



Antonio Rosmini
(1797-1855)

Society and its Purpose is the second and final volume of Rosmini's *Philosophy of Politics*. In it, he examines the nature of all society before investigating the elements which form civil society. Social benevolence, freedom, equality, order and right are discussed in depth. The inviolable rights of the individual, irrespective of membership of any society, are established clearly before the author shows how morality 'tempers and reconciles social and extra-social right'.

Society, which is non-existent without the presence of an invisible bond uniting the persons who are its members, must of its nature respect these persons for what they are; the single purpose of society is to provide them with 'true, human good', that is, moral contentment. Whatever detracts from this is per se anti-social.

Civil society contributes to contentment of spirit in a special way. Rosmini shows how the general end of all society is specifically determined for civil society as a result of interaction between the practical reason of the people as a whole and the speculative reason of individuals.

This interaction depends on virtue for its successful outcome. Rosmini rejects materialism as the determining factor of a successful society, is highly critical of exaggerated expectations as principles of progress, and sees stimulated, unrealisable capacities in the human heart as productive of immense political harm; only virtue can provide the substantial happiness which serves as a necessary basis for the degree of contentment achieved in society. The human spirit as the seat of contentment is the end of politics; as agent modifying itself or acting upon external things for its own sake, it is the one means of politics on which all others depend.

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PHILOSOPHY OF POLITICS

Volume 2

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Society and its Purpose

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Note

Square brackets [] indicate notes or additions by the translators.

References to this and other works of Rosmini are given by paragraph number unless otherwise stated.

Abbreviations used for Rosmini's quoted works are:

AMS: Anthropology as an Aid to Moral Science

NE: A New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas

PE: Principles of Ethics

SC: The Summary Cause for the Stability or Downfall of Human Societies

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SOCIETY
AND
ITS PURPOSE

INTRODUCTION

1. Philosophy applied to politics investigates those immutable, universal principles which enable a reflective mind to make a correct judgment about everything capable of influencing civil society for good or evil. I have called these great principles *political criteria*¹ because they guide wise people in evaluating whatever has power to modify the condition of a social body.

2. Everything capable of modifying the social condition for good or harm may be considered as a force moving civil society either towards its legitimate end (by benefiting and improving the social condition), or away from this end (by harming society and bringing it closer to its destruction). The amount of power proper to such a force is relative to its positive or negative political worth, that is, to its capacity for effecting social progress or deterioration.

Clearly, the *political criteria* we are discussing are simply ‘rules according to which we must evaluate the positive or negative value of all the forces acting upon and moving civil society.’

3. When accurately evaluated, these forces enable us to foresee to some extent the future of civil society. Thus political criteria contain within themselves the important art of political foresight.

Furthermore, these forces, when under governmental control, become a *means* of government. Hence political criteria also form the rules according to which we must evaluate the *means* of government; they are the summation of the whole great art of the government of nations.

¹ Cf. the *Preface* preceding the *Classification of Political Works* [SC, 1–16].

4. I have already indicated the nature and number of the sources of political criteria, but not their mutual relationship. By examining the nature of this relationship, we will see how all political criteria emanate from the four sources I have distinguished and how they can be divided into four classes.²

5. Politics may be defined as: 'The art of directing civil society to its end by those means which pertain to civil government.' This movement which must be applied to directing society towards its natural end is like the movement of a body whose location is changed. In this sense the art of government can truthfully be called *social mechanics*.

6. An engineer wishing to move a mass from one place to another must note and calculate four things if his effort is to succeed. First, he must consider the place to which he has to move the mass. Next, he must study the nature, form and weight of the mass. Third, he has to calculate the forces of the levers, capstans and other devices he will use and apply to the mass. Finally, he must be thoroughly familiar with the laws of motion. To accomplish the task, therefore, he must study: 1. the term of the movement; 2. the nature of the thing to be moved; 3. the forces to be applied; 4. the laws of motion.

7. These are precisely the considerations that have to be made by a mind responsible for directing civil society. We must know first, the legitimate *end* determining the institution and direction of civil society; second, the *nature* of civil society, that is, its natural constitution. Third, we have to calculate the *forces* capable of moving society, that is, those found in the nature of things, those set up by human beings, those which the government can and must use, and those which of themselves disrupt government action. Finally, the great *laws of social movement* or progress must be thought through — opposition to, or contradiction of the natural laws of society's movement would certainly be a profitless operation.

8. We can easily see how the whole art of politics is ultimately reduced to these four headings, which are the topics of an equal number of noble theories. These headings are the four sources of the supreme rules constituting *political logic* by which the

² Cf. *Schema of the Philosophy of Politics* after the *Preface to the Political Works* [SC, 17].

means of government can be justly evaluated — ‘criteria’ as I have called them.

9. These rules must be universal, immutable principles. Principles endowed with these characteristics can have their foundation only in the nature of things, that is, in their essential being, which is always the same. We can find something immutable and constant in human society despite its vicissitudes and ceaseless fluctuations; indeed, we find that the end, nature and movements of society, together with the laws of its development, are stable and unchanging. If we disregard the variations in 1. the purpose for which civil society is founded, 2. its construction, 3. the forces that move it, 4. the successive stages of its development, we then finally retain only that which is invariable and necessary in each of the four elements. In other words, we discover the foundation of the universal principles and the explanation of all the variable elements that appear in the limitless accidents and changes of political societies.

10. What has been said will clarify the scope of this book which, like my previous work, *The Summary Cause for the Stability or Downfall of Human Societies*, forms only a tiny part of the *Philosophy of Politics*.

11. I must indicate the place of this part in the great corpus of political philosophy and its relationship with the small part that preceded it.

12. This work, and the work on the summary cause for the stability and downfall of human societies, deals with the first of the four classes of *political criteria*, that is, they deal with the *criteria* established through consideration of the END of political society.

13. If we bear in mind that political society is continually fluctuating in its movement towards or away from its end, we shall easily see that its ultimate perfection and ideal will never be achieved and realised, however close society comes to achieving its end. Similarly society, despite distancing itself from its perfect ideal and suffering continual deterioration, comes to the opposite extreme of total deterioration only when it disintegrates. Hence, both its perfection (that is, the end which it has actually achieved) and its destruction can be considered as two *limits* between which every social body perpetually and restlessly oscillates.

14. In *The Summary Cause etc.*, I considered society in so far as it moves contrary to its end and ultimately reaches destruction. Reflections on this kind of movement led me to deduce the criterion 'by which to distinguish in society the element on which it rests.' The aim would be to protect this element from every danger even at the cost of sacrificing, if necessary, every accidental advantage. I also indicated the changes in position which take place in this substantial element through the continual development of society (which is never static). I showed where the element must be sought, and can in fact be found, at different periods in the existence of society.

15. This discussion concerned only the *lower limit* of the end of society. But the end can and must be considered relative to its *higher limit*, that is, to the ideal perfection of society. This is my intention in the present work.

16. I will indicate briefly the order in which the matter will be treated.

The subject to be discussed is *civil* society. Although civil society is only a particular society, it is too often confused with either human society or universal sociality or society understood generically and abstractly. Civil society and its concept must be carefully distinguished from all societies of this kind and from all such conceptions of society. However, it is impossible to discuss civil association accurately unless we first consider the characteristics common to all associations and determine what constitutes the essence of human society in general.

17. Everything I say will clearly demonstrate that many very harmful errors were introduced into political science as a direct result of negligence in considering attentively the essential element common to all human associations. Civil society has been studied without the consideration and careful determination of its preliminary, fundamental notions which alone provide a solid, immutable foundation for the subsequent discussion of particular societies.

18. Our subject, therefore, divides naturally into two.

First, we must clarify the general notions of society, determine its unique essence (always the same in every particular association), examine the end common to all societies (the essentially social end) and finally indicate both the deviations

which society in general can make from this end, and its direct approach to the end.

Next, we must move from these generalities to apply the established principles to civil society and its particular end. This will provide us with secure criteria for judging good and harmful means of government, the vision proper to eminent politicians, and the illusions and sophisms — in a word, the errors — to which rulers can be subject.

19. The destiny of peoples is sacred and of the utmost importance; no effort is too great nor meditation too deep in such a matter where a single error may determine the morality, dignity and happiness of many human generations. Unfortunately, this science is still, in my opinion, bereft of absolute principles. People have formed their political opinions in three ways: 1. according to the basic instincts of their own individual interests which act as blind guides to practical conduct; 2. simply on the material aspect of facts, sanctified and made into rights; 3. according to those imperfect, exclusive notions which at various times set the fashion but are alternatively espoused and repudiated by ignorant hot-heads who form the core of the parties from which the astute profit. Among the countless authors writing on politics after the Renaissance we rarely find anyone who is not inspired by some particular party or selfish prejudices. Generally speaking, the flaccid style and narrow vision even of unprejudiced authors, whose minds have not been honed by experience and exercised in public affairs, make their books impossible to read.

The defect of more modern writers is caused by the very popularity they ostentatiously seek. This popularity would be of great value provided it were not considered as a means for the acquisition of petty glory, love of which causes so much jealousy amongst authors. Popularity whose purpose is to instruct people and provide them with accurate and, above all, well-determined ideas of things is indeed of sublime worth. On the whole, however, popular ideas are rendered defective by their vagueness, lack of restraint and poor definition.

20. There is another kind of popularity. This, instead of providing people with precise, well-defined ideas, takes the few, simple, undefined, exclusive and imperfect ideas people have and envelops them in a sea of words and phrases which impress

the imagination. The words seem clear and apparently full of meaning; in fact, they are senseless (this is what those writers call eloquence!). The ideas, which are praised to the skies by their authors, are then restored to the masses who receive them as their own. Every unrestrained and violent passion stored up in the human heart will pour out upon any so-called sceptic who dares change a word of these sacred formulas!

This false popularity is simply base adulation of the people. God grant that few authors may succumb to the attraction of popular acclaim and allow it to draw them down to the people from the height of new-found culture, or lead them to abandon the study of wisdom for the sake of eloquence dependent upon popular opinion and passion. God grant that, if things carry on like this, not all authors will be tarred with the same brush!

21. This harmful, false popularity explains the scarcity of formal, scientific, political works; it explains the flood of books devoid of any systematic connection between notions that might force comparison and assessment of ideas, and their consequent limitation and subjection. These constantly unstable ideas are expressed in sloppy phrases, occasionally acerbic but more frequently poisoned by cunning falsity. Consequently, we very rarely find, even in works written by learned persons, a completed thought, a relevant view, a non-exclusive theory, an opinion or sympathy not pushed to excess. Only excess, by its very monstrosity, awakens attention and pleases the multitude of readers, who prefer to hear what is new and strange than learn what is true and useful.

22. Our own preference is that writers should constitute a school of truth and virtue, making themselves 'popular' in the true, noble sense of the word by inviting everybody to be nourished in this school. Authors should write at the level of the people, in a clear, simple style, but not at the expense of thought. The masses should be able to understand everything they read and at the same time find instruction in it. If they are drawn to further reflection, they can modify their ideas and opinion by verifying, comparing, determining and expanding them. Let them enjoy their reading, even passionately, provided enjoyment comes from the light of truth as it penetrates their minds, and from gentle modesty and benevolence as it informs their hearts. The passions they experience should draw them to

heroic virtue, freeing them from blind, turbulent slavery to vice. Holy popularity of this kind deserves the highest praise; it makes writers into masters and fathers of the human race. Such a sublime mission cannot be accomplished in any way by those who debase themselves to follow sycophantically the people whom they should lead.

23. We have to admit, however, that exact teaching cannot be made popular all at once. It has first to be discovered, then discussed by a few. Only when the discussion of learned persons has clarified, tested and determined the teaching can it be communicated without danger to the people.

Imparting this knowledge to the people is the work of a special class of writers deeply committed to public advancement. It is a splendid task whose reward is universal recognition. But because human forces are limited, those who give the public useful, accurate and certain teaching cannot be the persons who first meditate, discuss and determine teaching with scientific rigour. It is indeed more difficult and more meritorious to discover and determine scientifically a teaching useful to the people than to communicate it; the prior task is more modest and, I would say, more hidden. Only the few who live for their thoughts and studies, debating obscure, unrefined questions expressed in the technical vocabulary of the laboratory, as it were, know the extent and difficulty of the work involved in such questions. The people see nothing of this; they mock as bizarre and eccentric the little they do see. Nevertheless the hard, slow, obscure grind of the learned must provide the subject-matter for popular authors and books just as miners toiling deep in the earth and broken with work provide gold and diamonds for the makers of fashionable jewellery.

24. For myself, I have nearly always followed the lower and more obscure of the two functions. My only hope is that this present work will be seen by a few honest thinkers and friends of humanity as a stimulus to conscientious discussion and a more accurate determination of some of the great questions arising from the scientific study of society — a study from which a science could finally be constituted. One day, perhaps, social science will be expressed by rigorous formulas and evident proofs which outdo even mathematical disciplines.

Surely it is more important to ascertain and clarify the truths

on which fortunes, peace, life, dignity, the sanctity of the family and of the nation depend than to learn how to move great blocks of stone or raise water, or even to calculate the orbit of the stars? Why do we study so hard both to demonstrate that a mathematical proof is logically exact and to prevent political reasoning from rigidly pursuing a safe path, while at the same time we allow glib thought to hide behind the confusion of vague assertions full of equivocation? We are not so much afraid of nailing down the elusive truth by reasoning rigorously; rather, we fear a miserable disaster — that many people would be silenced who hope to gain more from the free use of their tongue than from the possession of truth. It is a fact that the enemies of truth are fewer in number than the lovers of utility. There are many young Ulysses for whom the maxim given by the astute king of Ithaca to Neoptolemus is more attractive than immortal virtue:

Listen, son of so sublime a father,
In youth I was prepared to toil
With active arm and silent tongue.
Now that I'm old and time has passed
I know full well that labour's naught;
The tongue alone prevails.³

³ Sophocles, *Philoctetes*.

Book One

SOCIETY

CHAPTER 1

The bonds uniting human beings with things and persons

25. Human beings have relationships with *things* and *persons*. Relationships pertain to the ideal order.

26. In addition to *relationships*, human beings establish effective *bonds* with persons and the things around them. These bonds pertain to the order of realities.

27. Necessary, immutable *relationships* constitute *laws*⁴ which must be respected by all.

28. *Bonds* are simply *facts*, which either 1. conform or not to laws; or 2. are arbitrary, that is, are neither positively willed nor positively prohibited by laws.

29. These facts, posited by human beings *outside the law*, so to speak, and constituting effective bonds, give rise in the order of ideas to new relationships with the things and persons to which human beings are tied, and thus stimulate new laws.

30. The simplest, most general relationships of human beings with things and persons are ultimately those of means and end.

31. Relative to human beings, things are *means*, persons are *end*.

32. From these two fundamental relationships descend all the moral laws which must govern human behaviour towards things and persons. The first law, governing human conduct towards things, states: 'Human beings must use things as means to the end proper to human beings.' The second law, governing human conduct towards persons, states: 'Human beings must treat persons as end, that is, as having their own end.' Included in this second law are the duties we have towards ourselves as persons.

33. Effective, real bonds correspond to these two relationships of means and end. In fact, we all have the faculty of binding and uniting to ourselves an infinite number of things and persons.

34. We bind and unite to ourselves all things outside us which

⁴ Cf. *PE*, ch. 1, where I have shown that properly speaking *law* is only an *idea* or notion which directs our actions.

we find useful; we make them our own and mark them out for ourselves. In this way we establish a *bond of ownership*.

We also bind and unite *persons* to ourselves, and ourselves to them. But this union, proper to persons, differs entirely from our union with things: we do not consider persons as advantageous for ourselves (in this case they would be the same as things), but as people in whose company we can enjoy the advantages offered by things. Persons united in this way acquire a communion in good, and together form a single end; things are only a means to the end which all persons have in common. This is a *bond of society*.

35. The bond of ownership has its basis in *usefulness* to the person who binds himself to things; the bond of society has its basis in the mutual *benevolence* of persons who bind themselves to one another. These two bonds are obviously and essentially different.

36. We rely on our intelligence both in the case of *relationships* pertaining to the order of *ideas* and in the case of *bonds* pertaining to the order of *things*. These bonds bind us to all beings (things or persons) who differ from ourselves.

It is pure intelligence that enables us to know the relationships of entia; with its help and guidance we can, as active beings, bind ourselves to various kinds of entia according to the different relationships they have with us and amongst themselves.

Without intelligence, therefore, there would be neither *ownership* nor *society*: human beings would not know what they owe to themselves or others. Consequently, they could not foresee or calculate the different uses and advantages they and others with them could obtain from the use of things, nor make firm plans about those things for the future.

Consequently, *dominion* and *society* pertain only to an ens endowed with reason, not to irrational beings, and they develop *pari passu* with the development of reason.

CHAPTER 2

The social bond

37. We must now consider more closely the nature of the two bonds. We begin with the *social bond*.

Two or more persons associate with the intention of obtaining some good for themselves, which is the end of society. This *good* must be sought for the advantage of all the persons forming society, who otherwise could not be called members of society.

Associated persons, therefore, together form a moral person (of which the individuals are only parts) whose good is that sought by society. This good is the very end of society. Each of the associated persons by the very nature of society, desires the good of all, because each desires the social end, which is common to all. I call this desire of each member for the good of the whole body *social benevolence*.

38. One important consequence of this, which does honour to human society, is that a moral element is present in the very essence of society, because the constitutive principle of moral virtue is also, generally speaking, the constitutive principle of society.

39. The principle of moral virtue, simply stated, is:⁵ 'Respect person as end; do not use person as a means for yourself.' The object of virtue therefore is always the dignity of the person, and here precisely lies the origin of human association. We have said that every human society is simply the union of two or more persons undertaken with the intention of obtaining a common advantage. All the persons in this union together have the role of end, and the advantage expected from the association is applied equally to all.

This consideration recalls Plato's sublime statement that

⁵ To avoid extending this book indefinitely, I have to take some things as proven. But the proof of everything I affirm can be found in my previously published works. When need arises, I will refer to the principal passages of these works. Cf. in this instance, *Principles of Ethics*, 66–68, 101–105, and *Storia comparativa dei sistemi morali*, c. 8, art. 3, §6.

‘without justice there could not be even a society of highwaymen united to rob travellers.’

40. Highwaymen are certainly unjust towards travellers but not among themselves. Their injustice affects only those outside their society, not the members themselves. They are not unjust in so far as they are associated. If they treat the members of their own society treacherously, they are treating them as outsiders, not as members. If their unjust actions affect only a particular companion, they set him outside the society; if their actions affect all members, the society disintegrates.

41. For this reason, ‘to set someone outside the benefit of law’ means ‘to deprive him of social benefits’, that is, to separate him from society and consider him as no longer belonging to it. Hence the excellence of the *social bond*: where it is present, there is no injustice; injustice begins where it is absent.

42. We will be more convinced of this if we look again at societies of villains, such as bandits or highwaymen or pirates. In my opinion, we find not only an element of justice in a society of assassins or pirates, as Plato observed, but a principle of humanity. In the hearts of such unfortunate people a spark of humanity still burns: they defend each other when attacked, share common dangers, and in a fraternal spirit happily divide the booty. Affectionately and tenderly they remember their fallen companions. One poet has them say:

At the climax of the feasting
When the red wine passes round
Memories of our dead companions
Mingle with the spoils we share.
Memories flicker on sad faces
Mindful of once happy friends.

43. A society of pirates is unjust only towards non-members. But let us suppose they add many persons to their company. From that moment these persons are no longer the object of their injustice; as numbers increase, injustice diminishes. A still greater increase in numbers would turn the band of robbers into a tiny nation. The republic of San Marino is an example of this. Still more people are added and the group now extends its power not by minor attacks on land and sea transport but by formal wars; in other words, by conquest. Injustice necessarily

becomes more limited and restricted as the association grows, because all those who become members of the society are sheltered from its injustice. Ultimately, we would have a Roman republic! As history shows, the origin of our society of highwaymen and pirates is precisely the origin of this legislator of nations and powerful mistress of the world. In Rome's case, Romulus was leader of the highwaymen and pirates.

This society of villains therefore is unjust only because it is limited — remove its limits and it at once loses its injustice. We are justly horrified at its beginnings, but only because it was too small. We call it a band of robbers, whose action was murder, whose heroism was ferocity. But as the society grows, its nature changes before our eyes. Unnoticeably it is given other names, becomes a city,⁶ a fatherland, kingdom, republic and empire. Its undertakings are now called wars, and the men who fought, conquered and perished in those wars, are brave and heroic; their glory in human eyes becomes pure, sublime and greatly to be envied.

44. These observations are not without value if they help to temper the ill-considered anger of those who oppose contemporary societies because they believe injustice presided over their birth. We cannot immediately conclude that an extended and firmly established society is unjust simply because its origin was unjust. As societies grow, they sometimes have an extraordinary capacity for continually cleansing themselves of the vileness in which they originated. As I have explained, a moral element is essentially present in every society. This element, small at the outset, later develops and increases along with the society. As it expands, it marvellously separates and rejects all that is vile and despicable in the social body.

45. Two causes explain how Romulus' band of brigands changed into a republic whose laws exhibited justice and equity never previously seen in the world: 1. they practised justice among themselves, that is, they formed a true society; and 2. they increased their dominion immensely through prudence and strength. This increase in dominion was an increase in their

⁶ Certainly, not all the early associations Cicero describes as: 'Associations of human beings, later called city-states' (*Pro Sext.*, 42), were legitimate and holy.

justice. They were not content merely to extend their power by land and sea; their aim was to widen and extend their association. Normally, they treated their allies not as mere tributaries but as associates, giving conquered peoples the rights and advantages of Roman citizenship.⁷

46. Some may regard as too absolute my proposition that the expansion of a society goes hand in hand with its purification from elements of injustice and that consequently universality renders it entirely just. Objectors say that the inclusion of all human beings in a society would not make it just, if the intended end were itself not upright. The objection seems solid enough, but collapses if we pay careful attention to what I have said.

47. I maintained that the nature of society requires those who form it to enjoy within it the personal dignity of end, and that this moral element is inherent in every society. We know that if a

⁷ Some authors are excessively hostile and unjust towards the Romans — the modern practice it would seem; others see the republic as the type of all virtues — as they did in the past. But both exaggerate. Nevertheless, I think Gravina's words about the Roman empire contain a good deal of truth. The empire, he says 'spread most profitably throughout the whole world as a result of its growing humanity.' He goes on: 'The Romans made slaves only of the enemies of humanity; only those who rejected the laws of reason were ENSLAVED. — They allowed the Greeks and other cultured peoples to live according to their own laws, demanding only SOCIETY in arms and counsel, not SLAVERY. When they set out to rule, they used their powers and possessions for UNIVERSAL COMMUNION in the law of nations, for the spread of reasonable living and for the improvement of the human race' (*Orig. juris civil.*, bk. 2, c. 16). — 'This wise, human policy was pursued by the Romans not only through a kind of good instinct; it was also formulated by writers during the Republic, and taken as a principle by their politicians. Cicero is perfectly clear about this: 'The principal foundation of our dominion, and the enhancement of the name of Rome, was undoubtedly due to Romulus, the principal founder of this city. He taught, by means of the Sabine treaty, that the State must grow even by accepting its very enemies. Our ancestors, following his authority and example, always provided others with some share and communion in the city-state' (*Pro Corn. Balbo*, n. 31). Tacitus himself valued highly this constant maxim of Roman policy. In his opinion, its absence amongst the Spartans and Athenians accounted for their fall: 'Although the Lacedemonians and Athenians were powerfully armed, their sole cause of ruin was to treat those they conquered as foreigners. But our founder, Romulus, was wise enough to consider as citizens in the evening many people who had been enemies in the morning' (*Annal*, bk. 11).

society seeks a less than upright end, it must do so by violating personal dignity, which alone makes something less than upright; in other words, the person, who must be respected as end, is used as a means. I have reduced all injustice and lack of uprightness to this.⁸ It is clear, therefore, that if a society proposes an end irreconcilable with uprightness, it either partakes less, or not at all, in the essence of society. It is also clear that giving the quality of end to persons associated together is precisely a characteristic proper to the social bond. It follows that this bond contains nothing wrong or unjust; everything wrong and unjust lies outside the ambit of personal association. Again, if all persons were associated and society had become truly universal, all would be respected; the dignity of each person would be inviolable. Finally, it is absurd and repugnant that a universal society should exist which pursues a non-upright end; this is only possible if there is at least one person whose dignity may be offended. This however is impossible unless some person is used solely as means. But in this case, such a person would be excluded from the society. This is contrary to the hypothesis; we would be dealing with a non-universal society which did not include all persons under every respect.

48. It cannot be denied that when the universality of a society is understood strictly, no intelligent, personal being can be excluded from it. Such a society must include God himself. If the supreme and greatest intelligence were excluded, the society could certainly have a non-upright end, because a person whose dignity could be violated would remain outside its sphere.

49. We can only stand in wonder before the mind of Cicero who, in his meditation on social perfection, conceived and described a truly universal society: 'This entire world is to be considered simply as a city common to both gods and human beings'.⁹ This sublime concept constitutes the basis of Christendom, which is simply a divine realisation of the Ciceronian city-state.

⁸ Cf. *PE*, 101–105.

⁹ *De Leg.*, bk. 2, c. 2.

CHAPTER 3

The bond of ownership and dominion

50. We come now to the *bond of ownership*. As we said, persons bind themselves by means of this bond to things whose use can be of some advantage to them. With this act, they reserve these things to themselves, consider them as their own, begin to use them, take possession of them and persuade themselves that their use of them will be perpetual. In all these actions by which persons assign things to their own use, not the least thought is given to the good of the things. We think only of our own good; we simply wish to extract the most we can for ourselves from things.

51. An important observation must be made here: all entia are *things*, but some of these things are persons. It follows that all persons are things, but not all things, persons. Every person therefore can be considered under the two aspects of *thing* and *person*.

It may be objected that it is completely absurd for the same ens to have two kinds of relationship (one proper to things and one proper to persons) and two kinds of bond (that of *ownership* and that of *society*).

If, in such an ens, the quality 'thing' and 'person' were so totally indistinct that the ens could never be considered 'thing' without its being considered simultaneously and necessarily 'person', only one kind of relationship would be possible with it and therefore only one kind of bond: a personal bond, of which the social bond is a species. Such an ens would be God; it would not be a human being, because the human, personal principle does not constitute the whole human being but only the best element and highest point of human nature in the human being.

52. What really is 'person'? I have defined it elsewhere as 'a substantial individual in so far as it contains a supreme, incommunicable, intelligent and active principle.'¹⁰ This definition clearly shows the difference between an individual and the

¹⁰ Cf. *AMS*, 769.

element constituting the individual's personship. An individual in a given nature is called 'person' only because of a sublime interior element through which he 'acts with intelligence and will'. However, this does not prevent the presence of other elements in the individual which constitute his nature, not his person. These elements are 'personal' not in themselves but through their connection with the personal element to which they adhere and by which they are dominated. In a word, the *personal* element in the human being is his *intelligent will*, through which he becomes author of his own actions.

53. The dignity of this personal element, which must always be considered as an end in itself, not a means, consists properly speaking in the fact that it is the element by which the individual can adhere with his total self to *truth*, that is, to being, contemplated objectively in all its fullness. As a result of this real adhesion to objective, unlimited being the person acquires a new nobility, fulfilment, bliss and completion.

54. An intelligent principle *able* to adhere unlimitedly to being is called personal precisely because of this power and natural ordering. But if it passes from simply *being able* to *actually adhering* to, and fulfilling itself in, the whole of being, we have to say that its personship has been increased and completed. And in this completion of the person are found moral good, moral virtue, final personal dignity and even beatitude.

55. Respect for the person therefore means doing nothing contrary to personal dignity either relative to the part of personship already obtained or relative to the part which person seeks to obtain. It means neither impeding this possession nor destroying any part of it, nor doing anything that of its nature *attempts* to destroy or impede it.

56. Having defined in this way the duty to respect person as end, we easily see that human beings can be united by the two bonds we have mentioned without either bond necessarily harming the other. Human nature is manifold; it has both a personal and a non-personal element. Hence it takes on both relationships: the relationship of thing and the relationship of person. In other words, under one aspect human beings can be considered as things, under another, as persons. They are beings with the power to offer advantages to their fellows just as

irrational things do. But they have another, much more sublime power: the power as persons to receive these advantages and freely dispose of them.

57. It may be objected: 'But isn't there a contradiction here'? Can human beings be joined together both by person-to-person bonds and by bonds between things and persons? Can we draw advantages from our fellows in the same way as from irrational things? Would this not mean debasing ourselves and them?

58. I reply that there is no contradiction in the concept itself: human beings can certainly bind themselves by bonds proper both to persons and to things. As I have just said, human nature is not totally and in every respect personal; it has a part which is not personal, that is, not always and necessarily personal.

59. We must be careful here — we may not deduce from this that we can use others in exactly the same way as we use things. There is an immense difference between the way we use things and the way we use our fellows considered as things. We use a thing *unlimitedly*, without any regard for the thing itself. In using it, whether it deteriorates or perishes, we think only of our own advantage, and if we keep it, we do so only for our own sake. We can also use our fellow human beings for our own advantage, and in doing so, we use them as things. But we cannot use them unlimitedly; we have to impose some limit, and in doing so we consider them as persons.

We can use our fellow human beings in so far as the *real element* present in their nature allows us to do so, but no more. In other words, we can use them provided we respect the *personal element* present in their nature, and do not impede or disturb their progress in moral perfection by the use we make of them. In this perfection lies the moral dignity of persons, their freedom, and that infinite excellence which cedes to nothing and is subservient to nothing.

60. Although human beings can draw advantage for themselves both from the use of things and from the use of persons (bond-servants) — here, persons are considered in their relationship as things — the use of things differs essentially and infinitely from the use of persons. The use of things is unlimited and left to the good pleasure of the user; the use of persons is always limited and restricted to the law of personal respect

which must continually accompany the use. Nevertheless, true use is present in both cases; in both cases the thing used is considered as means, and the user as end. The relationship and bond is real, not personal; pertaining to means, not to end.

61. Although human beings can sometimes be used in the same way as things, and be considered as things in an abstract sense, different words had to be used to indicate the bond of *unlimited ownership* which human beings have with things and the bond of *limited ownership* they have with persons. The limit, essential to the latter bond, constitutes a very notable difference. Consequently, the word 'ownership' was generally reserved for the power of unlimited, absolute disposal¹¹ which we have over our own things, while the meaning of 'dominion' and 'seignior' was restricted to the limited power, accompanied by moral respect, which we have in the use of persons belonging to us. It is indeed quite unacceptable that a human being should have ownership of another human being. On the other hand, we are not offended if someone has dominion or seignior over others.

62. Hence the bonds of *society* and *seignior* are generally found as mixed in various actual human societies, although, as we said, they are very different in their intimate nature.

63. In the reality of a particular society, the difficulty of determining the role of *seignior* and *sociality* can be solved only by applying the titles of fact constituting the right of each, that is, the *seigniorial* and the *social right*. In my opinion, although legists have so far neglected this, it will certainly have to be done if we wish to unravel the tangled mass of human laws.¹² I will

¹¹ Hence jurists generally define ownership as 'the right to enjoy and dispose of things in the most absolute way, provided the use is not forbidden by laws or regulations.' Cf. *Codice civile per gli Stati di S. M. il Re di Sardegna*, §439.

¹² As an example of the need to distinguish seigniorial from social right, let us consider the question so much discussed by publicists: 'Do the citizens of a State have the right to emigrate?' It is clear that this question can be solved only when treated in two ways, that is, by applying first the principles of social right and then the principles of seigniorial right. When we examine the question to this extent, it becomes four different questions, two of which appertain to pure right, that is, to the theory of right, and two to

deal elsewhere with the great need to separate the two relationships and two bonds mentioned above,¹³ so that some light and order may be given to the chaos of various human legislations [*App.*, no. 1]. For the moment I will summarise what has been said.

64. I have said that if an individual human being intentionally binds himself with other human beings solely for his own advantage, he will draw from them what he draws from his own things, or from things in his use; in this case he will not consider other humans as persons.

65. Such a person is isolated and alone, and in this state profits from all the objects around him. Whether the objects are things or persons is accidental and indifferent to him. What is essential and most important in his use of them is the good he seeks to obtain for himself; provided he achieves his own good, he is unconcerned whether things or persons realise it for him. If in fact he prefers persons to things, he does so in the same way as

applied right. The first two are:

1. Does social right always give the government of a society the faculty to prevent the emigration of its members? Or: when does it do this, and with what limits?

2. Does *seigniorial right* always give the masters possessing this right the faculty to prevent their subjects from emigrating? Or when does it do so, and with what limits?

The second two questions concern application:

1. In a particular *real civil society* do the titles of fact exist which give the government the faculty to prevent the members from emigrating? And with what limits?

2. In a particular *real seigniority* do the titles of fact exist which give the master the faculty to prevent his subjects from emigrating? And with what limits?

It is obvious that if all these questions are not first resolved in a particular nation, it is impossible to establish a clear legislation on the right of emigration. And even if it were decided that the right of emigration existed according to *social right*, the right could cease to exist or be limited by force of *seigniorial right*. These rights therefore have to be clearly distinguished if legislation is to attain its highest point of perfection.

¹³ According to my definition, the bonds are simply realised relationships, that is, actually posited in really existing societies. Philosophical right divides naturally into two parts: pure right, which deals with both seigniorial and social relationships, and right applied to real societies, which deals with both seigniorial and social bonds.

he would prefer better things to inferior things. In all this there is not the slightest hint of society: on the contrary, the law constituting society is that 'many individual persons are joined together in such a way that they form a single moral person'.

66. To be called society, a union of human beings must be composed of many persons as persons. Society cannot be any union where a sole person is end, and all others appear with the quality and relationship of means from which he alone draws the profit he desires for himself. Society exists when all the individuals are united with a single common end, in the way that all our bodily limbs have the well-being of our whole body as their end, and the whole body has as its end the well-being of the limbs.

67. A so-called society of servitude and seigniorship is not therefore true society, although it may be called such to express the *limit* of the bond rather than the bond itself. This moral limit gives rise to an obligation for masters and servants not to be content with the relationship of seigniorship and servitude but always to accompany this relationship with some sort of society and mutual benevolence.

I grant that one person's rights of seigniorship over others can be legitimate and just, but in my opinion do not provide the notion of society; they contain only the concept of a human being who possesses things, among which are certain rights over persons.

68. Moreover, as we said, it is necessary that, if these rights over persons are to be true rights, persons be seen as things without offence to their personship. In other words, they must not be prevented from achieving virtue and the supreme good that comes from virtue. In human beings we have to distinguish between the *work* they effect and their *personship*. In so far as they work and provide service, they are seen as things and can be possessed by others. But, I repeat, the work must not offend their personal dignity, which remains essentially free from all servitude. Right over personship does not exist; it is an absurdity, a wicked, rash dream of humanity which, in its pride, debases and torments itself.

69. Finally, although seigniorship over persons can, as I have explained, be just, we cannot deny that of itself it has a kind of unsocial nature; there is a division between those who are related as master and servant (if we remove every other

mitigating relationship). One is person, the other, thing, so opposite in nature that they cannot form a single moral body.

70. For this reason the Legislator of humanity, in his desire to unite all human beings into a completely universal society, excluded entirely the concept of dominion and seigniorship from the human race, reserving and referring all domination to God alone. To those upon whom he imposed the responsibility of founding on earth a pure and perfect society, he consigned this constitutive law: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves."¹⁴

¹⁴ Lk 22: [25–26].

CHAPTER 4

How 18th century authors conceived the right of nature

71. The bonds of ownership and of dominion does not associate one human being with another; each remains separate and isolated. In such a pre-societal state human beings are thought to be in a so-called *state of nature*, as opposed to the state of *society*.

Two levels can be distinguished in this state where social ties are thought not to exist. At the first level we can imagine human beings with the *simple relationships* which pertain to the order of pure reason; these individuals have not yet contracted effective bonds of ownership and dominion with things. At the second level, we can imagine others bound by effective *bonds* which unite them to things (and to persons, whom they consider as things), but are not joined and associated with their fellows as persons.

72. These two levels show no notable difference in the matter of *right* proper to this state. This right, prior to social right, concerns relationships and bonds with things. Human beings are either in potency to these bonds and relationships (this is the case in the first grade of the state of nature, where only *jura ad res* exist), or they have already actually and effectively taken possession of things (that is, have passed to the second level of the state of nature, where *jura in rebus* can in some way be conceived).

73. We should also consider that any society whatsoever (correctly called a moral person, as we said) has exactly those same relationships and bonds with everything outside it that the individual has in the so-called *state of nature* so that, relative to each other, societies in the state of nature are like non-associated individuals.

74. We must distinguish therefore a right prior to the existence of social bonds and a right arising from these bonds. The former was called *right of nature* precisely because the state of the human being prior to the social state was thought to be the *state of nature*.

75. Up to this point, it is impossible to fault the philosophers. As we said, the only possible criticism is that the phrases 'state of nature' and 'right of nature' are not altogether correct, and give rise to equivocation. They are *defective* because *nature* does not posit human beings outside society; on the contrary, we receive our life and are born within family society. They give rise to equivocation because the phrases did not define whether 'nature' had to be understood as 'nature in general' or only human nature, nor whether 'nature' is understood as the opposite of *art* or of *reason*. Roman jurists themselves fell into this equivocation when they defined natural right as 'that which nature teaches all animals',¹⁵ as if rights, precepts, and teachings could exist in the absence of reason. By 'nature' they understood 'natural instinct' which can indeed suggest to reason what must be done or omitted but cannot, without the dictate of reason,¹⁶ constitute any right or duty.

76. Instead of leaving the meaning of 'nature' so uncertain and undetermined, thinkers should have defined it by restricting it to human nature and calling the consequent right, 'right of human nature'. In this way, they could have spoken unerringly about right as a branch of the whole of moral legislation. They would have been irreproachable if, prescindng entirely from any social bonds, they had restricted this right of human nature to the essential relationships of individuals with things and persons, provided they had added to it the part of right constituting *social right*. In other words, they should have added the second, more noble element of the entire body of *right* relative to *human*

¹⁵ This definition of natural right has clearly been taken from stoic philosophy. Cujas believes he explains it when he says: 'That which brutes do by natural incitement, human beings do by natural right' (*Not. prov. ad I Inst. Tit. II*). But in my opinion it would be better and more upright to acknowledge such a definition as defective and abandon it.

¹⁶ Instinct can partly supply the matter of right, but not the form. Before Ulpian, Zeno and Thales, Hesiod said more soundly:

Great Jupiter with law
The human race endows.
Wild beasts and fish and birds are found.
Devoid of right they stalk,
While we with justice, highest good,
Rejoice in mutual care.

(*Op. et D.*, bk. 1, v. 276).

beings considered in their various relationships and conditions. If our philosophers had done this, *natural human right* would have been the foundation of *social right*, which in turn would have completed natural right. The latter would have been the first part of all *rational right*, and the former, the second part.¹⁷

77. To avoid past mistakes, therefore, we must always remember that this natural right was abstract right, a part of right; it was not the whole of right. We could never deduce from it what must be done and what omitted in practice.

78. This imperfection of natural right and its insufficiency in guiding human beings towards complete justice can be shown simply by considering that everything it commands can finally be summarised as follows: 'Do no harm to your fellow human being.' It is totally *negative* because it concerns only the relationships and bonds that individual, unassociated persons have with things; it views other persons solely in their quality and relationship of things. Hence, all duties to persons arising from *right* are reduced to establishing a *limit* to the use of persons, that is, to commanding that the use of persons as things is limited in such a way that it does not violate the respect owed to their . Such a duty is purely negative; it is reduced to not-doing and not-harming, and imposes no obligation to help positively. We should not be surprised therefore that the good sense of antiquity pronounced judgment on such a rudimentary, imperfect and primitive right, and condemned it in practice as *summum ius, summa iniuria* [there is no greater injury than supreme right].

79. The obligation to help our fellow human beings arises from *social right*, the source of positive duties. The fundamental law of society is to obtain for the whole social body and for each member of it the good for which society is established. This gives rise to social benevolence and obliges all who become members to help their associates. Once again we see how human association is an essentially moral thing.

¹⁷ Understood in this sense, natural right has two parts:

1. human relationships and bonds with all that can be used as means, whether thing (bond of ownership) or person (bond of dominion);

2. relationships and bonds arising from bilateral contracts, in which human beings do not associate with other human beings but treat them as equals, that is, according to the relationship of end to end.

80. Many 18th century philosophers rejected social right while retaining natural right as the only complete human right. This explains the primitive inhumanity which characterised the second half of the last century and stained it with blood.

81. Rousseau, rightly considered as the representative of the right of nature under discussion, was not satisfied with rejecting social right and dealing only with natural right; nor was he satisfied with returning to the definition of the right of nature given by Roman law: 'The right which nature teaches all animals' — for him this definition already contained too much because it considers human beings as reasoning animals who receive their right from their rational nature.¹⁸ Rousseau, however, prescind from all intelligence. He does not allow human beings to draw this right, proper to their species, from reason, the element constituting the specific difference between human beings and brutes. He claims that the natural right of humanity must spring from the lower element of human nature, from what we have in common with beasts! This is truly extraordinary thinking; abstraction could not be more abused! But let us hear his own words and follow his wayward thoughts. Although he wishes to give human beings a natural right as a guide along the path of life, it is everywhere obvious that this right springs from his limited consideration of a few primitive, arbitrarily chosen conditions. He ignores the real conditions in which human beings find themselves.

82. First he eliminates all social facts from his considerations:

Let us begin by refuting all facts. They play no part in our question. Investigations such as ours must not be taken for historical truths but solely as hypothetical, conditional arguments, more suitable for clarifying the nature of things than for demonstrating their true origin; they must be accepted as arguments similar to those made daily by physicists about the formation of our globe.— Our topic concerns human beings in general. We will use a style acceptable to all nations, or rather, we will forget times and places and our present readers by supposing ourselves in

¹⁸ Legists have added, 'according to their kind' to the definition, 'Natural right is that which nature has taught all animals.' This explains and clarifies the definition.

the lyceum at Athens discussing our teachers' lectures. Our judges will be the erstwhile Platos and the Xenephons; our audience, the human race.¹⁹

83. But this is still not enough: although he has excluded positive human conditions, that is, all social facts, from his calculations, he would still have found, in the state of undeveloped human nature alone, all those human faculties which are the principles of its successive development; and first of all he would have found reason and the instinct for association. But he wants nothing to do with these elements; he disdains human nature and imagines a state prior to reason itself and to sociality where he thinks he can locate the true natural right of the human species:

When I consider the first, simplest operations of the soul, I believe I find two principles PRIOR TO REASON, one of which makes us very solicitous about our well-being, while the other inspires us with a natural repugnance at the sight of the suffering and death of every feeling being, particularly our fellow human beings. It seems to me that the laws of natural right spring from the way in which our spirit is able to mingle and combine these two principles, without needing to bring in sociability. Reason, when it has almost suffocated nature through its successive developments, is then forced to establish these laws on other foundations.²⁰

84. According to this philosopher, therefore, *reason*, far from forming part of human nature, is a foreign, hostile power which appears later like a parasitic plant, as it were, withering and suffocating human nature! This is a right not of nature but of brute nature — which has no right!

85. There is no end to this path. If we follow it, we cannot be satisfied with the human state prior to the use of reason. There is nothing to prevent our seeking the principles of right at an even earlier stage. If we want to posit the idea of human nature before humans begin to develop, we could look within the maternal womb, find that the heart develops before the other

¹⁹ *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

organs, and then deny that these organs form part of human nature. We could go even further back, perhaps to the original formation of the cellular network or beyond. This, it would seem, is the work Rousseau seriously intends to leave to others:

Anyone can easily investigate the same path without finding it easy to reach the end. It is no light matter to separate what is original from what is artificial in the actual state of human beings, or to know clearly a state no longer in existence, which perhaps never existed and probably never will.²¹

86. According to this teaching, the natural rights and duties of human beings would indeed be locked in a very closed circle! Our duties would consist almost solely in caring for our bodies, if we had any duties! On the other hand, because Rousseau is forced to confess *perfectibility* as a distinctive faculty of the human species, how will he handle this new element which is so inconvenient for the natural right he has imagined? He extricates himself by denouncing this element as an intrusion (he lacks the courage to destroy it); in an extraordinary contradiction he describes and judicially condemns 'perfectibility' as the author and source of every degradation of the human race to which it belongs.

The multiple consequences of this absurd assertion are only too clear to him. Smoothly and eloquently he admits them, and pours out his sympathy on the human race so that the reader, if not convinced by the light of truth, is seduced by the height of feeling, and swallows them whole.

It is indeed sad to be forced to agree that this distinctive and almost unlimited faculty (of human perfectibility) is the source of all human troubles, and that in the course of time it draws human beings away from their original condition of peace and innocence. As the centuries go by, its enlightenment and errors, its vices and virtues increase; in the long run it becomes the tyrant of both itself and nature. It is indeed frightful to have to honour as beneficent that which had first taught the Orinoco River dwellers to

²¹ Ibid.

attach pieces of wood to the temples of their children as a guarantee of part of their imbecility and their original happiness!²²

87. Finally, this philosopher whose unfortunate observations we have recalled was in fact aware that the exclusion of reason would eliminate every duty or right because nothing reasonable remains. He made this point himself in the form of an objection:

At first sight, it would seem that human beings in this state would have no kind of moral relationship between themselves nor any known duties; they could not be good or bad, nor possess vices or virtues — unless, of course, we take these words in a *physical* sense and call ‘vices’ the qualities which can harm an individual’s own preservation, and ‘virtues’ those which can aid it. In this case, the most virtuous individual would be the one who least resisted the simple impulses of nature.²³

88. This is his sole solution to the difficulty, which at one blow shatters the whole of natural right that he attempted to establish at such length:

If we do not wish to depart from the ordinary sense of words, we must suspend our judgment on such a position, and be wary of our prejudices before going on to see whether virtue is greater than vice among civilised people, or whether their virtues do more good than their vices do harm.²⁴

89. That is all I want. These words allow me to agree fully that in Rousseau’s state of nature there are neither vices nor moral virtues. I also agree that even if such a state devoid of morality were preferable to a social state in which vices exceed virtues, it could never give us any idea of law or of right, precisely because it never gives us any idea of virtue, vice or even reason. Finally, I agree with the necessary consequences of all this, namely, it is vain and insane to have recourse to this state in order to discover the norms of natural right; we would be positing a condition of

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

things where even the smallest vestige of natural right is lacking. Any miserable pretext would serve for denying the existence of natural right or for changing moral laws into physical laws or vice versa. These considerations show how strange it is to imagine we can draw natural right solely from human physical elements; it is simply an effective way of annihilating natural right, not establishing it.

90. Finally, nothing J. J. Rousseau has published about natural right is to be taken as serious philosophical work; it is simply an elegy on the social corruption in which the unfortunate man had to live. And his eloquent declamation was understood neither by his followers nor his opponents. Instead of seeing him as an angry man venting his feelings, an orator given to exaggeration, a sophist showing off his intelligence or a poet weeping, people thought they saw a philosopher reasoning. This was as damaging to the times whose corruption he was lamenting as it was to his reputation.

CHAPTER 5

Social benevolence and friendship

91. Retracing our steps, we will see that I included social benevolence in the concept of society.— Is social benevolence friendship, or do their concepts differ?

92. The concepts of *social benevolence* and *friendship* must not be confused. Friendship is something purer, holier and more sublime than simple social benevolence, at least in the case of a limited society.

A friend forgets himself for his friend, he desires and seeks the good of the loved person without considering his own good, which he sometimes sacrifices. Friendship is essentially intellectual, objective. Through it we live outside ourselves and in the object of our love, according to our intellectual conception of the object.

93. This is not true of social benevolence. The members of a society desire, as members, the good of the society to which they belong; social benevolence consists in this good desired for the whole society. I grant that any person wishing the good of a social body, consequently wishes the good of all those forming the body, but he himself is one of these. In *social benevolence* therefore human beings do not forget themselves, as in *friendship*; they consider and love themselves as members of the society. Furthermore, they associate with other persons solely for the advantage to be gained from the association. Thus they attach themselves to the society, loving it and its common good only for their own good, that is, for love of themselves. They do not love the good of others properly and necessarily for the others' good but because they find it a necessary condition for their own particular good. Thus, social benevolence has a subjective source: it is a subjective love generating an objective love, which however occupies a subordinate place in the human heart.

94. We can conclude, therefore, that *social benevolence* holds a kind of middle-place between the *seigniorial bond* and *friendship*; it is more noble than the former and less noble than

the latter. It is a first step by which we attain the purest affections of friendship.

95. However we must not think that friendship is normally lacking in actual human societies. The *bonds of seigniorship, of society and of friendship* are in reality intermingled and influential in varying proportions. My sole aim is to determine the difference between ideas; unless we do this, we cannot indicate how much human communal living owes to each of the three bonds.

Indeed, only my prior distinction between the concepts of seigniorship, social benevolence and friendship enables us to conclude without difficulty that 'human unions must be considered happier and more virtuous to the extent that friendship within them dominates the other two bonds, and to the extent that the bond of sociality dominates those of ownership and dominion.'

96. We must now show how friendship and social benevolence can gradually continue to grow in nobility, and how they meet and unite to become one single thing when they both reach their last possible degree of nobility.

97. The more virtuous friendship becomes, the more it is ennobled until finally it attains the highest point of nobility, that is, virtue which alone is the essence of nobility, and therefore that which ennobles all things. Friendship has reached its highest level of nobility and excellence when friend loves only virtue in friend, and affection is brought to what is true, just, upright and holy as its ultimate aim. At this point any limited object receives our affections like pure glass through which they pass without hindrance, or like a flawless mirror which takes the sun's rays and reflects them without the slightest alteration.

98. But how does social benevolence attain its highest level of nobility? As we said, it increases as society increases. We also saw that society improves as it increases, because benevolence is perfected by this growth. Society increases in two ways: by the number of persons who come together, and by growth in the good which forms the end for which the union was formed. As long as one person remains outside the society, and some good is excluded from its aim, it remains a limited society; it has not attained its ultimate, possible perfection. Consequently the benevolence that accompanies association has not reached the highest term of perfection to which it can aspire. On the other

hand, if we suppose that society is completely unlimited and that no person is excluded from its fold nor any real good from its aim, we have a society that tends to virtue as to its ultimate end, the most excellent good of all. Virtue is not only the best good but the condition and legitimate origin of every good. Such a society will therefore tend principally to virtue as to the greatest good and source of every good. Now the kind of *benevolence* proper to this noblest of societies will be that by which each member of the society desires principally moral perfection for all the associates. Thus we have arrived at a benevolence which is purely a love of virtue, an essentially objective, unselfish love.

99. Just as friendship, when it has attained its ultimate ideal perfection, is changed into a most noble love of eternal good of virtue, so social benevolence, in so far as we can think about its ultimate possible perfection, is transformed into the same most noble love of moral virtue, and aims at every other good only in relationship to this supreme good.

100. The ideal of *social benevolence* and the ideal of *friendship* are therefore the identical pure love of virtue.

101. Before ending this chapter, we must consider how a universal society may really exist on earth in which *benevolence* and *friendship* cannot in any way be separated from each other or from *virtue*. The founder of Christianity in fact made *virtuous love*, in which both perfect social benevolence and perfect friendship equally have their end, the purpose of the society he founded. He said to the members of this vast association: 'A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you,'²⁵ that is, with the most perfect friendship and the most perfect social benevolence.

²⁵ Jn 14 [13: 34, Douai].

CHAPTER 6

Social freedom

102. The social bond is the contrary of the bond of seigniorship. Hence society, by its nature, excludes servitude. All associated persons are parts of a single body and are therefore end, just as the body itself, to which pertains the good sought by means of association, is end. Thus society presupposes *freedom*; persons, as members, are free.

103. The freedom enjoyed by associated persons is greater and more perfect in proportion to the size and perfection of society. Social freedom expands and becomes perfect in the measure that social benevolence²⁶ and the justice inherent in society²⁷ expand with the diffusion of society.

This new characteristic, like all the preceding characteristics, is found to the highest degree in Christian society. Freedom is the highest mark stamped by the Founder on his society. He also declared the freedom of his society to be an effect both of the truth possessed by the society and of the virtue to which it tends. To all people Christ says: 'If you continue in my word' (by faith), 'you are truly my disciples' (by your good life), 'and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'²⁸ Thus, according to the words of Christ, there are four successive steps leading to freedom: FAITH, THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH and FREEDOM.

²⁶ Chap. 2.

²⁷ Chap. 5.

²⁸ Jn 8: [31–32].

CHAPTER 7

Continuation

104. We must be careful however not to err by taking social freedom for what it is not. If we bear in mind what has already been said, we see that social freedom consists in this: all associated persons have without distinction the concept of end; none of them can be considered merely as a means to the good of the others.

105. Society is made for the sake of all its members. The good that it produces must be shared equally by them all, according to an equal law. No one is obliged to work for the others without receiving a share for his own work. This is social freedom. When however a person is obliged to work for another without working for a good common to them both, servitude is present.

It would be a great mistake therefore to think that social freedom consists in a member's being discharged from every obligation and labour.

106. The nature of society is that of a union entered into by many individuals for the end of obtaining a particular good. It is clear that all those entering submit and oblige themselves to all the laws deriving from the nature of the association.

107. All these laws can be summarised in two general laws:

1. Each person, by becoming a member, is obliged to seek the common good of the other members, and to contribute to its production or acquisition in the way decided; in other words, each contributes through his personal acts or through his external possessions.

2. Each person must receive a share of the good acquired by the association, in proportion to his personal effort or external possessions.

No member of a society can excuse himself from these fundamental social laws which are the first constituents of social order.

108. We can therefore deduce that associates sin against the society to which they belong:

1. if they seek as end their own good alone and not the common good, neglecting or even harming the common good;

2. if they do not contribute to the acquisition of the social good by the agreed, fixed means.

In the first case, they sin against *social benevolence*; in the second, against *social activity*, the two summary duties of every society.

CHAPTER 8

Social equality

109. Observations similar to those noted above must be made about social equality. It is certain that the very essence of society posits an element of *equality* between the associates. But we need to pay great attention to forming an accurate concept of the equality discussed here. Just as *social freedom* is correctly conceived by a comparison between the bond of society and that of seigniority, so a similar comparison shows the nature of *social equality*.

There is no equality between master and servant; the servant, as servant, is merely a means for which the master is the end. Here, means and end differ essentially and infinitely. On the other hand, all the persons composing a society are end, none of them means, and as such they do not differ essentially; they are essentially equal. Social equality consists precisely in this.

110. Finally, let us apply this teaching also to the most extensive of all societies. The divine Legislator began the task of its foundation by emancipating human beings from the slavery of fault so that, as free people, they might all be equal, having end as their *raison d'être*, not means. St. Paul, after baptising a fugitive slave, returned him to his master, commanding the latter to receive the man no longer 'as a slave, but as a beloved brother', and added: 'So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.'²⁹ Here we have social equality; the bond of seigniority has changed into the bond of society.

Finally, just as *social freedom* does not destroy the obligations of the members, so *social equality* does not prevent the presence of accidental differences among them. These differences must be examined more carefully in the following chapter.

²⁹ Philem 17.

CHAPTER 9

Social order

111. Differences or *inequalities* among members arise from the intimate nature of society. As we have seen, the two fundamental laws of every society provide an explanation for social inequality and indicate its various kinds. We begin by considering the second law: 'Each member has to receive as his share a part of the good achieved through association; this share will be in proportion to the contribution he makes to the society.'

112. This law supposes a twofold inequality between the members:

1. inequality in the quantity of what each person has contributed;

2. inequality in the right to participate to some degree in social advantages. This is a consequence of the first inequality.

Such inequalities would not exist in a society where each member places in communion the same portion of good as the other members, that is, the same quantity of means designed to achieve the social end. In theory inequalities would disappear if those associated were considered as abstract rather than real persons. In other words, persons would be considered as members³⁰ and, if I may be permitted the phrase, as the very *shares* they bring to the society on entry. Social persons resulting from

³⁰ Roman right distinguished human beings and persons. All people were human beings, but not all were persons. A person was defined as: 'a human being considered in a certain state.' 'State' meant 'a quality by reason of which human beings made use of different RIGHT'. In other words, members of the great Roman association were considered as persons; non-persons were all those not belonging to this association. A bond-servant, for instance, was not recognised legally as possessing the state and condition of member. Consequently he was ἀπρόσωπος (Theophil. I. *Inst. de stipul. ser.*), 'a person not having laws' (Cassiodor., *Var.*, bk. 6, c. 8). He was listed amongst the 'THINGS on the estate' (Bk. 32, §2, *D. de legat.* 2) and considered as 'nothing and dead' (Bk. 32, and 209, *D. de reg. jur.*) precisely because he had no place in society. — Every limited society necessarily gives rise to such a difference between bond-servants and free persons. Thus, the world requires the institution of a universal society from which no one is excluded and in which all are free. This was the work of Christ.

such abstraction are rendered totally equal in what they contribute and in what they expect to receive; everything placed in common in this way is presumed divided into equal shares. Many social persons and shares can, however, be united in a single real person and thus give rise to the inequality we have indicated. To imagine that *real persons*, members of society, were all necessarily equal would be an error rising from a misunderstanding of the social bond.³¹

113. The nature of society necessarily draws other inequalities in its wake. First, a society always needs *administration*. By *social administration* I mean a *co-ordinating* principle that directs and harmonises all the social forces to the end of the society. Even if associated persons place in communion some determined reality — some social capital — this does not produce anything of itself until it is administered. Moreover, even if it did produce of itself the good sought from the association, this would have to be harvested and divided amongst the members according to their individual contributions. If the members contributed with their labour, this in turn has to be directed to the single end intended by the society. By ‘social administration’ we mean all these functions taken together.

114. Of its nature, administration is a right inherent to the members who compose the society. However, the need for *unity* and *ability* ensure that one or more persons are entrusted with the office of administration in the society. This gives rise to the idea of *minister* or *president* or *executive* — the three titles mean more or less the same — each of which is essentially different from the idea of *member*. This is easily understood if we consider that the society could, when first formed, choose a *non-member* as its *minister*, *president* or *executive*.

115. Is the relationship between the *administrator* and his society one of *service*, or of *sociality*? This is an important question in which it is very easy to err by attempting a simple answer to a twofold problem. The relationship between administrator

³¹ This is overlooked by those who favour a universal franchise in representative governments. It is not the real person who must be represented, but what each person contributes. Representing real persons instead of social persons or the shares by which each citizen takes his place in society is a principle of apparent equality, but of real injustice and inequality.

and society is a complicated matter which cannot be resolved without prior analysis.

116. I note first that the *administrator* could be accepted and considered as a *member* if he posits his administrative work as his portion of social capital. In this case, the labour with which he contributes to the attainment of the end of the society should be justly calculated relative to the contributions of others. The administrator will then have a right to a share in the benefits corresponding to the value put on his work.

Administrators, therefore, can be either *members* or *salaried* workers. The former would without doubt be united to their society by the *social bond*; no relationship between these administrators and the society would reflect that of bond-servant and master. It is true that administrators would work for the advantage of the society, but this is the case with every member who supports a society by his own work. The relationship, therefore, is not in any way servile; it is entirely social, despite its rigorous obligations. As we have seen, *obligation*, which does not constitute a state of *servitude*, is necessarily connected with social freedom.

The *administrator-member* cannot be dismissed from his post unless provision for this has been agreed at the foundation of the society. If there is no agreement to this effect, he is obliged to carry out his duty like all the other members, but has the right to the administration as long as the society lasts, just as every member has the right to be a member in accordance with the conditions of his enrolment. It is wrong to believe that administration is always, and by its very nature, a *servant bonded* to the social body, and that the social body (the people) is always *master* of the administration.

117. A *salaried* administrator, not a *member*, is bound to the society by a *facio ut des* contract. This is not of its nature a bond of servitude, but a contract between two free persons whose mutual relationship is proper to the *state of nature* — when this is understood as the ‘state prior to social bonding’. It is true that the administrator is obliged to administer the society fittingly towards its end; it is also true, however, that the society is obliged to pay him the sum agreed for his work. Both sides have obligations and rights. This is not so when the bond is that of seigniorship and servitude: in this case, the master,

as end, has only rights; the bond-servant, as means, has only duties.

Note carefully that even the salaried administrator of a society, unlike a *bond-servant*, is not obliged in any way to act according to the *arbitrary* desire of the individual members or of the body as a whole. His sole obligation is to act according to the nature and end of the society. He is not a person dependent upon another's whim, but one who exercises a specific office determined by the nature of the thing in question. As such he is a *minister*.

It is true that the salaried administrator can be dismissed at the society's pleasure if no term has been fixed for the duration of his appointment, but it is also the case that he has the right to renounce his salary when he pleases, and leave his post. In other words, a bilateral contract is made on the basis of perfect equality between two sides.

These observations enable us to clarify the nature of the *bonds* tying an administrator to a society. Some other observations must now be made about the nature of the *office* of social administrator.

118. As we have said, the administrative office consists in ordering and directing harmoniously all the social means (whether goods placed in communion or personal work) to the attainment of the end for which the society was set up. It follows that to this extent the society, in electing the administrator, has abdicated its power, and is obliged to submit to administrative decisions. Moreover, because the members' work and labour are part of the social means, the members must in the nature of things *obey* the directions of the administrator. Not to do so would mean impeding him in his office and contradicting the reason for his appointment. I exclude, of course, cases of abuse of office by the administrator. My only aim at present is to consider the *nature* of the administrative office without raising further complications.

119. The concept of society includes rather than excludes the obligation of *obedience* to the society's administrator. If the administrator happens to be a member, this implies another kind of accidental inequality among the members. Such obedience, however, is not *servitude*. There is no question of obeying anyone's *whim*, but of submitting to the *social order* established

by the administrator of the society. This *submission* is undertaken for the sake of the members themselves who are end, not means; it is not done for others, as it would be if obedience were accepted under the title of servitude. *Obedience* to the administrator of the society does not in any way entail making oneself a *means*; on the contrary, no member can be end unless he is *obedient*.

120. If we suppose a society to be established under clear agreement so that all the members know, and desire to carry out, their duty, the concept of society would require, besides the members, only the kind of administrator we have discussed. His task would be to *co-ordinate*, in the best possible way,³² *all the social means to the attainment of the end of the society*. However, the defects to which a society is subject either in its foundation or relative to the dispositions of its members renders other provisions and offices necessary.

121. First, social pacts may be ambiguous. In this case, the members *must* discuss the matter and resolve the equivocation. If this is impossible, they have a moral obligation to agree upon the election of a prudent person with whose help they can reach an amicable conclusion. The office of this prudent person or *judge*, who either alone or with the members determines the interpretation of the social pacts and consequently perfects the establishment of a society, can be permanent or temporary. This office also is of its nature extraneous to society, and demands all the *obedience* necessary to enable the members to reach the friendly agreement for which the office was instituted.

122. We deal next with offices made necessary in a society through the *ignorance* or *improbability* of its members. We are not speaking about *ignorance* concerning the way in which members combine, as they agreed, to attain the end of the society. It is the responsibility of the *administrator* to teach members who

³² Requiring the impossible from people is unjust. Thus it is unjust to claim that the administrator should absolutely speaking work in the best way. No one is able to discover what is absolutely the best. A society can and must require that its administrator exercise his office diligently and earnestly, and in the best possible way, but only relative to his capacity, not absolutely speaking. He should take those decisions which, in good faith, he believes are the best for attaining the social end. The society has no right to require more than this.

are *ignorant* of their duty in this respect. Here the administrator holds implicitly the office of *teacher*; the members in their turn are obliged to acknowledge their own position as his *disciples*. This provides an additional reason for social submission and obedience, not for servitude.

The *ignorance* we wish to discuss concerns the rights and burdens of the members. Such ignorance can cause disagreement amongst them. In this case, they have a *moral obligation* to reach an understanding and an amicable settlement of their differences. If this is impossible, they are then *morally obliged* to choose a *judge* to whom they entrust the entire solution of the case.

I say that they are *morally obliged* to do this because there is a moral obligation upon all human beings 'to arrive at a peaceful *settlement* to their differences without violence.' This moral obligation, besides pertaining to the universal ethic preceding the existence of societies, is also generated by society itself which imposes on its members the duty of combining in the best possible way to attain its end. Every act of anger and violence is directly contrary to this duty.

123. Can the differences arising between an administrator and his society be decided by the same *judge*? This is certainly the case of the administrator who, as a member, takes part in the choice of the judge. It is not the case if the administrator is only a salaried official. Here, the question must be entrusted to a judge chosen by both parties.

124. Let us return to the judge whom the members have chosen to settle their differences. He must be chosen unanimously (unless the contrary was agreed at the foundation of the society). Where a single person is right, his notion is worth more than the mistake of all the others put together.

Consequently, it must never be believed that the judge chosen unanimously is representative of the social majority, and that his decision is equivalent to that of the majority. This would be a great mistake. The social majority is not of itself the judge of the rights and the duties of the members except in the case where such a compromise has come about through an agreement in which all have expressed their own opinions and the judge has been chosen unanimously. In contrary cases, the majority is not the judge. Note that we are dealing consistently with questions

of good faith that occur through ignorance, not malice, on the part of the members. These questions, we maintain, must be decided by a unanimously chosen judge. Moreover, each member has the *moral duty* to agree with the others about a given person for this office, when the office is necessary. The judge, therefore, does not represent the majority, but all members without exception. Better, he represents impersonal reason and justice which all members, governments and societies must *obey*.

The entire society and all the members are in a state of submission to, and harmonious support of this personage entrusted with the termination of dissensions arising in good faith and through ignorance. Again, this does not constitute any kind of servitude.

125. Up to this point, we have dealt with questions and different opinions arising between upright members in good faith, and with the necessity of a *judge* for the good handling of social needs. We have not seen any necessity for material *force* because in our hypothesis the society and its members are unable to oppose the execution of the judge's decisions about ending their social disagreements. Matters change, however, in cases where the members disregard their duty through ill-will or social disobedience. Clearly in the case of *ill-will* (disobedience), the prescriptions of the administrator or the judge will not be carried out spontaneously. Sanctions will be needed; *justice* will have to be sustained by *force*.

126. The uses of social force are: 1. to constrain reluctant members to obey social administration; 2. to constrain them, if necessary, to choose a judge and accept his decision about their disagreements; 3. to constrain them to compensate the society and its members for the damage caused to either through their disregard of social obligations; 4. to safeguard the society from the harm they threaten.

127. But to whom of its nature does the use of force belong? To the society as a whole³³ or to the majority of the members? Generally speaking, not to the society as a whole, nor to the

³³ Note carefully that we are speaking about society in general. There is not the slightest doubt that in our civil societies the use of force belongs to government alone, whose function it is to protect and support justice.

majority or minority of the members, nor to the individual members; it pertains to the party which has justice on its side. If the majority were wrong, and the minority right, the legitimate use of force would, according to social right, rest with the latter. It could happen that a single member were opposed by all the others. If their intention were to inflict injury and injustice on that member, the use of force would pertain to him, not to them [*App.*, no. 2].

Note, however, what has been said: 'In the case of any disagreement between individual members, or between two groups of members, or between a member and the society, or between the society and its government, there is a *moral duty* incumbent upon the parties in the dispute to seek a peaceful solution amongst themselves or, if that is impossible, to submit their views to a judge,³⁴ unanimously chosen, whose decision they will accept.' Any party refusing to take part in setting up this tribunal, which has to decide *de bono et equo* (what is good and equitable), or refusing to accept its decision once the tribunal has been established, is *de facto* guilty of negligence against the social, moral duty we have described. The other party can, therefore, use force against its opponent. Such cases could be foreseen when a society is established, and a stable *chief of social enforcement* could be unanimously appointed.

128. This office would not be established in order to act according to the whim of the members. In such a case, the chief enforcement officer would be a bond-servant of the members, whether united or divided. *Fulfilling a determined office* is not, however, *bond-service*; a *determined office* is constituted by the nature of things, not by human whim.

129. The duties of the chief social-enforcement officer are therefore: 1. to constrain the disagreeing members to take part in the choice of a judge, if no one were chosen when the society was established and some now refuse to make a choice; 2. to constrain the unwilling to carry out what the *judge* decides.

³⁴ It is obvious that 'judge' here refers to an office, not an individual. If the parties did not agree on a single individual, they could each choose one for themselves and form a tribunal. There could also be several subordinate tribunals, for example, tribunals of first instance, appeal and final instance. Whatever method is used in organising the office of judgment, we include it all, for brevity's sake, under the single word 'judge'.

If disagreement arises between the society and its administrator, or the judge, the dispute must be settled peacefully by the choice of another judge, if one has not already been determined at the establishment of the society. Here again the chief enforcement officer should constrain unwilling parties to choose a judge and carry out his decisions.

If, finally, the officer abuses his position, a state of *war* exists between him and the society. There is no doubt that precautions to avoid this catastrophe have to be taken at the establishment of the society. This is the most difficult problem in constituting a society.

130. The judge and the chief social-enforcement officer can be either extraneous to the society, or belong to it. What has been said about the administrator of the society must also be applied to them.

131. Social order, therefore, supposes three primary *offices*: *administrator*, *judge* and *enforcement officer*. All these are free offices, not bond-servants of the society. On the other hand, the society is not a *bond-servant* of any of these office-holders, although it submits to them and is obliged, by its intimate nature, to obey all three, which are as it were the three principal wheels on which it moves. The union of these three primary offices is normally called 'government of society'.

CHAPTER 10

Social right

132. As we have seen, the order or differences between members in a society springs from the intimate nature of the society. *Social order* gives rise to *social right*,³⁵ which we have distinguished from the *right of nature*. The latter deals with rights possible between human beings without reference to any social bond.³⁶ All we have discussed so far shows that social right is made up of two parts.

133. One of these parts determines the rights and duties of the individual members composing the society; the other determines the rights and duties of the government of the society, of the members and of the society itself relative to the government. The first part is rightly called, *private social right*; the second, *public social right*. We could also call them *internal* and *external social right*. I use 'external' because governmental functions are of their nature outside society, as we have seen.³⁷

³⁵ *Civil right*, as the Romans called it, was a part of social right because it regulated the faculties and prerogatives of Roman citizens. — The right of nations was distinct from natural right which presumed the existence of the right or faculty, attributed to every individual, of satisfying his natural needs and instincts, irrespective of his relationship with similar beings. The right of nations, on the other hand, involved relationship with other human beings. This right was also distinguished from civil right, which regulated relationships between people belonging to the same civil society (*civitas*). The right of nations ordered relationships between people who did not belong to the same civil society. Hence the words of the Digest: 'Under the right of nations wars are begun, peoples are separated, kingdoms founded, dominions kept distinct; limits are placed to property, building sites determined, business, buying and selling, *conductio*, obligations are carried out, with the exception of certain things which come under civil right' (bk. 5, t. 1).

³⁶ Chap. 4.

³⁷ The relationship of one society with another does not pertain to social right because the two independent societies are in the state of nature. In the right of nature, therefore, we should distinguish one part devoted to determining the faculties and relationships of individuals who do not form any society, and another which determines the relationships between an individual and a society of which he is not a member, or between two distinct

The second part of social right must also deal with the *titles* that any person, family or moral body has or can have relative to the government of a given society, or with any of the three governmental offices we have indicated previously, that is, administrator, judge and chief of social enforcement.

We have seen that the persons in charge of these offices are not necessarily members of the society itself, although they can be and may posit as their social contribution the work they do to fulfil offices necessary to society. Clearly such persons cannot be deprived of their posts if this was agreed at the establishment of the society, although they can be forced to fulfil them in accordance with their duty. Moreover, without the consent of the other members, these officers cannot renounce their posts for the duration of the society. In cases like these, they would possess a title giving them the right to occupy those posts and to maintain their governmental offices.

134. It is the task of external social right to determine the nature and number of these titles, which are obviously divided into *natural* and *acquired*. *Natural titles*, by which a person can be invested with the government of a society, consist in some action by this person which gives rise to the existence of the members who form the society. There are two principal titles of this kind, creation and generation. Universal society, of which the Creator is head and human beings members, is founded on the *title of creation*; family society is founded on the *title of generation*.

Acquired titles, other than agreements and pacts, are reduced to benevolence on the part of some person with seigniorship over many others, whom he governs as though they formed a society with him. The social bond is thus established between them and him. Previously, the only bond between them was that of ownership and dominion.

External social right also has the task of offering solutions to societies. Sometimes the relationships between an individual and a society, or between two societies, are identical with those of two unassociated individuals; sometimes new cases are presented which cannot be resolved on the sole basis of principles determining individual relationships. Treaties on natural right must, therefore, distinguish the part that regards individuals from that which contains the applications of the same principles to the relationships concerned with moral bodies.

doubts that arise about the quality of the person invested with such rights, about the conditions of investiture, the transmission of rights, substitutions, successions, and the possibility of the division and modification of rights, etc.

CHAPTER 11

Extra-social right

135. Besides social right, we have extra-social right which must not be overlooked. The *natural right* of members of a society when the society actually exists gives rise to *extra-social right*.

To understand this, we have to reflect that a human being does not and cannot cease to be a human being when he becomes a member of some company. He truly possesses *inalienable rights*, inherent to human dignity, such as the right to act virtuously, not to be forced to take part in indecent acts, and so on. This part of natural right is not absorbed by any association. Consequently, no one puts the whole of himself into any society with his fellows, even civil society. He always reserves something for himself, something which remains outside his membership and places him in the state of nature.

There are, therefore, two parts, as it were, in a person who associates with his fellow-human beings: that which makes him a social human being, and that which makes him extra-social. These two parts, which must be carefully distinguished in all human beings born in society, are the foundation of the two kinds of right we have distinguished: *social* and *extra-social right*.

136. It is true that publicists have not made great use of our term *extra-social right*. Nevertheless, in speaking about the limits to which civil law has to be subjected they have always acknowledged the substance of this right. For example, the soundest amongst them agree that religion is outside the sphere of civil government. Let me illustrate the point by reference to Romagnosi:

We must note that the relationships between human beings and the Divinity are of themselves *universal*, *invisible*, *personal* to every individual, and *independent* of every human authority. First, they are *universal*. Whatever position creatures hold, and wherever they find themselves, creatures are under the dominion of the creator; relationships between them are therefore universal. Second, these relationships are *invisible*. God is invisible;

the inner man is also invisible; but essential, religious relationships are present between God and the inner man, as the definition of religion makes clear. Hence, the relationships between human beings and the Divinity are invisible. Third, these relationships are *personal* to each individual. Whether we are dealing with a single individual or with many individuals, united or isolated, religious relationships always affect the individual human being. They are, therefore, personal. An offence on the part of many cannot justify an offence committed by an individual; responsibility before God is always personal. Fourth, I maintain that religious relationships are *independent* of all human authority. In fact, as long as the whole of mankind is incapable both of withdrawing itself from the omnipotence of the Creator and of adding a single millimetre to its own height, human authority can never rule in the place of truly religious relationships, which will always be essentially independent of it. Political jurisdiction, therefore, can only be exacted relative to *external* things which, through human institution or the external exercise of religion, are made to serve some common gathering or society.³⁸

The second motive which I have mentioned as limiting social or political authority was said to arise from rights *native* to human beings and citizens. Here we have to consider the attitudes towards authority which result from these primitive rights. Religion forms part of the moral individual's *ownership*. It must, therefore, enjoy the independence and primitive freedom that forms the justice proper to the social contract. Freedom of opinion and of conscience is a right as sacred as that of ownership, life and fortune. If we then go on to consider the *importance* and power of religious feeling, we find that it

³⁸ Catholics believe that some external things, such as the Sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ, are established by God as part of religion. They believe, moreover, as a dogma, that the Church has received from Jesus Christ the power to make laws and to have them observed. This power is contained in the words: 'He who hears you, hears me.' Catholics, therefore, when united to form civil society, cannot acknowledge in the government of their society any power of derogation over the laws of the Church or its ordinances. In fact, the government of civil society can never have more power than that of the members who unite to form it. These members, as Catholics, profess their submission, as I said, to the laws of the Church, laws to which they are never superior.

constitutes a *good* of the highest order for human beings. It also arouses such feelings that politics would never be able to overthrow it forcibly; indeed, the only result of any attempted usurpation would be to provoke the dissolution of social order through the tyrannical exercise of power. Everyone knows that the moral feeling proper to religion is more robust, sensitive, and independent than any other. The clearest, most constant and universal proof of this are the things done and endured for the sake of religion, and recorded in the annals ancient and modern of every sect. It is obvious that people consider religion as their most precious property.³⁹

Publicists admit, therefore, that some things are excluded from the right proper to civil society. We have to grant the existence of some right other than social right. The existence of these two rights explains the presence of questions with two different aspects and two solutions. Resolving them with the principles either of social or of extra-social right gives rise to a twofold result.

137. There was a time when *social right*, together with the *right of seignior*y with which it was confused, was considered almost the only right, and prevailed. It was used to resolve the most important questions about human communal living. Interested parties took it to such absurd excesses, however, that common sense was shaken and left disdainful. Modern times have seen a reaction, although those whose interests led in other directions went to the opposite extreme by extending extra-social right erroneously and beyond all bounds.

Count De Maistre, in maintaining the natural infallibility of the sovereign,⁴⁰ states a truth according to social right. This principle, because admitted in the French constitution, has to be considered in France as a political enactment also. Thus, the infallibility of the king of France has become a political-social right, that is, a right which draws its origin not only from the nature of society, but also from a national, positive agreement.

³⁹ *Assunto primo della Scienza del diritto naturale*, §36. — The limits of human positive law are dealt with in §30–36, which should be read. — Elsewhere we shall indicate how we differ from Romagnosi in assigning these limits.

⁴⁰ *Du Pape*, bk. 1, c. 1.

The question of the *infallibility* of the sovereign is not altogether distinct from the following query: 'Can the society or its members indict and depose the head of a society?'⁴¹ Clearly, according to social right, a negative answer is required. The teachings of the University of Oxford in 1630,⁴² which spread throughout Europe, are deducted from the principles of social right.

138. Exaggerated social right and total neglect of extra-social right produced two errors: 1. *social positivism* and 2. *legalism*. By *social positivism* I mean the doctrine that acknowledges only *positive* laws emanating from the legislative power of society; by *legalism*, the doctrine making the value of all laws consist in the external forms constituting legality. The two errors are closely related and are found in all political parties favouring monarchy and democracy. There is, in fact, no difference between the error of those who wish to deduce all laws from the will of the head of society (*a rege lex*) and of others who want to acknowledge only the popular will as the fount of laws.⁴³ It is

⁴¹ By 'head of a society' is understood the person to whom the right and duty of governing was attributed at the foundation of the society. This task is regarded as his social contribution.

⁴² Cf. Wood, *History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, p. 341. — The University of Oxford required from its doctoral candidates an oath against entertaining ideas of social doctrine contrary to those of the University. Before this, several authors in the preceding century had taught the same doctrine. Nicholas Hemmingsen, for example, published his *Apodictica methodus de lege naturae* at Leipzig in 1562. — Amongst the many English authors who wrote in the following century, Barclay deserves to be mentioned. He published *De regno et regia potestate*, bks. 1–6, at Paris in the same year as the birth of Charles I. — In 1605, Alberico Gentili published his treatise, *De potestate principis absoluta et de vi civium in principes semper injusta*. — These questions, which are extremely difficult to solve with the principles of simple rational right, are answered fully and sublimely by the supernatural principles of the Gospel.

⁴³ Note that the question of the forms of government is to be distinguished totally from that of absolutism and liberalism. It is a mistake to confuse such different questions. We can see this by reflecting that the most extreme absolutism may be found in any democracy whatsoever. In fact, the principle of absolutism consists in admitting the sovereign will as the unique, supreme fount of laws. It is indifferent in this case if the ruler is an individual, several persons or the whole people. — Friedrich Jarcke's article on absolutism and liberalism deserves to be read on this point. Cf. *Berliner Politischer Wochenblatt*, 1835.

necessary to ascend much higher than human will and any human society to discover the fount of laws which oblige human beings. The source of these laws can only be divine, that is, the eternal reason and God.

The mistake of those who exaggerate social right to the destruction of extra-social right inevitably produces *absolutism*, just as the mistake of those who exaggerate extra-social right to the destruction of social right inevitably produces *ultra-liberalism* and anarchy.

139. I have already noted that *social positivism* and *legalism* were brought to extreme conditions by Protestantism.⁴⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that schools with their roots in the Reformation propounded the most blatant absolutism.

140. A recent author,⁴⁵ an historian of moral and political doctrines, distinguished for his freedom of thought and consequently impartial in the matter, wrote as follows:

Temporal power is absolute! It absorbs all rights, even those of making laws. It absorbs all freedom, even that of violating liberties. Generally speaking, the German

⁴⁴ Cf *Storia comparativa e critica de' sistemi morali* (vol. 12 of my collected works, p. 268 ss.). — The great Hugo Grotius must be distinguished from other Protestant writers in this respect. He was able to avoid the error common to his contemporary co-religionists who reduced all law to positive law, which they made the source of obligation to authority (cf. *De jure B. et P.*, §11, proleg.). Heinecke reproves Grotius, to whom he was greatly inferior, for this great error, as he calls it. 'Here', he says, 'reason abandoned the great man' (*Recitationes in Elem. juris civ.*, bk. 1, tit. 2, §40). — I have shown that Protestantism passed through two periods during which it moved from one extreme to another. In the first period, authority held sway, in the second, individual reason. The movement is easily explained. First, Protestantism shook off the authority of the Church by submitting entirely to that of Scripture. This, however, had no solid foundation. Scripture, left without an authoritative interpreter, was a dead letter. Soon the authority of Scripture was also rejected. An historian of the moral and political teaching of the last three centuries makes the following wise comment: 'It has been said, and is repeated daily, that rationalism or reasoning became part of the social state and part of moral and political teaching along with the principles laid down in 1517. This was wrong, and is wrong by two centuries. Rationalism was not the aim of one side or the other in 1517' (Matter, *Troisième période*, c. 1).

⁴⁵ M. J. Matter, *Histoire des doctrines morales et politiques des trois derniers siècles*, *Troisième période*, c. 6.

schools are fairly moderate in their teachings: the political theory derived from sacred Scripture by Johannes Althusius⁴⁶ contain only the principles of Bossuet's work on the same subject. However, the teaching, contrary to the nature of things, does attribute to rulers authority in sacred matters. This is characteristic of Protestant political theory, and is found in the teaching of all the schools of the Reformation. An examination of the manuals left by this school are sufficient verification of this.

The greatest excesses of the ecclesiastical political theory of Protestantism were found in the English schools under Elizabeth and James I. Oriental teaching and Castilian ambition certainly provide us with more pompous expressions of monarchical omnipotence, but neither of them ever taught anything so positive, clear cut and absolute or gave a more sacred, inviolable foundation to royal authority.

Raleigh dedicated his book to the king (James I), and professed in the dedication: 'The bonds attaching subjects to their king must always be made of iron; those attaching the king to his subjects must be like spiders' webs. Every law which for reasons of self-interest binds a king, also makes lawful its violation by the king'.⁴⁷

The last word on this teaching is found in Hobbes' theory where social right is exaggerated to such an extent that 'he subordinated humanity to society', as our author justly notes.⁴⁸

These doctrines were preceded and followed, as we said, by others which offended by going to the opposite extreme. Like every other political teaching, these also claimed some

⁴⁶ Herborn, 1603.

⁴⁷ This is not new. It was taught long ago, and neatly compressed in Plautus' words:

'Every pact a non-pact; every non-pact a pact.'

⁴⁸ M. J. Matter, *Histoire des doctrines morales et politiques des trois derniers siècles, Cinquième période*, c. 1. — Speaking of the propensity shown by Catholics in the United States towards democracy, Tocqueville concludes his observations as follows: 'Catholicism may dispose the faithful to obedience, but does not prepare them for inequality. The opposite is true of Protestantism, which, generally speaking, draws people much less to equality than to independence' (*De la démocratie en Amérique*, t. 2, c. 9). — One of the most harmful modern errors is that which confuses obedience with servitude. I have distinguished the two ideas in c. 9.

foundation in the principles of justice, without which they had no chance of success. They attempted to take root in extra-social right, which they enlarged without restraint. The result was not extra-social right, but anti-social right.

Those who proposed extra-social right to the detriment of social right were enemies of the monarchical form of government rather than of absolutism. Their own confusion of ideas hid this from them, however. In England they were called *monarchomachists*, that is, monarchy-haters. More recently in France, during the never-to-be-forgotten revolution, they were called revolutionaries, anarchists, ultra-liberals and so on.

141. Social and extra-social right have, therefore, to be reconciled. They are not contradictory or inimical to one another. Each tempers the other by enclosing it within just limits. In this way they perfect, not harm one another. In a word they are, properly speaking, only two parts of a single, complete right which can be defined as 'the right of human beings in society, which springs partly from human nature, which is essentially individual, and partly from the fact of society.'

CHAPTER 12

Morality tempers and reconciles social and extra-social right

142. Un-oiled gears grate and grind, and soon wear out. The same is true of the social machine: the two great gears of social and extra-social right break down very quickly if they are not continually lubricated with the oil of moral obligation and the unguent of virtue. It is principally *perfect virtue*, the teaching of Christianity, that keeps the social machine in repair and moving sweetly. If we consider solely naked right and forget duty, we convert our right into a wrong. The ancient tag, *summum ius, summa iniuria* [there is no greater injury than supreme right], is verified.

143. We need more than knowledge of our rights if we are to learn to act as we should. We must at the same time be fully cognisant of the *limits* of our rights, and the *way* in which they are to be employed. Only morality teaches this. It too often happens that a person with a right allows himself to think he can use it capriciously and without limit. This is an extremely baneful error which produces insubordination and rebellion on the part of subjects in a society, and strong-arm tactics and despotism on the part of government. Subjects say to themselves: 'We have the right to take precautions to preserve our rights as individuals and citizens; we want to be in charge of public administration, and so on.' Government says: 'We have the right to take precautions against harm to society. We can and must, therefore, oversee and manage everything private and secret, sacred and profane, and so on.'

It is immediately obvious that there can be no mutual confidence, harmony, peace and collective security between individuals in society and its government and administration unless such extended, undetermined rights are given precise, determined limits by good faith, equity and goodness — in other words, by duty and moral virtues. The intervention of *morality* is absolutely necessary; its authoritative *veto* has to forbid various parties the use, or rather abuse, of their cold, coarse rights.

144. Morality first establishes the supreme safeguard: 'No one has the right to make bad use of his own right.' It is not sufficient for individuals or even government to vaunt a precautionary right as an excuse for doing what they please, without limit or supervision. Both individuals and government must always use their precautionary right 'well, and as little as possible.' Every unnecessary enactment or restriction entails overstepping one's limits; it is a real injustice and brings into being that *summum jus* which is indeed *summa injuria*. Only morality can teach this good faith and moderation in the use of one's own right; without morality no peaceful society, or even society, is possible.

145. Some other examples will help to show the necessity of morality if social advancement is to proceed smoothly and harmoniously.

146. Government is composed of people who, as human, are all fallible. Now, it is true that individual members of society have the right to a government which administers public affairs zealously and with all the prudence of which those in charge of government are capable. Nevertheless, to claim that government possesses real infallibility would be a genuine lack of discretion and indeed a real injustice in society. There are, however, individuals who demand their right to be governed well without considering the limitations to this right. They have no difficulty in laying claim to the impossible by requiring unerring government, and refusing to tolerate inculpable mistakes made through the inevitable limitation of governmental views.

Only virtue, that is, equity and benignity, can temper such a *summum jus*, and limit the unjust pretensions of subjects.

Christianity established one of the most social of all possible maxims when it made *charity* an obligation towards all, and in particular towards those who govern society; when it forbade rash judgement; when with respect and love towards governmental power, it taught people always to presume as well as possible of government actions; and when, in cases of doubt, it obliged subjects to renounce their own right generously and prefer not to offend others' right rather than exercise their own.

147. The same kind of considerations can be made about governments, which must also acknowledge their own fallibility.

By concentrating on their own authority to govern and administer, instead of loving justice without limit, they lay claim to *summum jus*. Their argument runs as follows: 'We have the right to administer and govern, and can therefore administer and govern as we want without ever being censured for what we do.'

Christian morality, however, suggests a totally different reasoning. Starting from the principle we have indicated, 'No one has the right to use his own right badly', it shows the obligation incumbent upon rulers of administering and ruling as well as possible without refusing any means that can lead to the exercise of good, just government. They must keep their own fallibility firmly in mind, be ready to receive enlightenment from any source, and prompt to discuss willingly and loyally those points where the individuals they govern sincerely feel offended. If these individuals have probable reasons in their favour, social administration is bound by moral duty to settle every question peacefully and promptly through arbitrators of proven integrity and universal trust. And neither of the parties must act violently.

148. These reflections show the desirability in treatises of ethics of a distinct place for the moral duties on which society rests. These duties would spread amongst all members the benevolence and trust that form the best guarantee for the conservation and prosperity of the social body.

CHAPTER 13

Invisible and visible society

149. We must examine more closely the nature of society in general.

Human beings, the basic elements of society, are made up of two parts: one internal and invisible, the other external and visible. Similarly, there are two parts to every human society, the invisible and the visible, the internal and the external.

Two kinds of bonds, internal and invisible, external and visible, correspond to these two parts of human society. The former draw together what Leibniz called 'the republic of souls'; the latter bind together external society, which falls under our senses.

We must now explore the relationship and the connection between *invisible* and *visible societies*, which are as it were the soul and body of human society.

150. In order to do this, we first concentrate on the elementary principles of society, that is, the human individual, and on the union and correspondence which exists between the spirit and body forming the individual.

The exterior part of the human being, that is, the animal body, has a twofold relationship with the interior part, that is, the spirit: 1. an *active relationship*, which consists in being able to manifest through external signs the impressions and modifications of the internal part of the soul; 2. a *passive relationship*, which consists in being suitable for receiving the impressions of the external things of bodies, and transmitting them to the internal part. This twofold relationship can also be observed between external and internal society.

External society must manifest internal society, and at the same time convey to the latter all that takes place exteriorly.

151. We must pause now to consider briefly both relationships, active and passive, between the two societies, visible and invisible. We examine first the active, then the passive relationship.

The *active relationship*, by which the external aspect of a

society becomes a truthful and faithful reflection of the internal dispositions of souls, must be considered as a quality necessary to the perfection of human society. It can even be called the *constitutive law* of human society. Indeed, if a society were simply external, it would not differ in any way from a union of inanimate, mobile things; if the external presentation were false, only an apparent society would exist — it would be a fact, but a fact without right, which of itself is always nothing.

Note that human beings consent to live in society only because they suppose, generally speaking, that its exterior corresponds to the interior of those with whom they live and associate. The very people who delude themselves about making their fortune by deception and lying are in the end victims of their own delusion; they know very well that society is founded upon the law of truthfulness. If this were not the case, it would be impossible to deceive anyone; the act would not be accepted as a manifestation of the truth. It would, therefore, 'be impossible to imagine an external society unless its members held that everything external possessed of its nature a real capacity for manifesting what is internal'. Although degrees of mutual diffidence are possible in a society, mistrust cannot increase beyond certain limits. At some point the society would self-destruct; it would be rendered impossible.

We must therefore acknowledge the following as a constitutive law of human society: 'External society must be representative of the internal society of its members.' Consequently, 'external society will be better constituted in so far as the external bonds between human beings are sincere, and faithfully correspond with similar bonds or affections of spirit.' On the other hand, 'if the external, material part of society does not reflect something internal and spiritual, the society's appearance is only a chimera; it cannot last. It is contrary to nature that fiction should endure; it is a vain shadow without a body, a fragile canvas sketched without consistency and solidity because it has no truth.'⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The internal bonds of society are: 1. rights, 2. social affections. The first are ideal, the latter, real. The external bonds of society are: 1. external laws and all the external acts relating to government and governed; 2. ways of life. External bonds correspond to rights, and produce their effect chiefly in the order of intellectual things; ways of life correspond to affections, and

CHAPTER 14

Continuation

152. The *constitutive law* of human society, as we have called it, has its source in the *active* relationship between external and internal society; similarly the *law perfecting* society, and hence the principle of social administration, has its source in what we have called the *passive* relationship. According to us, this relationship consists in the aptitude exterior society has for receiving impressions from things outside itself and transmitting them to interior society, that is, to souls. It is clear, however, that even if external union amongst human beings were not deceptive, but actually responded to their internal union, we could affirm only the existence of a society, not of a good society. If a society is to be good, it must have a good end, and be produce their effect in the order of real things.

Certain civil societies are furnished with far fewer external bonds than others. Examples of these are federations of States which constitute a nation composed of two or more nations. The federal government's action is limited to certain general objects, and persons in different States have no common way of life. The author of *De la démocratie en Amérique* rightly says of the government of the United States: 'The Union is an ideal nation that does not exist except in the spirits composing it. Only the intelligence can uncover its extent and its limits' (t. 2, c. 8, p. 281, 2nd ed.).

As we shall see in the following chapter, exterior society forms or sometimes maintains the interior. If however a way of life and forceful government is lacking, internal society is weakened. For example, as long as the citizens of Rome could be contained within the walls of the city, communal living and a common way of life was a source of unity in their interior society. When Roman citizenship was extended to all subject peoples, the city (*civitas*) became something ideal, that is, something embraced by mind and law, and not enclosed by external walls. Montesquieu offers the following reflections on this extension of Roman citizenship: 'When the peoples of Italy became citizens of Rome, every city brought in its wake its own characteristics, its own interests and its own dependence upon some great protector. The divided city-state no longer formed a single whole. Being a citizen of Rome was now a kind of fiction; the 'citizen' no longer had the same magistrates, temples, walls, gods, or burial places as Rome, nor did he look upon Rome with the same eyes, or have the same love for the fatherland; feeling for Rome existed no longer' (*Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains, et de leur décadence*. Chap. 9).

good internally. As we know, external society is only a simple representation and effect of internal society; the whole substance of society is internal and lies within the human spirit. This is true not only for the moral goodness of society, but for every perfection, even eudaimonological, which it may have.

153. For human beings, whether good or bad, there is never anything that is merely external good. It is wrong to think the contrary. Everything good for human beings must be *felt* as good for them. It must fall within their feeling, which is never external but always totally internal. We must not mislead ourselves here: external things can indeed cause pleasing sensations, but only pleasant feelings themselves (we take 'pleasant' in its widest extension) are finally the good that we draw from external things. All actual, human good without exception is, properly speaking, internal. Outside such good, causes of good exist, but not good itself. These true, occasional causes of good, which are outside human beings, pertain to what we have called 'external society'. We have to say, therefore, that external society must be directed at every turn to the amelioration and perfection of internal society, within which lies the proper end and, as we said, the life, spirit and form of societies.

154. The suitability of external society for influencing the amelioration and perfection of internal society is precisely what we have called the *passive relationship* between the two societies; as we said, it forms the law perfecting society and the principle according to which it should be administered. The same thing can be observed in individuals even before we see it in societies. The passive relationship between what is external and internal in the human being constitutes the means which develops and perfects what is internal. The spirit's faculties develop by means of the perception of objects provided as material for internal, spiritual operations by the organs of the exterior senses.

In the same way, as the signs of external things transmitted to the spirit become the occasion for perfecting the spirit, so external things can also become the occasion for the spirit's deterioration. This occurs in the individual and in society, and underpins the need for a guide who will direct to a good end the communication between exterior and interior. In society, this constitutes the office of administrator.

155. External society wisely administered and conducted perfects internal society by communicating to it three kinds of good: 1. it assists internal society (a society of souls) in learning how to make use of its own forces and powers; 2. it provides internal society with objects that help it to pursue its perfection; 3. finally, it provides internal society with objects (persons) through whom each member of the internal society somehow expands his existence. The first two services rendered by external to internal society dispose or help to perfection the individual members who already form a society; the objects that the *society of bodies* offers to the *society of spirits* bring about the aggregation and special perfection of internal society.

156. In this way, external society provides the *principle*, the *means* and the *end* of internal perfection. The principle are spirits, whose faculties are developed by external society; the means are real objects, many of which are furnished by external society as steps which elevate the spirit; the end are persons, the society itself, which through external relationships is constantly extended and enriched as new ties arise capable of bonding intelligences and hearts.

157. We must now briefly consider external society under its three relationships with internal society. We shall see: 1. how it develops human faculties; 2. how it helps to remedy moral weakness in human beings; finally, 3. how it extends the nature of human beings by binding them to one another with close, internal ties.

158. External society develops the intellectual, spiritual and bodily operations of human beings who are indefinitely perfectible in all these parts of human nature. However, because corporeal actions depend upon affections, and affections upon opinions held by the intellect (by the practical reason), we shall limit ourselves to considering the impetus received by the intellect from external society, the principle of all other human movement.

159. Experience shows that we receive all our faculties enclosed, as it were, in a seed where they can do nothing of themselves, even the tiniest act, until they are awakened by objects different from ourselves which stimulate the organs of sensation and our other animal powers. An immense difference

exists, therefore, between the state of an already developed person, who has attained dominion over his own operations, and that of the same person in those first moments when he possessed his powers but, having no dominion over them, was unable to use them. We have to note carefully this distinction between *powers* and the *ability* to use them. Our powers, at least our principal powers, are innate, but the ability to use them is acquired through use under the influence of external stimuli. Thus, the *ability to use our own powers* is acquired a little at a time in accordance with the use we make of them.

160. For example, however we wish to use our mind it is always necessary for us to be passive in the beginning; some idea must first present itself so that our train of thought may be initiated. Only in the presence of this idea are we able to relinquish other, successive trains of thought dependent upon the idea, or freely second them.

In fact, when we want to reason, we first have to know what we wish to think about.

But the subject of our thought is either given to us or chosen by us. If it is given, what we have said must be true, namely, that the first idea is presented to us without any free choice on our part. If, however, we choose it for ourselves, our choice must fall on something that we already know, something already present to us. Some cognition present to the intellect must, therefore, precede every choice and decision that we make about using our intellectual faculties. It is true, of course, that one series of reasoning causes another, but various series of reasonings connected as causes and effects can be regarded as a single act of reasoning in the midst of which stands some first idea not called into being or chosen by us, but coming into our mind of itself, spontaneously. Its origin certainly depends on the impressions we receive from external objects.

Even more important than the impression of other external factors is contact with others from which also we receive the occasions and beginnings of our first mental processes, and hence a greater ability for moving quickly with our thought from one object to another. External society, therefore, provides internal society with its *principle* of growth.

161. Granted the *principle* of development of our human faculties, we must now examine the *means* through which we

arrive at transporting our act of intellect freely from one object to another. This means is speech, which we receive from external society.

The first objects to present themselves to us are real, feelable objects. Our first acts therefore must pertain to the faculty of *perception* and of *full ideas*.⁵⁰ The object of an act is, when attained, a resting place for the act. All that the mind can do, therefore, however many real objects present themselves to us, is to remain fixed in contemplation of one or more of them, without proceeding further. If these objects were no longer present to the senses, we would have only their images, the full ideas, and thoughts about them in the treasure of our fantasy and memory. These consequences of perception would then fall quite quickly into a state of inadvertence, from which we could not revive them without some casual movement of the brain or some new, external impression upon us.

In this state, we find no reason permitting our mind to move as it pleases from one object to another. Because each object has its own individual, separate existence from that of others, the mind would rest in each of them or in many as if they were one, but it could not pass freely from one to another, or from one collection of ideas to another. It is impossible to maintain that such a passage could come about through the relationships binding these objects together. Relationships can be known only through the faculty of abstraction, which would not be developed in the human state we are discussing.

Nor could it ever be developed without speech. Our faculty of abstraction consists in considering an object not in its entirety but in one of its simple qualities, recognised as discoverable also in innumerable other objects. Our intellect, if it is to pass from the object contemplated as a whole to concentrate separately on some particular quality in the object, needs the ability to move itself freely. If, however, the abstract idea presupposes that we have a capacity for moving the intellect from one object of our attention to another, the idea is not sufficient to explain the capacity it presupposes.

162. When, however, we receive speech from society, we immediately acquire dominion over our own intellect. Speech

⁵⁰ Cf. *NE*, 2: 509.

contains words indicating *abstract ideas*, and words indicating *full ideas*. The second group enables us to acquire the ability to recall objects as we please, even when they are no longer present to our senses and mind. The first group enables us to be stimulated to advert exclusively to the particular qualities of things and so to form abstractions for ourselves. Having formed *abstractions*, we know immediately the *logical relationships* which pertain to the abstractions. And relationships are the paths, as it were, along which the mind can pass from one thing to another.

163. The mind becomes master of its thoughts through speech; human freedom is born. It is true that the mind still has to receive the principle of movement from some idea that has entered thought almost casually, as it were, but once this has occurred it is words as such which open to us the paths of thoughts along which they enable us to travel.

164. It may be objected of course that the intellect cannot pass from a sign to the thing designated before the formation of the idea of relationship; *sign* and *designated* are relative terms. The difficulty vanishes if we consider that the passage of our attention from the word to the thing does not come about because we know the relationship between the sign and that which is designated. The word is a physical stimulus which, in striking the ear and arousing sound, simultaneously calls our intellectual attention to think of the harmony between that sound and other sounds, and between that sound and the objects of all the other senses. At the same time our intellect interprets all these objects in their context.

A series of sounds forming a discourse presents our ear with what we may call a rational sensation, that is, with a sensation modified by fixed rules in harmony with all the objects which we perceive contemporaneously and successively. The intellect perceives the order that contemporaneous sensations have with the word, and that order explains to it the word itself. Finally, the word draws our intellectual attention to what it signifies, even when this word alone is present to the intellect.

We may clarify this fact by recalling that sense and intellect are both capable of repeating easily acts which they have carried out on other occasions. Consequently, a single part of an object already seen is sufficient stimulus to recalling the entire object.

Similarly, the sound of a word recalls objects which, on other occasions, were perceived together with the sound.⁵¹

165. It is through the word, therefore, that we succeed in moving our attention as we please over a multitude of objects; it is through the word that we acquire mastery over our faculties, and make ourselves masters of our affections (which depend upon the objects we contemplate) and free rulers of our external actions. But where does the word come from?

It comes from society, as we said. This sacred deposit is preserved and communicated by tradition from generation to generation. We owe to society the *means* of development of our various faculties and of all our perfection.

Speech, in so far as it is furnished with lofty, general, abstract ideas, furnishes matter for prolonged thought. The state of various languages explains in great part the degrees of development of different nations. My own opinion is that this has not been sufficiently considered by historians of humanity's gradual growth in civilisation.

On the other hand, speech follows the state of the society which uses it. This becomes more apparent as we consider speech closer to the origins of nations.

166. We now have to consider the second advantage of human society which, as we said, consists in the support it provides in the face of human, moral weakness. This support consists in education, good example and various stimuli to carrying out social good. We have already seen that *social good* is at least a rudiment of *universal good*. In speaking about the common society in which nature draws all human beings together, and which has no special aim but the general good of humanity, we find that our uncertain, hesitant intellect finds at least temporary, provisional rest for its doubts. Here it can remain at rest and draw strength to undertake more substantial reasoning. The heart also, tired and oppressed in its effort to practise virtue, finds assistance in its labours through the society of others; it hopes, and comforts itself by means of honest, temporary amusements and swift reward for its merits.

Society, therefore, is the mistress of human beings, to whom she presents the principles of perfection, and whom she helps

⁵¹ Cf. *NE*, 2: 521–522; *AMS*, 439–468.

and encourages in the use of these principles. Only rarely are persons capable of standing on their own feet and pursuing good without the continual moral assistance administered by society, the means through which the majority of people obtain the perfection of which they are capable. This becomes more obvious when we consider the means that every society possesses for restraining socially bad members, and defending from injury and harm those who are socially good.

167. Finally, society extends our existence. This is its third benefit.

To the extent that we all are bound together, the feeling of one's own forces is strengthened in each of us; the habitual feeling of existence is augmented through the existence of all other humans to whom the individual feels himself bound. This feeling of a more expansive life, extended to a great degree beyond self, becomes so attractive and dear to the human heart that the pleasure of living in other persons overcomes and sometimes renders weak or insensible the feeling of one's own individual life, of one's own interior nature and of the invisible objects within. Good then degenerates into evil. Often we give ourselves excessively to what is external; internal factors become extremely weak, external enjoyments extremely strong.

People think nothing of what is within, everything of what is without. This is the only explanation of the common, material error which places all human happiness in attending to the limitation, multiplicity and attractiveness of external bonds, and in abstracting totally from the interior state of the spirit. The opposite also occurs: the few who love a perfect, truly sublime state consider an excessive number of accidental, exterior bonds as superfluities impeding their eagerness to press on to lofty, pure virtue, and distracting them from the ennoblement they could gain from solitary, sublime thoughts.

168. But we do not want to speak here about such exalted and extraordinary souls. We simply want to draw attention to what we said about the way in which human beings bind themselves through natural relationships to *persons* and *things* around themselves, and thus expand their own existence by forming for themselves a circumference of objects belonging to them almost in the way their own bodies do. Chief amongst these objects are the persons with whom they form society.

Thus society itself becomes end for every human being, not because our end must serve society, but because society and human beings become a single thing, just as the spirit and the body surrounding it become a single thing. This explains why a father feels he is defending himself when he defends his own family. In its members he does not see beings distinct from himself, but vital parts of his own existence. His reason and his heart carry him into all those parts and make him live in them. In the same way, every member of more extended societies forms with his fellows (in so far as he is united with them — the work of his intelligence) a single existence, a single moral person, for whom he desires and obtains all that he desires for himself, and from which he distances all that he distances from himself [*App.*, no. 3].

Book Two

THE END OF SOCIETY

[INTRODUCTION]

169. In Book 1, I showed the difference between society and material aggregation.

The union of many material beings in the same place is not sufficient to constitute a society; if it were, a heap of stones would be a society.

170. Nor is union between merely feeling beings sufficient. These can be united not only in the same place, but also by sharing pleasant and painful sensations, and by instincts which move them to seek pleasure and avoid pain. This, however, is simply *gregarious living*. The instincts which impel animals to live together are essentially individual; animal union lacks a common, willed end, and although a collective good, constituted by the sum of the individual goods, may result from it, the individual animal neither intends nor proposes this collective good for itself. The inclinations of each are directed by the wisdom of nature for the good of all.

171. Finally, not even a group of human beings, no matter how big, can be called 'society'. Society requires intellectual and moral bonds. Its members must know and be conscious of a common end; they must desire this end and freely choose the means to achieve it. Consequently, the social good to which the members tend is not simply a collection of individual goods but a truly common good, unique in its concept and shared in by each individual. Intelligence, therefore, is necessary for society which, as we saw, also presupposes some right, some justice and certain moral virtues. In brief, society is, as Cicero said, 'an association formed by an agreement in right and by mutual helpfulness.'⁵²

172. Hence, the teaching given in the previous book about the nature of society spontaneously provides the teaching about the end of society. I will now present that teaching as clearly as I can.

⁵² 'The State is the reality of a nation. But not every association of a multitude is a nation, only the association formed by consent of right and by mutual helpfulness' (*De Rep.*, bk. 3).

CHAPTER 1

The end of every society must be a true, human good

173. If society were simply an aggregation of bodies, we would have to seek its end in some good relative to bodies. But the union of mere bodies does not form society; we need a union of intelligent souls. It is clear, therefore, that the social end has to be sought in intelligent souls rather than in bodies. As we have seen, the corporeal, external part of society must be considered the means for perfecting the internal, spiritual part, where, properly speaking, the human being exists, and where the delight and perfection of which he is susceptible resides. The final end of every society must therefore be found in this internal part.

174. We begin our discussion with some universal, certain truths so that the consequences we draw derive directly from clear principles admitted by human common sense.

No one can possibly doubt that human beings act only for good, or that they turn to evil because in their search for good they are deceived by appearances. Thus society cannot be formed even by human beings without their aiming at some good through united effort. The contrary would be absurd; to say that human beings associate to obtain what they see as evil would be meaningless.

175. It is also clear that if human beings err about the good they seek, and find real evil instead of real good, their action is wasted and valueless, or has only a negative value. Let us apply this concept to society. If society does not lead us to good, to some real, true good, but deceives us under the appearance of good so that we obtain what is truly evil, it becomes useless and harmful to us by betraying its natural, necessary end; it no longer has any value, or at most a negative value.

176. Finally, there is another evident principle as important for the scientific study of society as the previous principles. It states that the true good of any human society, must be *human good*, good which is definitely good for *human nature* and in

harmony with all its needs, so that human nature entirely approves and desires it.

Anything agreeable to a lesser faculty of human nature but rejected by human nature as a whole could not be called human good, good for human nature. Rather, judged as rejected by the totality of human nature, it would have to be classed as evil.

177. We must not make the mistake of determining true good solely by considering the relationship between an object and one or other of our human faculties, nor by conforming to opinion; the solid judgment of the *whole* of our nature must be accepted. Cicero's teaching is particularly relevant: 'The whim of opinion evaporates with time; the judgment of nature is confirmed'⁵³

178. The foundation of all sound teaching, therefore, must be the following simple principle: 'Every society, whatever its nature and form, must ultimately tend to true human good.' This is required by the very *essence* of society; without it the *essential end* of any association is lacking. Such an association would have no *de jure* nor *de facto* existence.

⁵³ *De N. D.*, 2, 2.

CHAPTER 2

Human good

179. It has rightly been said that ‘the greatest wisdom is finally reduced to distinguishing good from bad.’⁵⁴ The principles established in the preceding chapter, if they are to be rightly applied, call for all this wisdom. The fact is that the difficulties encountered in such an application depend on our passions, which prevent a great number of us from consenting with simplicity to the immediate lights furnished by the intellect. If the spirit were pure, and unaffected by mistaken, blind appetites, it would not be difficult for us to know our *true good* which, although always desired by our nature, is often rejected by our will. Clear, distinct teaching about good and evil does, however, comfort and assist upright nature in its battle with seductive passions and the will they have misled. Otherwise, we would have to despair of the salvation of mankind.

180. We have to consider, therefore, as foremost in the natural constitution of society, that ‘society must tend to true human good.’ Before we can do that, we need to investigate true human good, the essential aim of every society. We shall try to do this now.

181. Human beings are subjects furnished with various powers, to each of which corresponds a species of good. Anthropology shows that these powers have a relative order which in its turn is mirrored by the relative order of the various goods proper to the different powers. This order is founded in nature which, therefore, is not satisfied if the order of good is not maintained.⁵⁵ The total appetite of human nature is one thing; the appetite of its individual powers is another. Each of these specifically distinct powers tends to a species of good proper to itself. Human nature taken as a whole tends to the entire order of good, and remains unsatisfied as long as this order is violated in any way whatsoever.

182. The order of these powers and of the good which

⁵⁴ Sen., *Ep.* 71.

⁵⁵ Cf. *AMS*, 644–649.

corresponds to them is again indicated in anthropology which shows that all human powers, and the appetites accompanying them, are reduced finally to two classes: subjective and objective powers, and appetites for subjective and objective good.⁵⁶ Subjective good includes all that delights us, but only relative to the pleasure it produces in us; it has no relationship to the nature or intrinsic worth of the pleasurable object, independently of our own benefit from it. Clearly the power of feeling can enjoy only subjective good.

However, we also possess the gift of intelligence through which we know the value of things that are neither pleasurable nor advantageous to us. We are able to consider these things as pleasurable and good for others or for themselves. This value, which our understanding enables us to know in things, is not measured by their relationship to us. We do not reflect on our own interest but on objective good. It is the nature of our knowledge-faculty to judge things disinterestedly, that is, as they are, not as they are of use to us. In this way, we esteem them according to truth, not according to the passion proper to self-love.

183. Our essentially disinterested knowledge of things becomes the basis of morality as soon as it is considered in relationship to the will.⁵⁷ Our free will is evil if, seduced by self-love, it lays siege to our knowledge with the aim of falsifying it, or attempts to corrupt the natural judgments of our understanding. The will, if it remains firm and unassailable against the attractions of subjective love, is good. It lends the practical support of its power to the law of our understanding by permitting our intelligence to judge according to the truth it perceives, and by taking pleasure in the understanding's right judgments. We feel a pressing urgency that our will be good, not evil. We want it to adhere without equivocation (and even to the extent of sacrificing all our subjective appetites) to the judgments the understanding makes when left to itself.

184. The intellect and will, therefore, are objective powers. All entia according to the degrees of their objective worth, that is, according to the degrees of their entity, are the objective good

⁵⁶ Cf. *AMS*, 521–566.

⁵⁷ Cf. *PE*, 69–113.

proper to these powers. The will that adheres to the things presented to it by the intellect with degrees of delectation proportionate to the degrees of entity in things is subject to two effects: 1. it experiences a natural, pure, noble delight which depends for its intensity on the quality of the will's adherence to the known entity and on the greatness of what is known; 2. it is approved by the intellect, which judges that the will, by operating in this way, acts well and in conformity with its nature and with truth. These two effects may be called *moral delight* and *moral approval*.

185. Moral approval has a nature different from delight, but a new delight, added to the first, arises from the approval. Its effect is to redouble the initial approval and complete it. Human nature desires this delight and approval; we call such desire, which is absolute and superior to all other desires and appetites, *moral desire*. Human nature remains unsatisfied as long as this desire is unsatisfied, even if its fulfilment requires the sacrifice of all the desires and appetites of its other powers.

186. The final order to which human nature tends intrinsically takes account of the order of our powers and the *order of the good* corresponding to each of these powers. It aims at ensuring that objective powers prevail over subjective, that objective good prevails over subjective good, that the judgments made by the intellect are upright, that the will loves upright judgments, and that the only rule directing the operations of the will is that of these upright judgments. In a word, the order of human good requires that first place be given to the truth furnished by the intellect and to virtue on the part of the will. Every other good that is incompatible with virtue has to cede to it.

At this point we can come to know and define *human good*.

187. From what has been said, we can understand that 'true human good lies only in moral virtue, and in all those kinds of good that are compatible with virtue.' We have to conclude, therefore, that 'whenever good of any kind is incompatible with virtue, it ceases to be human good because no human good excludes virtue.'

188. If we now analyse *virtue* according to the description we have just given, we shall find that in its origin it manifests three elements which, with the virtuous act, come to light as a single

body. First, good will feels truth's authoritative demand for adherence, and surrenders to it. Then the will draws *delight* from its adherence. In the third place, it feels that its adherence is worthy of approval, and does indeed come to be approved by the intellect.

The elements found in every virtuous act of the will are therefore: 1. voluntary adherence to entia according to the authority of truth; 2. delight in the adherence; 3. approval. Properly speaking, the first of these three elements constitutes *virtue* in its essence. The other two elements are *eudaimonological*, that is, components of happiness necessarily joined with virtue.

The very origin of virtue, therefore, contains an intimate bond joining it with *happiness*.⁵⁸ Moreover, the constitutive elements of human happiness are seen to be contemporaneously in the virtuous act. In other words, we see that happiness must result from two elements, *delight* and *approval*. The enjoyment of delight alone would certainly not be sufficient to make a person happy. However great our delight, it could never fully satisfy us if our rational judgment disapproved of it and reproved it as evil. If, however, we do enjoy something and our reason approves our enjoyment, human nature finds true contentment and full satisfaction in the delight. This approval can never be absent when the enjoyment is a consequence of the virtuous act itself.

189. We now know that *human good*, the essential aim of every society, 'resides in virtue and the eudaimonological appurtenances of virtue, and in general in every good in so far as it is connected with virtue.' We can conclude, therefore, that:

1. Every society whose aim is contrary to virtue is illegitimate because its aim is contrary to the essence of society.

2. Every law of society is invalid if, or in so far as, it prevents members from achieving virtue. Without virtue there is no human good, the end for which society was instituted.

⁵⁸ We have spoken at length about this important bond in *Storia comparativa e critica de' sistemi morali*, c. 8, art. 3, §7, and in *AMS*, 890–905.

CHAPTER 3

Continuation: human good is not isolated pleasure but contentment

190. What has been said requires us to distinguish between the *pleasures* we enjoy and *contentment* of spirit. This distinction is very important for eudaimonological science.

All our faculties have their own *particular pleasures*, just as they all have their development and perfection; *contentment*, however, pertains only to our *whole* human nature. We can *have* many pleasures but only *be* simply content. We are either content or not with our state; there is no middle term.

Objects which directly or indirectly cause pleasure are called *goods*. Thus possessions are called good because they are things used by us either to give us pleasure, or to obtain what can give us pleasure — in ‘pleasure’ I include the satisfaction of any need whatsoever and the cessation of pain.

191. In human happiness, therefore, to which every human association tends and must tend, three things have to be carefully distinguished: *pleasures*, *contentment* and *goods*. It would be a great mistake to take one for the other; true *human good* is not found in pleasures nor in goods but in *contentment* [App., no. 4].

192. We must note here that the error which human beings make in seeking happiness does not lie in choosing something different from *contentment* as the aim of their activity. We all seek *contentment* and cannot do otherwise; our nature itself directs us to do so. People desire to possess a great number of *goods* and are always seeking new *pleasures* precisely because they hope to find *contentment* in the good things they accumulate and in the pleasures they enjoy. If they do not find it, their error does not consist in not wanting it or not looking for it, but in looking for it where it is not, in choosing the wrong means for obtaining it, and finally in their ignorance of the nature and real conditions of the very contentment they seek.

This confirms what we have said: true human good, which

lies in the contentment of human nature, is the essential *de iure* and *de facto* end of society. Society is always the action of individual, associated human beings who, in their actions, can only look ultimately for the contentment of their nature. If they seem to be looking for something other than this, they do so because they think it a means of contentment. Thus, the intention ultimately of all who associate (an intention determined by nature) can only terminate by means of their association in the procurement of what placates and contents them, or at least contributes to their appeasement and contentment.

193. From these simple but very solid truths we draw the following conclusions:

1. All societies which, instead of drawing people to true contentment, distance them from it, contradict the will of all their members, even when they erroneously form and promote the societies.

2. When the members' will, even though apparently unanimous, is directed to something clearly contrary to human contentment, due to error or the heat of passion, it is not truly social and cannot constitute any law.

194. This last consequence is of the greatest importance. It means that even in democratic States governed by the principle that the people is sovereign and their will constitutes the law, the wisest politicians do not consider themselves obliged to obey, but to resist the unpredictable caprices of the masses. They accept as true law of their legislator-people only the constant, natural will tending to true social good, because no people truly and continually desires evil for itself.⁵⁹

195. All that we have said can be illustrated by the undeniable authority of Alexander Hamilton, one of the most influential contributors to the Constitution of the United States of America. The opinions of this famous man relative to our discussion can be read in *The Federalist*, the

⁵⁹ Careful reflection on this kind of conduct of eminently virtuous and wise people in democratic States clearly indicates how completely contrary to nature it is to consider human beings as politically equal. It must always remain true that in every form of government without exception there are individuals who *de jure* and *de facto* modify the desires of the popular majority.

newspaper published in America by three great men⁶⁰ when the project for the federal Constitution of the United States was still before the people. I think it valuable to quote a rather long passage from this newspaper⁶¹ which will greatly help to clarify the matter:

I know there are those who think that the executive power could not be commended more than when it bends slavishly to the desires of the people and the legislature. It seems to me however that they have crude ideas about the object of all government and the means for obtaining public prosperity.

When public opinion has been formed by reason and has matured — (we should carefully note this condition laid down by Hamilton for the authority of the people's will), it guides the conduct of those to whom the public entrust their affairs. The result is the establishment of a republican constitution. But republican principles do not require us to be moved by every little wind of popular passion, nor eagerly obey every passing impulse given to the masses by clever men who praise the prejudices of the masses in order to betray the interests of the masses.

Generally speaking, it is true that the people desire only the public good. However they are often mistaken in their search for it. If someone told them that they were always a sound judge of the means for national prosperity, their good sense would cause them to despise such adulation. They know only too well by experience that they are sometimes mistaken. In fact they marvel that they are not mistaken more often, because they are relentlessly subjected to the subtleties of parasites and sycophants; they are ensnared continuously by ambitious people whose only support is their ambition; they are daily deceived by the clever manoeuvres of people who undeservingly have their confidence, or by those who seek their trust rather than make themselves worthy of it.

When the people's *real* interests are in opposition to their desires, those responsible for these interests have the duty to combat the error of which the people are the victim, and give them time to consider and rethink the matter in cold blood. A nation saved in this way from the

⁶⁰ John Jay, Hamilton and Madison.

⁶¹ No. 71.

fatal consequences of its own errors has on more than one occasion been happy to erect monuments to those who in serving the nation have exposed themselves, with generosity and courage, to its displeasure.

196. This very true teaching depends entirely on the principle I have established, namely, that the will of a society or of its members is only apparent, not real, every time it fails to tend to social good, that is, more generally speaking, to true human good and contentment.

CHAPTER 4

Continuation: two elements of contentment, one necessary, the other willed

197. One of the most profound and important questions posed by ancient moralists concerned the power of the *will* over human happiness. The two opposing schools of Epicureans and Stoics gave extreme solutions. The Epicureans denied the will any power to produce happiness or, rather, entirely neglected the influence exercised by the will in making human beings happy. The Stoics, on the other hand, gave the will total power to make human beings happy.

The reason for this difference of opinion was that the Epicureans made all good consist in *pleasure*. Pleasure, at least physical pleasure, from which the general notion of pleasure was taken, is produced necessarily in human beings according to the laws of animality and not by the action of the will. The Stoics, however, saw that happiness could never lie in individual pleasures, no matter how many, but in general satisfaction, that is, in *contentment*, the production of which clearly entails a willed judgment.

We cannot deny the Stoics therefore the merit of having seen and determined two great and valuable truths: 1. that human happiness consists in contentment, not in pleasure (it is obvious that, if any human being, immersed in pleasure, declares himself unhappy, no one can ever consider him in possession of happiness); 2. that contentment always requires as its condition an act of the will by which human beings deem and judge themselves content and happy.

198. So far, we could not dissent from stoic teaching. Pleasure-seekers deride it because they can conceive only pleasures as our source of happiness. If they, who are given so much to pleasure, were to note what takes place within them, they would see that the stoic theory is the theory of human nature, acknowledged and praised in fact by people of all systems and of every kind of behaviour. When pleasure-lovers maintain that happiness consists in pleasure, they make a judgment; they are

declaring, rightly or wrongly, that they are blessed in their use of material enjoyments. If their judgment were sincere, the Stoics would agree with them. If on the other hand their judgment were totally opposite, as often happens, they would be agreeing with the Stoics. It is always true therefore that, in order to be happy, human beings need a *judgment* declaring they deem and assert themselves happy. This is precisely the Stoic teaching about contentment. The strange thing is, however, that pleasure-lovers, while arguing theoretically, resolutely maintain that all happiness consists in pleasure, although their private lives, which are an almost uninterrupted succession of pleasures, find them plunged moaning and unremittingly complaining into a deep sea of sadness where they see themselves as the most unfortunate of people. Experience shows that people of this kind manifest and feel an unfortunate tendency to hatred of life, to suicide. I could quote examples known to me personally of these sad victims of sensual pleasures, but I do not think it necessary — we have all encountered such cases or read of them in the papers and in statistics.

199. Clearly, then, the intensity of pleasure deceives sensual people. As long as they are expressing only philosophical theory, they consider pleasure alone and find it very good. When they are forced to descend from theory to practice, experience tells them that material pleasure, which depends on the state of one's physical fibre, is neither unlimited nor continuous nor perpetual; by its nature it occupies and exercises only the most humble and least important of our human powers, leaving all the others starved and unsatisfied. Consequently, the human being as a whole is forced to declare himself empty and wretched. This explains the continual discontent, oppressive anxieties and ceaseless complaints of pleasure-seekers.

200. This is the true part of stoic teaching, drawn faithfully from observation of nature.⁶² But the teaching goes too far when it claims that contentment depends *solely* on the will, and that

⁶² Language also favours the stoic system. When we ask: 'Does happiness consist in pleasure?', we presuppose a difference between *pleasure* and *happiness*, and mean: 'Does *pleasure* produce human *happiness*?' *Pleasure* is considered as cause, *happiness* as effect. The opposite is true, however; as we can see, *happiness* becomes virtually a synonym for *contentment* or complete satisfaction, the only sense we can rightly make of these words.

the will can always pronounce the judgment by which we are made content and happy. The Stoics claim that human beings, in whatever state they are, can by an act of will deem themselves content and happy. This energy of the free will rises above all the accidents to which human beings, together with their external things and bodies, are subject, and preserves immutable the judgment by which they consider themselves blessed. The Stoics make both human virtue and human happiness consist in this will.

This gives rise to an intrinsic contradiction. If human beings must judge that all goes well with them, they must have some matter on which to form their judgment. This matter can only be a *truly satisfying state* which gives foundation to the judgment they make of themselves, when they say all is well. If this were not the case, the judgment would be a nebulous, false proposition.

201. This critique of stoic happiness brings with it a critique of stoic virtue: if stoicism is seen to be in contradiction with itself because it sometimes makes human *happiness* consist in a false judgment pronounced by the free will, it contradicts itself all the more openly in making *virtue* a freely pronounced false judgment.

202. Furthermore, we must note, as I have shown elsewhere,⁶³ that these are the extreme efforts of human reason in the investigation of happiness and virtue. Reason lacked an essential element and therefore succeeded only in obtaining an erroneous result at the end of its argument.

203. We must conclude that *contentment* of human nature results from two elements: 1. a true good independent of human free will, 2. an act of free will by which we deem ourselves content with the good we possess.

⁶³ Cf. *Storia comparativa e critica de' sistemi morali*, c. 8, art. 3, §7.

CHAPTER 5

The distinction between the final and proximate end of societies

204. Summarising what has been said, we see that human beings form societies for the sole purpose of obtaining a good end. Only good can be the end of a society. If human beings erroneously take what is evil as good, we have to say that their will is neither a social will nor a true will of *human nature*, but a deluded will of the *human person* in contradiction with the will of human nature.⁶⁴ The end of every society therefore is a *true* good, not an illusion of good, which is not good. Moreover, it must be a true good for those who associate. As we said, the true, final aim of every society is, by the nature of society itself, *true human good*, to which humanity tends of itself. The human person also tends to this good, provided he is not deluded and has not willingly made himself incapable of judging the real, proper object of his desires. We also investigated the general nature of the true human good which must be the continual aim of every association; it consists, as we found, not in passing pleasure but in constant *contentment* of spirit. Finally, the analysis of this contentment showed it to be composed of two elements: a *real good* independent of human freedom, and a *free judgment* of the human will. Such is the teaching about the *end common* to all societies.

205. But it is also clear that if all societies have a common, necessary end, each society must have its *own end* to distinguish it from others. In fact, if all the individuals who unite in some way in society basically seek their own *contentment*, they use different means for obtaining it. It is precisely these means which distinguish societies and constitute the proper end of each.

In the stoic teaching, which makes human contentment depend solely on the free judgment of the human will, the different societies binding human beings had no reason for

⁶⁴ The distinction between *human person* and *human nature* is of the utmost importance; it is the key to opening many secrets of humanity. I refer the reader to what I have written on the matter in *AMS*, bk. 4.

existence precisely because all contentment depends on the human individual, irrespective of every association and external circumstance.

In my teaching, according to which human contentment depends partly on the efficacy of the will and partly on something real and necessary, we see why an association seeks this real good, a good desired by the human spirit and so necessary for the spirit's true contentment.

206. It is true that opinion plays a very large role in determining this real good, which influences our satisfaction and contentment. Such a role was precisely the argument used by the Stoics to maintain that all external goods are the man-made effects of opinion and the result of the free judgment we make on them. With this judgment we form the opinion that some things are good, and that others are not good, or are evil.

As I have said, I agree that this teaching, although taken too far, contains a deep insight. The Stoics certainly glimpsed the distinction between *absolute* and *relative good*, a distinction which only Christianity brought into full light. They saw nothing absolute in anything external; everything was relative. Consequently everything was subject to human opinion, which turns into good or evil whatever it capriciously chooses.⁶⁵ But what the Stoics did not know, and what Christianity alone has revealed to the human race, is that besides feelable good there is a real, absolute good over which opinion has no power at all, a good which is most real, immutable and lacking every evil.

207. At first sight, this sublime truth of Christianity seems open to the objection: 'The stoic theory is seen to be unsocial because the only real good it acknowledges is that constituted by the individual's free judgment that he is happy; this judgment renders all association inexplicable and aimless. On the other hand Christian theory recognises only one association, whose end is the absolute good not formed by the free judgment of the will nor by opinion.'

208. This apparently true objection falls when the Christian theory is fully understood. The *absolute good* which

⁶⁵ In the next book I will deal with 'the way in which opinion exercises this extraordinary power over things'. The question is as important for psychology as it is for moral science and politics.

Christianity conveys to all people satisfies of itself all the desires of *person* and *human nature* to the highest degree. But this supreme good does not prevent the existence of lesser goods in tune with human nature. Christianity does not deny that they are *goods* and *pleasures*; it only denies that *contentment* necessarily consists in them. If we add to these ordered goods and pleasures appropriate to natural human needs the free, spontaneous judgment with which we deem ourselves content, a state of contentedness certainly arises. These states can vary in kind and value, but there is no doubt that each of them, rooted in an abundance of natural goods free from disorder, is infinitely removed from the contentment produced by the supreme good, in the possession of which Christianity places the fullness of beatitude. We only need to clarify when and under what conditions the judgment of ourselves as content can be true and spontaneous, not deceptive or forced. This judgment, it may be said, can take place only when we are conscious of our own innocence. In fact the contrary is true: although we can openly confess and try to persuade ourselves of our happiness even when we experience the remorse of guilt, we lie externally to others, and internally to ourselves.

The condition for contentment laid down by both Christian teaching and philosophy is this: when the good appropriate to human nature contains no disorder, it can constitute the matter of *natural contentment*, provided our human spirit feels no guilty remorse, which hinders true contentedness. Hence, the Christian theory accepts all upright societies and recognises as real some limited good different from absolute good, although the power of the former alone cannot produce contentment in human beings.

209. Contentment, therefore, the common end of all societies, is required by the general nature of association. Particular good, which must form the matter of contentment, constitutes the aim of individual societies.

The end common to all societies can be called the *remote end*, while the proper end of a society can be called the *proximate end*.

210. Let us conclude. Every society necessarily has two ends: 1. a remote end, common to all human association consisting in true human good, that is, contentment of spirit; 2. a proximate

end, proper to a particular society and constituted by the good and pleasure which furnish matter for the spontaneous, internal judgment that produces and posits human contentment.

CHAPTER 6

Continuation: the remote end is internal; the proximate end can be partly internal

211. Continuing with our consideration of the psychological qualities of the *remote* and *proximate ends* of societies, we can make the following observations.

The *remote end*, which consists in contentment of spirit, always relates to the individual and clearly has its seat in each individual composing society. This follows from what has been said, namely, that individuals are necessarily the end of societies and that societies are and can only be methods, systems, means which tend to increase individual happiness.

The remote end is also seen as something *invisible*, remaining within the spirit of the person enjoying it. It is entirely subjective.

The proximate end is, as we said, composed of pleasure and good. We can say the same about *pleasure* as we said about the remote end: it is individual and invisible, enclosed in the subject enjoying the pleasure. The good, however, can be *external*. Thus the proximate end, in so far as its matter is external, material good, is itself external and pertains to what we have called *visible and exterior* society.

CHAPTER 7

The political criterion drawn from the relationship between the two ends of society

212. In every society therefore we must distinguish two ends, the remote and the proximate. But which is the principal end? Does one end serve the other? We find the answer without difficulty in what has already been said.

True human good, which is the essential, common end of any association whatever, is always contentment of spirit, a true end. The proximate end of society, like society itself, is simply a *means* for obtaining the *remote end*. The remote end must never be sacrificed to the proximate end; on the contrary, the latter must be subordinate to and made to serve the former. The value of the proximate end lies solely in the service and aid it gives to the remote end, the ultimate, absolute social end.

213. We have therefore the following very important political criterion drawn from the end of society:⁶⁶ “The *proximate end* of society, which consists in the acquisition of particular good and pleasure, must be ordered to the *remote end*, which consists in contentment of the members’ spirit. The proximate end must always be evaluated relative to the remote end, never unconditionally.’

⁶⁶ Another criterion is that of substance and accidents, which I discussed in SC.

CHAPTER 8

The error of those who tend to materialise society

214. We can now see clearly the error of governments who only want to materialise society, positing all social progress in the continuing increase of external goods. Their considerations stop at the proximate end of society, or rather at part of it; they do not see the final end, in which alone consists that real good whose achievement every society must essentially procure. Consequently, while they think they are satisfying the people by increasing the quantity of material enjoyment, they are in fact only causing disquiet and discontent. An increase in material pleasures in no way effects an increase in contentment of spirit, in which alone we find rest; rather, the contrary often happens.

Politicians acting in this way are taught by a large number of authors who restrict political theory to the externals of society and the production of material goods. This neglect of philosophy, a philosophy that considers the *whole* human being, the needs of his heart and the longings of his nature, is one of the principal, deeper causes of the evils afflicting present civil societies. In fact, matters have reached such a pass that to speak of the real needs of the whole human being and of his total contentment is considered by many as out-dated. Ephemeral authors are ashamed of the discussion; they are rightly afraid of not appearing progressive enough to their readers. It is a pity they do not realise that the first truly progressive step taken after their demise will consist in proclaiming them ignorant!

215. Another reason why moral, eudaimonological philosophical teachings (for example, those concerned with the common end of societies) are excluded from political treatises is the self-imposed duty of many authors to follow abstract methods. As a result, what ought to be strictly unified is divided into different treatises.

Let us imagine a society formed for the specific end of commercial speculation. The gain intended by the members through their association is obviously the object or immediate end of the

association. In this society, the remote end (contentment of spirit) lies entirely outside the society and is left to the prudence and morality of individual members who seek contentment as human beings but not as members of the society. In a word, the remote end in this example can be called entirely extra-social. If the administrator of the society were to say: 'I must act in such a way that the commercial society entrusted to me obtains the greatest possible profit, which is the aim of the society; I am not responsible for procuring the contentment and happiness of the members from the profit,' he would be right and could not be faulted.

But things are not like this in civil or domestic society. These societies have a kind of universality in their end, and are not limited by nature in any way to procuring some determined good for their members. On the contrary, they are instituted to obtain for all their members without distinction the good they can obtain. These societies must do this however by using only means which are proper to them and within their jurisdiction. Both these societies therefore have an *undetermined* extension in their end, and, *by using pertinent means*, can greatly influence the procurement of contentment and satisfaction or disquiet and discontent of the human spirit. Thus, it is clear that the remote end (human contentment) is included in societies of this extent, and that the philanthropic vision of their administrator must look to this end. However, the authors under discussion, instead of considering civil society in all its extension, stop at external, material prosperity, which they consider the only end of civil society — as if it were a society limited to business or something similar, with an exclusive, *determined* end. They claim that whatever leads to contentment of spirit must be the work of individuals alone. In other words it is an extra-social end, a work foreign to society.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Some writers limit the end of civil societies to *safeguarding* rights; others extend it to the acquisition of *external prosperity*. Heeren says that 'safeguarding ownership constitutes the first and perhaps the only aim of civil association' (*Sull'origine, lo sviluppo e l'influenza delle teorie politiche nell'Europa moderna*, A. H. L. Heeren, professor of history at Göttingen). These authors excessively limit the end of civil society. This end is *undetermined*; up to the present it has been determined in practice only by laws and customs, in different ways in different nations, and at different

CHAPTER 9

The determined and the undetermined proximate end of societies

216. It follows that there are societies whose proximate end is fully *determined*. In this case, their remote end (contentment) lies outside the society, and cannot be partly or totally the task of social administration; it can only be the private task of individuals as human beings, not as members.

217. There are also societies whose proximate end is *undetermined* and virtually universal in such a way that the end includes every human good obtainable by social means. An example is found in *domestic* and *civil* societies, where the remote end is both internal and external to the society. Social administration must keep its sights always fixed on this end, carrying out enactments which, far from harming the end, contribute as much as possible to its procurement.

times of nations' existence. A time will certainly come when what has up to the present been tacitly and factually determined will be expressly determined by the will of interested parties; dependent on their interests and needs, the end of civil association and the offices entrusted to its government will be restricted or expanded. Nevertheless, no matter how much we reduce the functions and determine in writing what is expected from civil association, it will always be true that individuals living in community have, from the moment they civilly associate, an inexhaustible means of good in their association, and that this association has, at least in potency, a very extensive, almost unlimited aim. The most common errors of modern publicists consist in their *excessive restriction of the aim* of civil society and in their *excessive expansion of the means* it can use.

CHAPTER 10

Duties of social government

218. We can now deduce the principal, supreme duties of civil government, which are founded in the very nature of the society under government rule. They can be reduced to the following three:

1. Not to obstruct the individuals composing the society so that they are prevented from or hampered in achieving *true human good*, the final and essential end of both individual and society.

2. To remove, in so far as possible, every obstacle which hampers individuals in the achievement of this good, and particularly, to defend the right of each against any usurpation and oppression by others.

3. To co-operate positively, using only the means proper to social government, so that individuals are encouraged and guided directly to the acquisition of true human good.

No civil society nor its government has the power to act contrary to these three moral duties, from which all other more particular obligations of social administrations derive.

CHAPTER 11

Human rights

219. Because no social government has any legitimate power to prevent the individuals who compose a society from acquiring the true human good we have described and analysed, human beings who associate do not and cannot renounce, nor have they ever renounced, their right to tend to this end. It would in fact be completely absurd to think they had placed their perfection and happiness in the power of any government whatsoever. We can neither morally nor physically renounce our final contentment. There would no longer be any reason for submitting to a government that did not have as its only duty the defence of the right which we each naturally have to our own happiness, and to make available the means to this happiness.

220. Our analysis of the right that we each have to our own moral contentment and happiness shows clearly that the right is of its nature inalienable;⁶⁸ it is not only the *first right* but *the most general of duties*. The good which is its object results from two elements: virtue and the eudaimonological appendages of virtue. Because none of us can renounce our duty or dispense ourselves from the practice of virtue, our right to true good is simply 'the right to perform our moral duties'; carrying out our duties produces the eudaimonological appendages just mentioned. Such a right is clearly inalienable.

We also said that this was the *supreme* and most general right. We can show this as follows. The concept of our right to or over a thing can arise in us only on condition that we give some value to the thing. Human beings never form rights relative to things which offer no good and have no value either in opinion or in reality. All the value we give to things, rightly or wrongly, can only come, however, from our opinion that these things contribute in some way to our contentment and happiness. Hence, we finally see that the *formal part* of every special right is rooted in the right to contentment and happiness. We are conscious of

⁶⁸ Chap. 2.

having this right, which is the most general of all rights, virtually containing within itself and producing of itself all the others.

CHAPTER 12

Possible collisions among human rights

221. The question now arises 'Can the equally supreme right of two persons to their own final contentment collide? If so, who must give place?' If such an extraordinary collision happened, neither one nor the other ought to or could give way; the encounter would mean an intrinsically evil surrender repugnant to nature. However, a collision of this kind, which would contradict the wisdom and holiness of the Creator, is by the very nature of things impossible. It is not a question, we must note, of a collision between the rights of many people to the *means* of happiness, but between the rights to happiness itself. The happiness we are discussing, posited in a human being, does not, and never can obstruct the happiness of others. Possession of happiness, although common to all, is not diminished for anyone.

222. Among these means, we must distinguish those that are absolutely necessary to human happiness from those simply useful and helpful. The former include none that, possessed by one human being, cannot be possessed by all others. The task of human contentment and happiness is accomplished in the secret of the spirit, where human moral value and the bliss of virtuous contentment are located. On the other hand, all external, limited things, which can be possessed exclusively, may in some way help the production of interior contentment and, by removing obstacles, the production of interior virtue. However, they are never absolutely necessary. Consequently, at least in the case of Christianity, virtue is exercised and contentment enjoyed as much in a fetid dungeon as on the most exalted throne, thanks to the wonderful power of free action by which the Christian, devoid of all subjection, adheres to immutable things and finds beatitude in them.

Nevertheless we also said that there are means which, although not of *absolute necessity* to the perfection and virtuous contentment of the human spirit, dispose us for the acquisition of this good by removing the obstacles that lie in our way. Hence we must ask the following important question in

philosophical Right: 'To what extent do the individuals who compose civil society retain the right to the means which contribute to their moral perfection and happiness, and how limited is government in using those means?'

223. The question has two parts. The first asks, 'What is the limit of the individual's right to the means which can contribute to his happiness?'; the second, 'What is the limit of government authority in making use of the very means that contribute to the happiness of the members?'

I answer the first part by saying that 'the principal limit to the individual's right to means which contribute, or are thought by him to contribute to his happiness, is the right of *ownership*. In striving for happiness, each must limit himself to the use of his own things and of his free actions'. The limit could be more generally presented by saying that 'the limit of our right to use the means for our happiness is determined by the equal right of all others', because our own right must not obstruct the coexistence of the same right in all others. In a very general way we could say that the limit is rooted in reciprocity: we must all limit ourselves. However, if nearly everybody transgresses this duty of self-limitation, it would cease to be a duty for the one or the few who were ready to practise it faithfully.

224. The reply to the second part must be deduced from the three supreme moral duties to which, as we have said, every social government is obligated.⁶⁹ The first of these great duties of social governments mentioned by us is negative, that is, 'not to place before the members of society any obstacle to their acquisition of virtue and moral contentment'. Hence, this first duty means that 'all those enactments which limit the use of every human being's right to use the best and most perfect means for obtaining virtue and moral contentment for himself are illicit and unjust.'

225. Every social administration must carefully reflect therefore that individual happiness is not, properly speaking, its task but only and always the task of individuals themselves.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Chap. 10.

⁷⁰ This is a consequence of the principle that 'happiness depends, as on an essential element, on the free judgment each person makes about his own eudaimonological state'.

Government can only safeguard this task: it can and must defend the free effort continually made by every member of society to attain so great an end; it can and must remove any obstacles and help each individual. But because government cannot do more than this, its action must be mostly negative, and its treatment of the members very cautious and reserved — more supervisory than directly involved. It must fear its own actions and take care that its enactments do not impede the task of happiness pursued by individuals in their private or hidden life; it must not fetter them, hold them back and weaken the effort to which nature, reason and the supreme being call them.

226. Here we must note that the means for moral contentment which are not absolutely necessary, speculatively considered, can be *relatively necessary*. The power of human freedom, considered generally and in itself, seems naturally greater than any temptation whatsoever against virtue, but this is not the case if we consider the power as it really is in each of us — our individual freedom is more or less limited and weak.⁷¹ This explains why in the great Code common to all civilised nations (I mean the Gospel) we find that ‘he whose eye causes him to sin, let him pluck it out and throw it away, and he whose foot causes him to sin, let him cut it off’⁷² We should prefer a virtuous, happy person without eyes and feet rather than an evil, unhappy person with eyes and feet. These generous words of the author of the Gospel, which places true human good before every other good, presuppose the limitation of human freedom which cannot always prevent eye, foot or any other good, whatever value we give it, from causing sin and obstructing our end. Hence, granted this limitation of free activity, we see that the means by which we rid ourselves of objects good in themselves but harmful relative to us become necessary although they are not theoretically and absolutely necessary for our supreme end.

227. The publicist who attempts to indicate the just limits of governmental power and determine the moral duties which

⁷¹ The various limitations of human freedom in different individuals have been dealt with at length in *AMS*, 567–763. — What I have said there shows the necessity of such a teaching on human freedom for anyone who wants to establish a truly practical and complete *public right*.

⁷² Mt 18: [8–9].

bind this power, must not limit himself to the theoretical consideration of the *absolute necessity* of the means conducive to human perfection. Theoretically, it is certain that no external means is absolutely necessary. This would easily lead to the false conclusion that means of this kind do not form the matter of inalienable rights relative to individuals, and that all means are therefore equally within governmental power; consequently government can dispose of them as it thinks fit. Certainly, publicists have till now considered the means necessary for virtue and individual perfection in this theoretical way, and as a result erroneously deduced many so-called powers and rights of social administration. On the contrary, it is most important to pay close attention to the *relative necessity* of these means. This necessity is not revealed simply by ideal speculations but by study of the facts and by careful observation of the different states and conditions of *individual freedom* as it is variously limited in different individuals.

Clearly, therefore, the means which are *relatively necessary* for the individual's moral perfection constitute a *right* as *inalienable* as his right to be virtuous and happy.

228. We now see how the power of social government is limited, which to some extent explains and determines more precisely what we indicated earlier: 'The power of social government must be exercised in such a way that its enactments do not prevent *any individual* from using those means which, relative to him, are necessary for the acquisition of his own moral contentment.'

This limit, although clear and true, is very delicate and easily exceeded. The government of any society whatsoever normally applies general enactments, and in most cases cannot do otherwise. — But this is precisely why they can easily err.

When a government draws up a general law or enactment, it believes it need consider only the general effects of the law or enactment, without descending to the anomalies of particular individuals. The intended law and the human nature to which the law is applied are considered solely in the abstract. This is not sufficient. Human nature, considered abstractly, is one and unique but, considered in individuals, it varies according to innumerable accidents. Often, these accidents contain the foundation of true natural rights in the individuals. Consequently, if

the wisdom and justice of the governor or legislator has not foreseen that the proposed law or enactment can violate the individuals' rights under discussion, the rights are unjustly sacrificed to the inexorable generality of law⁷³ formed without any attention to the important accidents of human nature and to the inviolable rights proceeding from it.

229. We have seen that contentment is not created in human beings simply by an act of freedom, as the Stoics claimed; a real good, granted to human beings independently of their free power, is also necessary.⁷⁴ Nevertheless the teachings holding sway in public right presuppose the stoic principle. The authors on public right, although professing other teachings which appear strangely at odds with this principle, seem to follow the stoic opinion on contentment when they come to determine governmental powers. They abstract entirely from the consideration that some means of contentment can be necessary relative to individuals. Instead, they suppose that these means are not at all necessary, but totally indifferent and never suitable for constituting titles to inalienable rights for individuals — this of course would be true if human contentment depended solely on a free human act. According to them therefore all those means remain in governmental power. Hence the government, disposing of them with imprudent prescriptions, very frequently violates the right we have both to our own contentment and to the means absolutely or relatively necessary for procuring it.

230. We must now deal with those means of virtue and individual contentment which, although neither absolutely nor relatively necessary, are absolutely or relatively *useful* for the same end. Do these form natural rights for members of society? The question was answered when we stated that 'those enactments are illicit and unjust which limit the use of the right of all human beings to use the best and most perfect means to procure virtue and moral contentment for themselves.'⁷⁵

⁷³ We must distinguish between the *equality* of a law and the *generality* of its conception. The former is an endowment necessary for the law to be just; the latter is a defect which often renders the law unjust.

⁷⁴ Chap. 4.

⁷⁵ Chap. 10.

231. Our initial solution deserves further clarification. We did not mean that the individual has the right to all those means which according to him possess the aptitude mentioned above. This would destroy social administration or make it impossible. We are talking only about those means which are actually best and most perfect. Consequently, if the means under consideration are not such, our principle cannot be applied. It is true that an individual's real or apparent judgment about the suitability of these means can easily collide with that of the government. We will discuss later these collisions of judgment, which are often inevitable and constitute, as it were, a *casus belli* between the administration and the individual member. We shall also indicate the way to reduce as much as possible, if not entirely avoid, the serious consequences arising from them.

232. Furthermore, when we affirm that an administration 'cannot licitly or justly limit the use of the right of the individual to use the best means for procuring virtue and moral contentment for himself', we simply mean that it is illicit for a government to do so without moral necessity. Such a necessity would result from the government's obligation to defend an equal right in all individuals by preventing a particular individual from using his right to obstruct an equal use of the right in others. We have said that every individual is limited in the use of these means by the two moral duties of respect for others' ownership and reciprocity.⁷⁶ The government is the natural judge and defender of all these limits (this is the second of its principal moral duties towards the members of the society it governs)⁷⁷ which therefore constitute an unrestricted sphere of power. However, enactments of the government within this sphere do not restrict in any way the use of the individual's right under discussion. On the contrary, they extend it first by removing the obstacles which individuals can cause each other when they abuse their rights, and then by protecting and defending each individual's part. No one, I repeat, has the right to abuse his own right.

233. It remains true therefore that the use of the right which individuals have to use the best means for virtue and their own

⁷⁶ Chap. 12.

⁷⁷ Chap. 10.

contentment can only be restricted by government in the case of the individual who abuses the right by exceeding these limits and thus harms the right of others.

234. Our right to use the best means for our moral contentment can be considered as a very general right from which we can deduce many special rights naturally possessed by each individual and to be respected by every wise and just government. I will comment on only one, because the purpose of this work is not to discuss public right but to indicate those parts of it which are necessary for the correct understanding of the nature of society and of the important teaching about its end.

All members of society have a special right, which must always remain intact, 'to choose that way of life which they judge will contribute better to their procurement of moral good, that is, of the most perfect virtue and of moral contentment of spirit.'

The use of such an important right cannot be restricted in any way by the arbitrary will of government; it can only receive moral limits arising from particular duties. Hence, the way of life which we can choose by right, must

1. be licit in all respects,
2. not offend positive obligations already undertaken, and among these obligations
3. must not in any way offend the obligation of social contribution, either by personal endeavour or external goods.

Government can and must be vigilant so that all these limitations of the right of individuals under discussion are carefully observed.

CHAPTER 13

An example of the violation of human rights

235. One example of grave violation of this extra-social right of the individual was the cruel abolition in modern times of religious orders. Individuals were forbidden the use of the most precious and sacred of their rights (the choice of a totally harmless way of life which, to their eyes, was of great help for acquiring virtue and personal moral contentment) on the pretext that those who withdrew from the multitude to dedicate themselves to the contemplation of heavenly things were useless to society.

I cannot in any way agree that people who separate themselves (never entirely, we should note) from the company of their fellows are useless to human society. The unvaunted benefits they bestow are well-known and shine clearly enough to be seen even by those who try to blind themselves to them. But I do not want to use this argument, and am content to suppose as proven that religious are indeed people who do not apply themselves directly and positively to the good of society. What I wish to know is whether, granted this supposition, the administration of civil society had any legitimate power to abolish such a way of life and drive those people, who belonged more to the other world than this, from their peaceful refuges.

236. First, I do not deny to government the power to punish crimes. If any of those who professed a way of life consecrated to religion committed crimes and violated others' rights, their being judged guilty and condemned by the courts would in no way contradict the inalienable right they had as human beings to follow a way of life which seemed better to them and had been declared such by the competent authority of the Church. But this is not true for the entire body of religious; no one has said, nor could it ever be said, that their way of life has led to violence, robbery and the violation of others' rights. They truly practised a life that was innocent in itself and inoffensive to all other members of society.

237. Second, it could never be said or proved that the temporal goods they possessed were unjustly obtained and held by them. The ownership of goods held by religious rested on titles of usucaption, donation, heredity, contracts of sale, and such-like, that is, on the same titles possessed by others. The titles of acquisition were precisely those established by the natural, civil law of ownership. Hence, to despoil religious of all they possessed could only be a real infraction of the right of ownership. Government, however, is instituted above all for the defence and preservation of all ownership on the grounds that all members of society without any exception have social equality before the law. We have seen that respect for ownership not only limits government in its enactments, but individuals in the use of their extra-social right to use the best means conducive to their end.⁷⁸

238. No legal reason existed therefore which authorised any secular government to destroy or impede a harmless way of life that tended to moral perfection, or to despoil such people of properties acquired and held by the same titles which all other members of the social body enjoy. Because the principle of 'political equality before the law' was not applied to those citizens who professed the religious life, they were considered outside society and excluded from favour of the law. More accurately, they were despoiled not only of their civil rights but of the rights they had as human beings. Every human being has the right not to be violated in his way of life, or robbed.

239. But what in fact was the pretext used to give an appearance of justice to the violation of human and civil rights? The pretext, we repeat, was that those who followed religious life (that is, who professed only to love God and their neighbour perfectly and to live only for the benefit of their fellows, sometimes with heroic sacrifices entirely repugnant to nature) were *useless to society*.

240. Here we see the great principle of a political system which, based on a material and entirely immoral philosophy, destroyed the ancient principle that 'no government may do anything contrary to justice'. This sublime, liberal principle that forestalls every arbitrary act of government, was substituted by

⁷⁸ Chap. 12.

a new, unheard-of formula of extreme despotism: 'Government can do all that it thinks useful for society; whatever it does with this end in view is just because it is useful.'⁷⁹ — a new political system of *public utility* has now replaced the ancient system of *justice*.⁸⁰

241. It is all too clear that government will be granted entirely limitless authority if we destroy the universally accepted sources of justice and of rights rooted in justice, and if the greatest public utility is the only recognised source of what is just and upright. The great charter of human rights will be torn up; we will no longer recognise anything free in human beings or immune from the action of public authority. Public utility is of itself a vague idea, totally incapable of determining the principle of governmental authority or of what is just. If it means the utility of the majority, the minority is completely sacrificed and the weak irredeemably offered in holocaust to the strong, to Moloch; everyone is at war with everyone else. On the other hand, if public utility means the utility of each person, we have a

⁷⁹ This formula is the expression of the imperial despotism that followed the revolution in France which, despite its declarations of human rights, was guided in its actions and claimed to justify its errors by the same wicked principle. I grant that the majority of those who readily espoused the revolution thought that 'the freedom of the individual would be assured once government was in the hands of the people', but there is no government so absolute and tyrannical as that in the hands of the people or, to speak more accurately, of the uneducated masses. The fact that a government is moderate and not despotic depends on its foundation on principles of justice and moral virtue, not on its being in the hands of many rather than one. Napoleon came to a powerful government in the hands of the republic and kept it powerful. He himself did not make it powerful; in fact, he mitigated it to a great extent. These observations do not mean we can go to the other extreme and think that the principle of despotism reveals itself simultaneously with human rights. On the contrary, the following passage shows how a respectable author justifies American democracy: 'So far there has never been anyone in the United States who dared to hold the maxim that everything is permissible in the interests of society. This impious maxim seems to have been invented in an age of liberty in order to legitimise every future tyranny' (A. Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, c. 9).

⁸⁰ I indicated the characteristics of these two political systems when I made a comparison between the conduct of the Holy See and that of the Napoleonic Court in my little work on Pius VII in a collection of writings published at Lugano, 1834.

reaffirmation of the equality of all before the law, the practice of justice and the return of the rights of individuals.

These rights, which precede the utility of the majority, must be respected by government. When we understand public utility in this way, government can no longer sacrifice the rights of individuals and defend itself with the meaningless expression, 'public utility'. The rights of individuals are elements untouchable and inviolable by public utility. Hence, the justice or injustice of the recent enactment abolishing religious orders must be judged according to the ancient norms of justice which make nonsense of 'public utility', a phrase introduced to confuse ideas. Any government harming the private sphere, essentially harms the public sphere. 'Public', we should carefully note, must include all citizens, not the majority or the most powerful and influential. Otherwise, the public is a party, not society itself.

242. In the case of peaceful citizens who consecrate themselves to meditation on heavenly things, to the study of virtue and to works of every kind of beneficence, a civil government can require, according to the norms of antiquity, or better, the norms of immutable justice, that they commit no violence by murder or assault, and that they do not steal or encroach on the sphere of others' rights. No one would contest these demands, but when applied to people consecrated to the religious life, they become ridiculous; no one has really thought that religious would be guilty of that kind of infraction of natural and civil laws, or at least certainly no more guilty than others.

It is also absurd for civil government to require that religious help their fellows more than they actually do and show great beneficence. If we grant the irrefutable principle that 'all the members of society must be equal before the law' and that certain people can be required to practise beneficence at a level determined by government, government can exercise the same power towards all citizens. An absurd consequence of this (perhaps never before thought of) would be that government has the right to determine the level of freedom and beneficence for each member of society!

243. We know that charity and beneficence can be commanded by God, but we contradict the proper notion of the duties of humanity and charity if we have the right to demand

the practice of beneficence and to regulate it by law as we please. Such action would result in endless disputes and squabbles and even cause terrible wars which could end only in the destruction of the system or of humanity. If individuals themselves cannot require from their equals, as a right of justice, what pertains to beneficence, much less can a government, which is principally instituted to defend and preserve the right of all the individuals that compose the society.

If I am harmed by someone attempting to force a benefit from me, my right is violated, and the government must help me against those who violently attack me in this way. Clearly, a government which protects unjust and violent people is forcefully obliging me to do what in fact depends totally on my will and on the extent of my inclination to be beneficent. Not even civil society as a whole can change the natural duties of charity into duties of justice, nor all the members united together require one person to give, out of justice, what he is obliged (I am presuming he is obliged) to give out of affection. Otherwise, love would not be love, and beneficence, not beneficence.

244. Society, and those that govern, can indeed require that all who are equally subject to them do not harm each other and that no one invades the rights pertaining to another, but they cannot in any way constrain individuals to surrender their mutual rights, that is, their right to do good to one another. If they do so, they violate legitimate order and the purpose of association, with detrimental consequences.

How beneficence would be limited if society constrained the equal citizens that form it to be mutually beneficent? And if society made beneficent action a duty of justice, why could it not make all possible beneficent actions duties of justice? Furthermore, granted that society and government were able to determine the amount of beneficence to be obligatorily exercised by each citizen, how would it verify that the duty had been fulfilled by each? What kind of sanctions would such new laws apply?

Finally, can society command someone to exercise beneficence towards others before exercising it to himself, and if it cannot, who will determine the time, effort, attention and possessions needed relative to each person for his own perfection

and know exactly which of all these things can be used individually for the benefit of others?

No one, nor any human society, can impose on others the undeterminable duty of beneficence; only God can suggest it in the depths of the human heart where its manner and extension of execution must be determined; here alone is it secretly promulgated, here alone does a tribunal exist competent to pass judgment on it. From whatever angle we view the example we have used of serious or public infraction of human rights, the infraction appears very ugly and repulsive.

245. We have seen that the end of civil society is ultimately the contentment of spirit of the individuals who compose it. Consequently, when a politician wishes to explain public happiness, that is, all the happiness present in reality in the people, he must take into account private, individual contentment whatever its source. There are some people who live alone, content with what they have without pursuing trade or similar enterprises for the purpose of accumulating material wealth; their study are works by which they daily increase the moral goodness of their heart and their own contentment and happiness. Why are politicians not pleased with such people and use their modest virtue to evaluate the increased number of happy persons and human well-being? Do the political evaluators consider themselves not bound to take account of these degrees of happiness simply because they are hidden and unseen by the public and not reflected in others?

246. Happiness is no less real because hidden. We should not be looking for it in market places, theatres, trading banks and on bloody battlefields but in the depth of the human spirit where alone it can be found. The public are only a collection of individuals, and if each individual were immensely happy in spirit without knowing how others feel, a body of happy people must surely be the result. Although our personal happiness is unknown to others and not reflected in them, we cannot consider our happiness as nothing. And if the happiness of some is reflected in the spirit of others, the latter are helped by knowledge of that happiness and would not consider themselves as devoid of a share in public happiness, even if their increase in happiness did not itself reflect on still more people and so on. We do not need to find an infinite number

happiness of the public as a whole. The opinion of politicians who think that we can rejoice in the happiness of a human being only when the happiness is visible and sought by others, is clearly blind, vain and of no value whatsoever. If a politician values a potential happiness, that is, the means capable of producing happiness in others, he should value much more the same happiness in act, that is, those who are already happy.

247. To drive people from their retreats and the contemplation of heavenly things, therefore, under the pretext that they have no influence on public happiness, directly contradicts the sublime end of politics. Even if they had no influence, they would form public happiness within themselves. The task of forming it is far greater than that of exercising a mere influence on it. — Society is not weakened simply because it has fully obtained its end in all these individuals, and nothing more remains to be done for them. — It is an illusion to reject true happiness for relative happiness. To think otherwise is to be like a mathematician who, while noting all the fractions, neglects the whole numbers. — Hence, the sum of public well-being of which the human race was despoiled by false political theory is as great as the number of people who, despite their innocence before the law, were driven without trial from their refuges where virtue had helped them attain a contented life (a number increased by the degrees of happiness of each individual). If all of us made ourselves happy, all misery would disappear from the world; if one citizen alone does this, we cannot claim anything further from him.

248. Another consideration makes the violation of human rights through abolition of religious orders even more unacceptable. A civil government which prevents human beings from choosing a way of life whose purpose is to preserve innocent customs and perform virtuous works applies two different measures: one to those who strive to obtain moral perfection and with it contentment of spirit (the purpose of society); the other to those who, without any morally high aspirations, live for material things, are very often given over to vice and are torn by passions depriving them of contentment. The first are viewed with deep hatred; the second are warmly accepted — indeed it would be considered extremely harmful to disturb their wayward, immoral life.

249. It does not cross the mind of such governments to ask those stagnating in laziness and dissolute living to help their fellow human beings and become truly useful to society. Much less do these governments take this way of life as a pretext for laying hands on the goods these people possess and abuse — provided they commit no crimes, such citizens are left in peace. If an administration suppresses the vices with which they infect the earth, it is accused of tyranny; simply to glance across the doorway of such people becomes an infringement.

Why are the same principles not applied to virtuous, sober and decent people who give the world an example of the highest virtue? Why does governmental power consider itself unlimited against these people alone? They are the only citizens excluded from the common right enjoyed by everyone else. They are governed by arbitrary judgment, not by law, and only they can be despoiled of their goods, expelled from their cells, from their caverns, and from the great buildings which have risen throughout the world so that all may benefit from the immense charity practised by religious. Finally, governments think they can forbid them the natural right to associate for good and achieve personal happiness (common to all human beings).

But even this is not sufficient: outrage is added to injustice. According to the pretext used against them by false legalism, they are useless to society. But those who maintain that these citizens are useless to society, suppose that society is formed simply by themselves. They expel from society and humanity those whom they want to despoil, and erase them from the ranks of the living.

250. Unbelievably, lawyers came to the aid of a political policy so openly opposed to natural laws and to the most elementary rights of humanity. They put together subtle formulas and cleverly drew up a new *Statute* for implementing the policy. Their first claim that religious were public officials under the power of the government simply demonstrates their crass ignorance of the nature of the religious state. In the Church's eyes, this state is essentially individual; those who embrace it seek only their own moral perfection; they do not, and cannot think of becoming public officials. If a home is private, an

individual's conscience is much more so. The religious state is a matter of conscience; it is not therefore a social responsibility.

251. It may be objected that if the secular clergy are classed as public officials, the regular clergy must also be public officials.

Once again, we are faced with ignorance and confused ideas. First of all, religious and clerical life must not be confused, although the latter is sometimes united with the former. Moreover, religious were not abolished as *clerics* but as *religious*. Thus, even if priests were public officials, government would have no right to prevent, much less to destroy, religious associations, which constitute a state of private life where individuals strive to exercise their inalienable right, namely, virtue and contentment of spirit.

252. Secondly, we must distinguish between public and government officials. Priests may indeed be public officials, but they are and can only be officials of the Church. Civil society must not be confused with society in general, that is, with society considered in the abstract which alone contains, ideally, every other special society, including the Church. On the contrary, civil society, as I have said elsewhere, is itself a special society where people associate for the mutual protection of their rights and for other ends. But the Church is a society instituted by Jesus Christ, not by human beings. Both societies have officials, but the Church's officials are not those of civil society, nor civil society's officials those of the Church. Consequently, the officials of one society can exist irrespective of the other's; in fact, the Church's officials exist in peoples still at the family stage, while officials of civil associations exist where the Gospel has not yet been preached. Moreover, government does not form and send priests to the ministry, as it would if priests were their officials; to say the opposite is to abandon Catholicism and the entire Christian system.⁸¹ Civil government therefore

⁸¹ Individuals who profess the religious life have different relationships with the State and the Church. The State can consider them only as human beings and citizens. Relative to the Church's authority over religious bodies, we must distinguish the *religious state* in general from the religious state professed in *determined societies* with their own rules. The religious state in general takes its origin not from the Church but from Jesus Christ. The Church, therefore, cannot abolish it. The religious state professed in certain societies with their own rules is determined by the Church itself. Hence the

cannot consider priests as such⁸² as its officials, but only as citizens and nothing more.

253. It may still be retorted that civil government, which must acknowledge religious associations by issuing a decree necessary for their legal existence, can also suppress their existence. This reasoning is subtly deceptive. As we have shown, in humanity an extra-social element remains alongside civil society which is not absorbed by civil society. This element does not need so-called legal recognition in order to exist in reality; it exists *per se*, and no one can destroy it. An element existing *without legality* differs from an element existing *against legality*. The former must be respected by legality whenever legality comes up against it; if, however, legality comes up against its contrary element, it can destroy that element. Religious association is an element that can exist in humanity without need of legalisation. If a government acknowledges such an element, it *must* respect it — the element may be outside the civil society ruled by the government but it is not opposed to that society; on the contrary it is extremely useful to it. To claim that only what is legalised may exist in humanity is a principle which establishes the most universal, absolute despotism.

254. Because this argument cannot be taken any further, another is proposed: 'Religious institutes were established for the public good. The intention of those who gave their possessions by gift or inheritance is the public good. Civil government therefore must assure that the intentions of these generous donors do not go unfulfilled.'

255. Here again we must begin by disentangling confusion. The religious state is in essence and origin a private state, chosen by the individual for his own perfection and moral contentment of spirit. This is the essential element of all religious Orders and

Church has the power to suppress religious orders, modify them and institute new ones in accordance with the supernatural good of the faithful which is the end of the Church in all these enactments.

⁸² Sometimes purely civil offices have been given to the clergy with the latter's consent, but this has led to great confusion of ideas. One thing must be mentally separated from the other. Any office accepted by the clergy from government is only accidental and does not change their original state. The government certainly acquires rights over the clergy in this way but only relative to the civil offices they accept.

Congregations; when they are destroyed, an individual's imprescriptible right to the best means for procuring his perfection and happiness is violated.

256. Some religious associations assume different ministries of charity towards their neighbour, such as preaching, schools, hospitals, prisons, etc. They freely undertake these works out of pure charity, not as wage-earners. Thus, their members must be considered beneficent and charitable; their zeal is no cause for their classification amongst wage-earners. As I have observed, however, no one can prescribe a law governing charity nor determine its extent. The duty of citizens and civil government towards religious bodies is simply to express the gratitude which charity merits.

257. However, instead of pursuing this duty, it was deemed it better to divide religious congregations into two classes: contemplatives, and active congregations which exercise external charity. Some people then thought it good to destroy the former, and to debase the latter by considering their members as wage-earning servants in the employment of civil society and applying to them the laws proper to wage-earners. They believed that governmental power extended even further: wage-earners receive no reward if it is proved that they are not doing their duty; religious were dispersed *en bloc* without trial (which in any case would have been impossible for lack of evidence).

258. The goods themselves of religious did not all come by inheritance or the donations of laypeople. The Benedictines, for example, enriched themselves by their agriculture. However, it was not thought worthwhile to distinguish different goods; the testators' intentions were considered applicable to all.

259. But even intentions were not interpreted correctly. In an age of religious indifference no government can be the accurate interpreter of the intentions of those who lived in times of religious fervour. Let us consider the kind of intentions possible to testators.

260. Their intentions must be deduced from the nature of the religious associations for whose subsistence they bequeathed their goods. As we have said, some of these religious associations had as their purpose contemplation; others, contemplation accompanied by the exercise of charity. Benefactors were

fully aware of these kinds of association, and their clear intention in binding goods to contemplative congregations was to preserve this life of contemplation; governments, in order to conform with these intentions, abolished the life! When benefactors left goods to active congregations, their clear intention was the free exercise of charity by those congregations, as the nature of charity itself requires; governments, in order to conform with the intentions, considered the congregations as a body of wage-earners in the service of civil society in whose name they preferred to acquire the goods rather than have the work the congregations undertook! Those to whom society had given the responsibility of defending these goods purloined them on the grounds that they acted in conformity with the holy intentions of the long-dead benefactors!

261. Finally, others spoke more honestly. They said that religious possessed goods which their non-religious fellow-citizens wished to possess on the pretext that religious were unproductive, but their fellow-citizens, productive. The non-religious citizens however had forgotten the commandment which forbids us covet others' goods, or perhaps they were convinced that it was no great sin to despoil the dead. Consequently their productive hands could despoil the hands of the religious over whom they had legally sung the *De profundis*. Although we grant civil society the right to make enactments regulating the way in which temporal goods are transmitted (for example, the right to abolish succession by *fidei-commissa*), we believe that where determined rights of ownership are to be altered or modified, the interested parties must be heard and due weight given to their case. Making laws which regulate the transmission of ownership differs, however, from changing ownership and arbitrarily disposing of it.

There is also a difference between the confiscation of the goods of religious congregations and the destruction of the congregations themselves. A robber can despoil a traveller, but does he have to kill the person who has been robbed and offered no resistance? Let those who rob in the name of society come out into the open and say they cannot resist the temptation of temporal goods. Let them take the goods quietly, but they should not commit the added crime of despoiling human beings of their natural freedom to form religious associations for a holy

end and for achieving the ultimate purpose of the society whose administration has been entrusted to the despoilers.⁸³

262. Perhaps I have spent too much time on this matter. Nevertheless what I have said does not concern religious associations only; they are the first example that comes to mind. The danger is more general, and this example was chosen with wider implications in view. In my defence of human rights, I have defended the peace and happiness of all those upright families whose only ambition is peaceful virtue and loving, family affections. These families, although they do not sail the sea in search of treasure, nor desire to climb the social ladder, nor test the fortunes of war, deserve to be left in peace in their humble state by governments, and not driven from their homes, stripped of their goods and reduced to dependence. Content with their state, these families find contentment in the harmony and benevolence which unites all hearts in the association. They deserve infinitely better of civil society, and infinitely better of those who bang the big drum and ultimately dominate others. Such people are frequently called 'beneficent', but they have not even begun to benefit their own souls and bring themselves peace and happiness.

⁸³ To speak the truth, we must say that the teachings we have refuted are far removed from the spirit of justice and religion which animates and guides the Austrian Government in all its actions. Our august Monarch, who defends the goods of the Church, also favours religious bodies, which continue to increase under his paternal rule.

CHAPTER 14

Independence

263. Let us continue to clarify ideas. We have placed the concept of social *freedom* in the *individual* member of society considered as end, not means. The sole and ultimate purpose of everything done by the individual and by the social body is the good of the individual himself. Hence he cannot be used for any purpose; everything is used for his purpose, for the attainment of his end.

The concept of *independence* differs from that of *social freedom*. Properly speaking, social freedom is found only in society; independence is of its nature extra-social, outside society.

In society the individual is always free, even when dependent on government and bound to obedience. We have shown that obedience (the same can be said about dependence) is not subservience if dependence and obedience are regulated by the nature of things, not by arbitrary human judgment, and if the purpose of the dependence and obedience is the advantage of the very people who depend and obey.

Human beings, however, because endowed with certain inalienable rights (which we discussed in the preceding chapters), always exist in a sphere where they are independent of others. These rights define the sphere of their independence. *Social freedom* and *extra-social independence* are, therefore, distinct.

264. We must note carefully that the word ‘independence’ is habitually used in the bad sense of unacceptable insubordination to legitimate authority. We must also realise that it is very easy for our self-love, that is, our hidden wickedness of heart, to over-extend the sphere of our primitive, inalienable rights in order to extend our sphere of independence. This renders us violently unjust towards society.

Finally, in this very delicate and dangerous matter of independence, a most noble, moral duty forbids us to constitute ourselves absolute judges in our own cause. Probably there is no moral duty more salutary and necessary than this for human

society. It obliges us, in accord with the principles of humility and Christian diffidence, to resort to the judgment of the most upright, authoritative people in our endeavour to know the exact limit of our primitive rights.

CHAPTER 15

Political parties

265. All we have said clearly indicates that civil society, because of its intimate nature and end (which condition its existence and successful progress), requires 1. that the *rights* of all be respected and maintained, and 2. the use of rights be tempered and directed by special *moral duties*.

Political parties impede this *justice* and social *morality*; they corrode society, and are an evil, confounding the expectation of philosophers and rendering their fine theories useless. Political parties are formed by human beings who do not aim at what is *just* or morally *upright* and *virtuous* in what they do. Otherwise, they would not say they belonged to a party but to the ranks of upright citizens whose party (if we could call it that) is the whole of society itself.

266. The origin of political parties can be considered as threefold: 1. the effect of *material interests*; 2. the effect of *opinions* firmly held by a certain number of members of the society, and finally 3. the result of *popular passion* momentarily aroused by demagogues who themselves are moved by material interests, opinion or ambitious passion.

267. Parties originating from *interests* are formed by people from the different classes or conditions which compose civil society but whose social advantages collide. The proletariat, the rich people, the aristocracy, the heads of society naturally have different inclinations because they have interests which are partly different; these *inclinations* produce corresponding *opinions*. In turn the inclinations, expressed and supported by these opinions as they become hereditary, dynastic or corporative, are easily made into formal parties as soon as such classes of people unite in mutual understanding. This usually happens either when some energetic person places himself at their head to direct their complex action or when circumstances prompt mutual understanding among members who share the same condition. The extent of the parties corresponds more or less to the extent of interests: each

interest can have its own party to represent and defend it. Agricultural workers can form a political party which collides with manufacturing and trading parties. Trade itself can be divided into as many parties as there are objects constituting the matter of trade: we see for instance in France how fiercely makers of sugar from beet and traders in sugar from the colonies defend their opposing interests. The size of a party must not be measured solely by the extent of interests which are its object, but also by the number of citizens involved. Thus, not long ago in the United States of America, we saw the North defend trade restrictions because of its manufacturing industry while the agricultural South fiercely upheld freedom of trade.

268. Parties formed by *opinions* do not normally enjoy great strength unless the opinions themselves have interests as their concealed origin and foundation. If so, parties belong to the first class we have discussed. Parties of this kind can also lack strength if their opinions are not supported by ancient beliefs and ingrained customs, of which the strongest and most tenacious are those going back to the oldest origins and more religiously rooted in families.

269. Finally, parties formed by *popular passion* are generally violent. Their strength can destroy the best established institutions, unless some outside cause intervenes to moderate them. However, as long as they are not supported by interests or ancient opinions and national and family customs, they are totally without durability.

270. Clearly, whatever the origin of these different kinds of parties, their source is always ignoble and ominous. Justice and morality do not enter the minds of party-people. Their excitement, which can become enthusiasm, delirium and fury, is the result of much lower principles. Nothing could be more harmful for the preservation and natural function of civil society than political parties founded within society. This observation is even more regrettable to the extent that each citizen, who must necessarily belong to one level or other of society, has inclinations, opinions, habits and passions corresponding to that level. Even those who cannot be said to take sides, and generally show they love what is just and upright, can scarcely lack a certain kind of hidden instinct which inclines them to one

rather than another of the different parties. Consequently they favour different parties negatively or indirectly, and at critical times their inclination, hardly noticeable in time of calm, swings the social balance.

271. One of the most important questions for a politician, therefore, and one of the most difficult problems to be resolved by the philosophy of politics is how to defend civil association from the danger of parties, and make the peaceful principles of justice and moral rectitude, which alone can lead society to its true end, constantly prevail over the blind hotheadedness of party people.

272. Various measures have been proposed against the danger of parties, who remove from government and governed the necessary calm for discerning and using what is just and upright as the sole guide of personal actions. These measures, considered in general, can be reduced to the following:

1. No party should prevail over another, but each be so balanced that any two in conflict would collide at that level (system of balance or social antagonism).

2. One of the parties should so clearly prevail over the others that, having nothing to fear from the others, it loses any will for new enterprises; all the other parties are dominated, restrained and regulated by its overall power (system of absolutism).

273. If we examine these measures, both put forward as a defence of society against the danger of parties, we must conclude that the knowledge and ability of human beings to direct human society is limited and powerless. Society would lack any serious guarantee if, in addition to human provisions, it could not rely on a higher providence to keep continual watch over its preservation and government. Let us consider both measures briefly and simply.

274. A society preserved by ceaseless party antagonism is a society in which continual strife reigns; peaceful contentment of spirit, the very purpose of society, is totally lacking. Where the strength of each combating party is more or less equal, the struggle is continuous and indecisive. This may be sufficient to prevent the society's being sacrificed to the power of one party, but will never suffice to procure the contentment of the individual spirits that compose the society. Indeed the members

experience greater disturbance from the continual, indecisive fighting.⁸⁴

275. In the second place, it is not difficult to imagine some equality of strength between the largest parties of society, for example, the democratic, aristocratic and monarchic parties, which can be maintained for a time. But minor parties, which could be as numerous as the possible different interests, opinions and customs, can never remain in a state of equilibrium. Equally balanced parties may produce a certain equity in public dispositions, but the imbalance of minor parties opens the way to injustice in direct proportion to the intensity of their heated emotions.

276. Finally, it can never be a maxim of State that a balanced antagonism must be established and maintained between parties, because no human being or power exists that is willing or able to put such a maxim into practice. If this power did exist, it would have to be far stronger than all the parties it holds in balance. But a power that is stronger than all the parties either is, or is not, a party itself. A party dominating and maintaining equality between other parties is not a case of equilibrium being used to save the society from parties, but, as we said, of making one party prevail outright over all the others. If on the other hand the power, which is greater than that of the parties, does not belong to any party, the antagonism of equal parties is not sufficient of itself to save society; something is needed from outside all the parties, like Archimedes' fulcrum. The first of the proposed measures, therefore, is insufficient to obtain the end, that is, the protection of civil association from the harm threatened by the political parties formed within the association.

⁸⁴ As we observed elsewhere, this growth in disturbance of human spirits reaches its extreme when the object of the political party is by its nature unobtainable; consequently, the efforts to obtain it remain perpetually frustrated. This truth is obvious if we consider the nature of those parties which aim at the perfect *material equality* of human beings, that is, not 'equality before the law' but equality understood in the way the populace understand it, an equality in wealth and every other good. But this purpose can never be entirely obtained because it is contrary to the laws of nature. This explains the irritability, unrest and activity of all radicals and equalisers, in a word, of all those who cling to the most populist understanding of democratic principles.

277. The second measure, which we now examine, is also subject to difficulties that do not give society much hope for better protection and guarantee. There is no doubt that whenever one party dominates all others, it can level and govern them. In the United States, for example, after 1801 when the democratic party came to power and prevailed completely over the aristocratic party, great political parties ceased to exist because the people were the majority and became all-powerful. In the case of the Venetian aristocracy considered as a party (although it should more correctly be considered a government), we can easily understand why there never was another State with so few political parties. We can say the same about absolute monarchies.

At this point, however, we must distinguish forms of government from dominant parties. The purpose of any form of government whatever is universal justice, equity and every moral virtue, as we have said. The purpose of a dominant party is, on the contrary, its own self, its own advantage. Clearly, therefore, whenever a party places itself at the head of public affairs, freedom perishes, because justice and virtue have perished — something which no one wants. It is true that a party which has taken over government and power acquires from its responsibility views of justice and equity not held previously. But, apart from the consideration that some time must pass before the newly governing party has acquired the habits of justice and morality proper to governments, this would be a case of things functioning well socially because a party has ceased to be a party and become a just government, not because one of the parties is the government.

278. In the second place, it is true that all the small parties are suppressed when a prevalent force makes itself felt in society. This is not the case with large parties. Great power becomes burdensome to all members of society. As intelligence slowly develops in those subject to government, injustice and arbitrary decisions are found in many of the ruling enactments. Times of great social crises then arrive when minorities increase in strength as feelings spill over into enthusiasm. Through these feelings the ideas of some become ferocious; the ideas of others, generous to the point of heroism. Many of the weak sacrifice themselves fearlessly and unhesitatingly to challenge strength

immensely greater than theirs, and the place of those who succumb is taken by still greater numbers.

The spirit of freedom and independence, which harmonises so well with everyone's self-love, spreads everywhere; the attacking party, smaller and weaker at first, nearly always wins. At these times, the anarchy of ideas in individual minds balances the anarchy manifested by the society. No one knows what kind of State will result or who will hold power; this is beyond human knowledge. Only Providence from on high determines the new destinies of nations, which undergo such a crisis without knowing why. What long-term guarantee therefore can be given to a society in which one party prevails over all others, or any force whatever comes to dominate all the parties?

279. My conclusion, drawn from the manifest inefficiency of the two measures proposed for protecting society from the harm done by parties, is the following.

No political combination is sufficient to firmly guarantee society from the bad effect of political parties. This can be done only by preventing their formation, or, if they are formed, by reinforcing and encouraging them as little as possible.

But how can their formation be prevented or, if formed, how can they be held in check?

280. As we have seen, by 'political party' I mean a certain number of people who associate expressly or tacitly for the purpose of using their combined strength to influence civil society and make it serve their own advantage. The purpose of a party is not justice, equity and moral virtue, but its own advantage. Justice, equity and virtue are the contrary of party. The only way therefore to impede the formation of political parties and keep them as moderate as possible is 'to sow early in the spirit of the individuals who compose society the seeds of justice and moral, religious virtues, and above all to educate future generations in such a way that youth conceives a love for all that is just, upright and virtuous.'

281. The health of society must ultimately be sought in the probity and moral virtue of the individuals composing it. This is the only true and stable guarantee of its utility and existence. I repeat: public good must be sought in the private citizen; social justice in individual justice. The foundation stone of

the social edifice must be virtue, buried deep in the human heart.⁸⁵

282. No human being can lay this stone so that it remains immovable; only the Providence of God, who created the human race and never loses sight of it, is capable of the task. We will try to clarify this by the observations made in the next book.

⁸⁵ J. de Maistre made a noble affirmation when he said that 'uprightness of heart and habitual purity of intention can have influences and results which extend much further than is generally thought' (*Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, tom. 1, pag. 17).

A difficult but very fruitful topic for moralists would be the investigation and description of these hidden, remote influences and results of *habitual purity of intention* and constant uprightness of heart.

Book Three

HOW THE PROXIMATE, BUT THEORETICALLY UNDETERMINED END OF CIVIL SOCIETY BECOMES FACTUALLY DETERMINED

I learnt from Plato that certain
changes are natural in public affairs.

Cicero, *De Divin.*, 2, 2

[INTRODUCTION]

283. We have shown at length in the previous book that the ultimate and primary end of civil society is the moral contentment of the human spirit. This end is simple, obvious and fully determined in itself. But civil association, besides possessing this ultimate end (or *social end*, as we may call it) has its own proper end, that is, its proximate end (or *civil end*, as we have called it). Relative to the social end, the civil end must be considered as a simple *means*, and valued as such, neither more nor less. It is not easy to describe adequately the nature of this proximate end of civil society.

284. Although some elements of the proximate end of civil society can undoubtedly be indicated easily, because they are essential to all civil societies, this is not true of all elements. For instance, the following is one of the fairly obvious elements composing the *proximate end* of civil society: 'The protection of all rights pertaining to individual members by means of the least violent and most peaceful defence of these rights.' I do not wish to comment on this formula, which expresses the first element of the civil end — I am not writing a treatise on right — but the thoughtful reader will understand its importance without difficulty and sense its intimate truth.

Granted this formula and the full protection of the rights of all individuals, it is clear that each individual can make free use of his rights within their limits and in the correct way. Practically speaking, *civil freedom* consists in this *free use* of all one's rights. This brings to light another element of the proximate end of civil society: 'The maintenance of the greatest possible civil liberty of all the individuals composing the society.' These two elements, 1. the peaceful, effective defence of rights and 2. the fullest possible freedom in exercising them, can never be absent from the end for which people form civil associations, and are therefore necessarily included in the end of such associations. We are now faced, however, with another question: what is to prevent members from drawing other kinds of good from their association?

285. It is certain that association can be a means, willed by the members, towards many different kinds of good. Likewise, the administration responsible for some aim intended by the social will can be limited to some degree by this will in the use of the means available for obtaining its purpose, and in the arrangements it can make relative to the purpose. In certain States, for example, many useful works are carried out by means of private societies; in other States, by the government. The functions of administration and of government are not equally determined and defined in all places. For this reason we said that civil society is one of those societies which, considered in general, have an *undetermined, proximate end*.⁸⁶

286. This means, of itself undetermined, has to be determined in every individual civil society by two principles, *Right* and *Fact*, which determine the proximate end of civil society.

287. The science of Right, which can determine the end of civil society, is still in its infancy. Practically nothing has been done about it in those places where civilisation seems most advanced. All European nations with the exception of Switzerland and the municipality of San Marino have a mixed constitution composed of a *seigniorial* and a *social element* variously proportioned in different States. These proportions change through violent or peaceful political revolutions, instantaneously or gradually, and principally because the two elements are not sufficiently determined by some express, evident Right [*App.*, no. 5].

Right which has to determine the *seigniorial element* is *universal* and *particular*. Universal Right contains the principles needed to provide the determination of which we are speaking. Particular Right applies these principles to the *de facto* titles found in different nations. Through this application, it is able to establish whether this *seigniorial element* exists in a given nation and, if so, its precise sphere.

⁸⁶ By associating, members tend proximately to a varying degree of complex good which can be made up in various ways. To achieve this end, government can use only those *means* least onerous for its members. In other words, it must obtain the end proposed for it with the least possible evil. Consequently, it must have at its disposition only what is strictly *necessary* to achieve its end. This must always be understood, however, relative to its capacity for solving more or less adequately this problem of the least means.

288. The general theory of these titles, and the principles of justice and equity to be applied to them, are not yet complete. Even less care has been taken to collate the real titles themselves and the documents indicating facts which, in individual nations, can provide a base for seigniorial right and limit its extension. This work was viewed with apprehension by those who could undertake it; they reasoned like aristocracies which, as we said, are loathe to provide clear laws. This reason is not, we maintain, a simple will to abuse power through vague, undetermined laws, but rather fear of the dangers foreseen as an inevitable result of the discussions that must precede every attempt to establish new, clear laws.⁸⁷

289. The *social element* can be based only on the nature of the society, the will of its members and on all the documents enabling us to know this will precisely.

290. Such *de jure* determination of the proximate end of society is reserved for the future. It will not be delayed by any human will, and it is the greatest step that civilisation is about to take. It is true that all right pertains to the *ideal order*, but whether progress comes about in this order or not, or whether the proximate end of society is determined or not by human thought and expressed under positive sanctions, the *agent causes*, which pertain to the *real order*, continue to act for good or evil, justly or unjustly, in society. The proximate end of society therefore is always under *de facto determination*, despite its continued *de jure* indetermination. Our intention in this book is to study this single, unremitting *de facto* determination of the civil end.

⁸⁷ If we consider the highest aristocracy of Europe before the French revolution, we do not find a single sovereign State without its precious claims over other States. There was no desire to define and bring to term such half-rights because each State wished to reserve for itself some excuse for action when occasion offered. This is the worst kind of false political theory. Uncertainty about rights and the secret struggle over unending claims must cause constant distrust amongst States and generate war with extreme ease. Some idea of the mutual claims held by European courts can be seen by reading the booklet *Intérêts et maximes des princes et des états souverains*, Cologne, 1666. — This part of *seigniorial-public right* has made great progress since the French revolution. Many ancient claims have been mutually renounced; conventions between reigning houses have been clarified, defined more closely and made more explicit. There is no doubt that similar progress is required today in the field of *social-public right*.

CHAPTER 1

The undetermined, proximate end of society is determined in fact by the *practical reason of the masses*, and by the *speculative reason of individuals*

291. It is not difficult to understand why the *per se* undetermined end of civil society is necessarily determined in fact by the behaviour of the members and administrators of society. As long as some good remains undetermined, it can never in practice be the aim of human actions, which always tend to attain determined good. Real good is nothing if not determined. Undetermined good, as we call it, which is only an abstraction, existing in the mind, does not indicate anything real in nature.

292. Applying this observation to civil society, we can distinguish *government* from those who are *governed*, and the different ways of acting of both parties. On a more general level we can, if we wish, repeat our distinction between the *practical reason of the masses* and the *speculative reason of individuals*.⁸⁸ These two agents work together simultaneously to determine in practice the good or complex of good that society tends to attain in fact. This good thus becomes its real, proximate end.

293. Sometimes the *practical reason of the masses* and the *speculative reason of individuals* are at one in determining this good or complex of good; sometimes they conflict. In the latter case, the good or complex of good to which in fact civil society tends is the composite effect resulting from the simultaneous action of the two reasons, which together direct and move the social body in different, or even contrary directions.

294. It is clear, therefore, that human good, the contentment of the members, the true good of society, depends upon uprightness and soundness in the practical reason of the masses and on the speculative reason of individuals. Whether they act harmoniously or disharmoniously, these two reasons

⁸⁸ Cf. SC [c. 8 ss.]. — Properly speaking, *speculative reason* never acts. When we speak of the *speculative reason of individuals*, therefore, we simply wish to use an abbreviation for the following over-lengthy phrase: *the practical reason of individuals which is guided by some speculative teaching*.

contemporaneously urge society towards its end. If the masses and individuals are corrupt and seriously mistaken in their evaluation of what is good, society cannot arrive at the end for which it was established. We conclude, therefore, that society's salvation depends 'on the opinions and upright feelings that members have about its good and evil. This is especially true of the more influential individuals in society.' Moreover, the citizens' vices are detrimental to public happiness.

CHAPTER 2

The soundness and corruption of the practical reason of the masses prior to the institution of civil society

295. We will gain a good deal of light on our subject, I think, if we first examine the different levels of soundness and corruption at which the practical reason of the masses and the speculative reason of individuals can be found. In each case, we shall show how these sound and corrupt reasons exercise their influence in determining the proximate end of society. We begin with the practical reason of the masses.

296. In order not to omit any case, we have to begin by considering the state of soundness and corruption in the masses anterior to the institution of civil society. We have to go back in thought to the cradle of humanity when, at the death of the father of a family, or whoever held his place, siblings with equal standing remained deprived of the natural ties binding them in domestic society.

297. Communal living on the part of siblings or kinsfolk forming a tribe, that is, an incipient civil society, retained family customs, although it is almost impossible to suppose the existence of such a community before the development of agriculture, which fixes the population on determined soil and forces it to adopt city-living. Probably only the Hebrews knew how to live together in strict sociality before becoming cultivators. The force of true religion brought them together and gave them as father a truly extraordinary man, a prophet of God. Religion made them respect this man, consecrate forever what he willed to them, and bind unmovably his paternal desires to the revelations of the Almighty and to solemn promises about future greatness. Religion accounted for the wonders which bound in such unity a multitude of descendants who had not as yet learned to live by cultivation. It is indeed difficult to find in history another example equal to that of the children of Jacob who, in their twelve tribes, lived as pastors, yet as a single people.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Nomadic tribes of pastors still exist, but I think that the Hebrews are the only example in human history of a pastoral people's changing, after four

They had a single will, both in the slavery of Egypt and in the freedom of the desert where they were led for forty years by a captain who used only his God-given authority to guide these six million persons through such a vast, arid solitude.

298. Without these two causes (agriculture and religion), a multitude of descendants from one father do not unite gradually to form a single people. When fathers die, siblings divide into more than one family, that is, into that state which, according to us, is prior to the foundation of civil societies. During this period, hunting, fishing or pastoral activity, the sources of subsistence, give rise to only temporary, or at most imperfect, civil unions of tribes held together by the necessity of common defence. Their head is the finest warrior, who leads them to war when necessary, and whose power ceases when war comes to an end.

299. We must now examine the characteristic soundness and corruption present in the reason of the masses during the period of varying length that precedes true civil societies.

300. In this initial condition, the population has no intellectual development. Nevertheless, the need to act draws with it some use of the understanding, whose development now begins. In the first steps of such development, made through the perception of external objects, nature provides human beings with a rule — physical pleasure and pain — enabling them to distinguish what is useful to them from what is harmful. Note that the physical pleasure and pain of which we speak are simply indicators for primitive people of what can help or harm their nature. As long as human beings remain incorrupt (even though they have not developed), they never tend to physical pleasure as their end, nor avoid pain as if it were the height of evil. They tend to good, general well-being, to a good state of their entire nature; pleasure and pain are only indications which they follow in the belief that they will find what they seek. Consequently, placing little importance in actual physical pleasure or pain is a sign that

hundred years, into an agricultural, property-owning nation. There is no doubt that Providence used the two means of slavery and desert solitude to keep the Hebrews united amongst themselves by separating them from all other peoples. They thus came to possess that unique, indelible temperament which enabled Balaam to describe them as: ‘A people dwelling alone, and not reckoning itself as among the nations’ (Num 23: [9]).

instinct and practical reason, which serve as guides to these people, are still incorrupt.

301. However, there are races in which the senses seem to have acquired total command over the will. This tyranny of the senses may depend both on the primitive strains of physical constitution amongst them and their continually obtuse, inert understanding, or on the corruption of their upright, natural instinct through the abuse of physical pleasures. In either case, it is certain that these populations can never make any progress if the corruption of which we are speaking is rampant in them before they associate in civil communities, nor can they ever hope to form civil aggregations.

This primitive corruption seems to account for the origin of savage tribes who appear to have been overtaken by corruption before political association has made possible the actuation of their intellectual and moral faculties. It is very difficult to believe that populations united in civil societies, which presuppose an activated intellective capacity, could descend into savagery, which presupposes no intellectual development. These populations and races were, therefore, held back from their initial step forward; their intellect, weak and inactive by nature, was overridden and conquered by the vehemence of material sensations. Sense alone thus remained in charge; and sense has no power to draw people together in civil communal life. Sense foresees nothing; it moves only on the basis of actually felt, present good.

302. I think that this origin of savage peoples explains better than any previous hypothesis the customs and characteristics distinguishing them from civilised people. Their passion for liquor, which makes them drink themselves to death, shows how immediate pleasure amongst such races has prevailed over the instinct for good behaviour and bodily health. This is an obvious symptom of the intimate corruption of the animal instinct which, while still incorrupt, is ruled consistently by the need to follow immediate pleasure not for itself but as an indication of what is healthy. It often happens, in fact, that the incorrupt instinct guides the animal even to deprive itself of certain pleasures and to submit spontaneously to certain kinds of pain.⁹⁰ Destroying a plant after collecting its fruit shows a total

⁹⁰ This law of animal nature was studied at length in *AMS*, 401–415.

lack of foresight and practically zero use of the intellectual faculties which, impeded and as it were imprisoned by present sensation, are scarcely capable of taking a single step forward.

303. At times, the religious ideas of savages sometimes appear simple and pure (this is the case of North American Indians who worship God principally under the name of the Great Spirit); at other times *feticism* is found amongst savage races. This is a superstition originating in the family, and presupposes in those who initiate it not only dominion over the senses, but also control of the sensual imagination and some use of the intellect as an aid to the imagination. It is the opposite of the pure idea of the divinity as one and spiritual, which itself shows that primitive tradition has been preserved free from elaboration and alteration by the human spirit; in other words, it indicates a lesser degree of intellectual activity than feticism [*App.*, no. 6].

304. The nature of language amongst savage peoples also provides a sign of intellectual inertia and immobility. The languages of the American Indians from the Arctic down to Cape Horn are regular to the highest degree, and depend upon the same grammatical laws. Modern philologists find that these languages possess a very exact, wise system of ideas.⁹¹ Here, too, it is clear that such populations have traditionally preserved the language they received from antiquity without elaborating it. This is due, as we said, to the immobility of their intellectual faculties. It would seem, therefore, that these languages, preserved more faithfully from remotest antiquity, provide a better source for discovering fragments of the primitive idiom towards which modern linguistic studies tend ever more eagerly, than do the languages of more developed peoples subject to greater changes.

305. The love of freedom and independence found amongst savage peoples is famous, but careful examination shows that what is at stake is great repugnance in using the understanding rather than love of freedom. All social bonds require the use of understanding because they demand constant attention in

⁹¹ On the languages of the American Indians, cf. *Papers of the Philosophical Society of America*, vol. 1, Philadelphia, 1819, pp. 356–464; vol. 3, which contains the grammar of the Delaware or Lenape language by Geiberger; *American Encyclopaedia*, vol. 6, *in fine*.

directing one's actions in harmony with them. This continual intellectual care and vigilance is an intolerable burden to savages who abandon themselves to the guidance of passing sensations. Civil society is thus excluded by savage peoples because their use of understanding is not at the level required by the institution of society. Their intellect, we repeat, has come to a halt before the insuperable repugnance felt in using it; at the same time, degraded human beings have an immense propensity to be moulded by casual yet lively sensations.

306. I note finally that poor use of the understanding does not prevent savage peoples from having extremely strong feelings. On the contrary, feeling seems greater when *reflection* is non-existent. In savages we find, united to *animal instinct*, activities arising from what we call *human instinct*.⁹² This explains the presence in savages of heroic acts of natural virtues, allied with monstrous vices.

Charlevoix, in his description of the first French war against the Iroquois in 1610, narrates that the Huron, who were allies of the French, were greatly scandalised when they saw the French strip several Iroquois, lying dead on the battlefield, of their beaver skins. The Huron themselves, however, inflicted unheard-of cruelty on their prisoners, and the French were horrified to find them eating a man they had slaughtered.

These barbarians prided themselves on their aloofness and were amazed at its absence in our own nation. Yet they did not understand that despoiling the dead was far less evil than eating their flesh like animals.⁹³

The Indian is kind and hospitable at times of peace, but in war merciless beyond the known limits of human cruelty. He is prepared to die of hunger for the sake of the stranger who knocks on his door at night, yet tears apart with his own hands the quivering members of his prisoners. The most famous republics of antiquity never saw more resolute courage, prouder spirits and more unshakeable love of independence than that hidden in the savage forests of the New World.⁹⁴

⁹² Cf. our remarks about the *human instinct* in *AMS*, 683–686.

⁹³ Vol. 1, p. 235.

⁹⁴ President Jefferson reports: 'The Iroquois have provided examples of elders who disdained to flee from their enemies or to go on living after the

Hospitality and revenge pertain to *human feeling*, and do not require great use of reflection. Thus, they are found even to the highest degree in savage peoples.

307. This all shows clearly that the state of populations which have degenerated before the institution of civil society renders the institution impossible. The degree of intellectual activity sufficient to determine the proximate end of society is lacking, together with the means for achieving it. As a result, the collective will of these people is anti-social rather than simply unsocial. They consider society as an evil because the use of understanding required by society is for them an evil.

308. Nevertheless, humanity does not renounce *contentment* when reduced to a state in which it is unable to determine the proximate end of civil association. *Contentment* is that good to which human beings tend as human beings, either through society or without it. Savages, too, seek and find a suitable contentment amidst their dearth of needs and desires. They achieve it by neglecting their intellectual faculties and exercising extreme physical activity, after having been immersed in this state of stupidity either through their ancestors' fault or their own, or through having contracted disastrously yet blamelessly some disordered physical habit from the race.

destruction of their country. They faced death like the ancient Romans during the sack of Rome by the Gauls.' (*Note sulla Virginia*, p. 148). He goes on: 'There is no example of an Indian who begged for his life after falling into the hands of his enemies. Rather, the prisoner almost seeks death from his captors by insulting and provoking them in every way' (cf. p. 150).

CHAPTER 3

The soundness and corruption of the practical reason of the masses during the four stages of civil society

309. Let us now review the case of populations which are incorrupt before the foundation of civil society. By retaining a certain amount of free, intellectual activity, these populations are fit to unite in civil societies; their power of understanding enables them to conceive the advantage they would gain by this and, therefore, to determine some good which serves as the proximate end of the society they intend to establish amongst themselves.

310. We should note, moreover, that such association, which presupposes a degree of primitive incorruption, is itself extremely useful both for intellectual development and the moral betterment of the families who unite. I add 'for moral betterment' because the establishment of a political society between families or individuals in these families provides a new, useful direction to all the passions as the new society becomes the fixed aim of the attention and thoughts of all.

From the moment the city-state is founded, the intellect sees before it a new, great object for which it has to work. The members' previous unregulated efforts and customs necessarily come under a rule and order; the affections are nourished by a noble desire to develop and obtain common prosperity, which is the common good sought by the association. This would explain how Romulus' insignificant offspring evolved so quickly and almost magically into a solid people with exemplary customs. Later, the outcasts of Europe established in the New World flourishing colonies and well-ordered States in which respect for laws together with love of order, work and all civil and domestic virtues took root. In the light of these things, it is not to be wondered that all the traditions and memories of remotest antiquity are unanimous in asserting the presence of natural goodness when a civil community is at its first stage of association.

311. The further we go back in antiquity, the more frequently

we find simple customs, frugality and austerity of life, uprightness of mind and integrity of heart. In a word, the goodness we meet in primitive nature would convince us that human beings are good from their origin, were it not for the clear, though few, indications of human corruption that we find by careful consideration of those first stages. And, of course, we have before us examples of populations that have fallen into the saddest depravity almost from their first existence on earth, as we saw in the previous chapter. Moreover, the phenomenon of good customs present in the infancy of nations is explained easily enough if we realise that even the germs of corruption need as much time and opportunity to develop and show themselves as do the phenomena of virtue and wisdom. The aberrations of instinct, although scarcely perceivable at first, become ever greater as humanity grows older; all the seeds in humanity germinate and develop with the various stages of society.

312. Let us take one example: the function assigned by nature to the instinct of pleasure and pain. As we said, this function serves to indicate to the animal what is useful and what is damaging to its habitual constitution. From the very beginning, this instinct must have been fallacious to some degree. In other words, it must have indicated falsely what was good or harmful to our constitution. In making certain things too pleasurable or not pleasurable enough to us, it showed them more or less useful than they actually were; it made them too painful or not painful enough, it showed them more or less harmful than they actually were. If we then go on to abuse the pleasures falsified to some extent by faulty instinct, pleasure itself stimulates the instinct of pleasure. Finally the stimulated instinct acquires the prevalent force over the will and the understanding which leads to the advanced corruption found throughout the whole human being.⁹⁵

313. This natural law, in virtue of which the innately corrupt germ, scarcely noticeable at the beginning, grows as humanity develops, causes the gradual corruption of the practical reason of the masses in civil societies.

⁹⁵ I have explained (*AMS*, 687–726) both the natural malfunction of *instinct* and the development by which it comes to prevail in human beings.

314. Here, we have to note four stages in which this practical reason, always intent on the most immediate and present good, comes to determine in different ways the proximate end of society, that is, the aim which the complex will of the members intends and desires.⁹⁶ At each stage there is a sound condition followed by a corrupt condition. We can now begin to sketch the characteristics of these stages.

315. As long as there is question of founding civil society, defending it against external enemies and regulating it with internal laws, the minds and wills of all its members are dedicated to these noble aims, which are so helpful to the moral condition of the human spirit. At this first stage, the practical reason of the masses determines the *proximate end* of the society and social activity, which it makes consist in the *very existence of the society*. The newly-born society is the object of the love, study and care of all. As we said elsewhere, this is a moral and pre-eminently patriotic stage in the life of a society. A special kind of common satisfaction and *contentment* corresponds in the members to the good or proximate end as this is gradually achieved.

316. When the end has been achieved, and the society founded, strengthened by arms and furnished with laws, the social will, that is, the reason of the masses, is bound to turn naturally to another object and thus determine in some other way the *proximate end* of social action. Normally this end is determined by making it consist in the attainment of *power* and glory for the fatherland. Already at this second stage the proximate end or good to which people tend is neither as pure nor as moral as at the first stage. It is now a question of being on the offensive, not the defensive; of conquest, not avoiding defeat; commanding others for the sake of one's own advantage, not laws useful for self and the commonalty of the citizens. The laws which first regulated the citizens were highly charged with social benevolence because they tended necessarily to the common good of the members; now, because they aim at dominion over foreigners, it is utility, not social benevolence, which dictates ordinances and laws. The relationship of dominion and servitude is introduced into society. The sole

⁹⁶ The reader would need to recall what has been said in SC [cc. 7 & 8].

relationship of brotherhood no longer rules as it did; the social bond has been entwined, ivy-like, with the bond of cold, hard ownership. We should not be surprised, at this stage, to see true virtues decrease and give way to other false, apparent, impressive and popular virtues, despite the presence of military heroes and wise counsellors with profound convictions. Customs deteriorate rapidly as ambition and glory come to hold sway. Patriotism, which seems more ardent than at the first stage, actually loses its purity and pristine legitimacy. In such a state of things, satisfaction and *contentment* are achieved with difficulty; the longing for power and the burning desire for glory become unquenchable, and the practical reason of the masses loses its way in the midst of delusion.

317. With the State now powerful and glorious, the practical reason of the masses once more changes direction and moves eagerly towards love of wealth which, together with power, has entered society. This love of wealth can be united with productive work, commerce and other decent ways of enrichment, or it can be a love of false wealth, satisfying its longings by means of theft and rapine.

318. The love of wealth is less dangerous in the first case. Productive work requires use of the intellect, which keeps the intellectual faculties alive. However, it is practically impossible not to go to excess in wanting to enrich oneself, at least with the passage of time, and not to become insatiable. In this case, contentment of spirit, the supreme end of society, is impossible.

319. The final result, if a powerful, easy-going people loves wealth solely as a means towards luxury and pleasure, is a state of moral perversion and corruption. As I have said,⁹⁷ these very pleasures are still desired for some time by the society as a whole. Soon, however, each person desires them for himself alone; selfishness takes the place of benevolence. External society goes on, but only until it crumbles before some slight collision; internal, true society has perished. In this final condition, the *proximate end* of society is factually non-existent. The difference between the condition of savages and that of citizens who have arrived at ultimate corruption is this: the corruption

⁹⁷ Ibid.

of savages precedes the existence of a society, that of citizens comes after the existence of the society. As a result, the society continues for some time in its exterior forms despite the corruption of its members.⁹⁸

320. The practical reason of the masses therefore determines the proximate end of society differently in society's four different stages.

At the *first* stage, the proximate end of society is made to consist in the *society itself*, whose existence is sought as the immediate good; at the *second* stage, in *power*; at the *third*, in social *wealth*; at the *fourth*, in *pleasure*. Only the first stage can be called a stage⁹⁹ of social incorruption; only then do the reason and will of the masses tend towards the substance of society, that is, to an absolutely upright good. At the first stage, *power* is still absent, and with it the desire to overcome and dominate others; justice reigns. *Wealth* is absent, and with it covetousness; a frugal, simple life reigns. There is no luxury or refined *pleasure*; moderation and sound living reigns.

321. The stages of power, wealth and pleasure have their own special dangers. Each stage is subject to its own kind of social corruption.

Social corruption resulting from an immoderate desire of *power* consists in a state of violence and *war*, in the harshness proper to ways of living consequent upon war, and in continued acts of arrogance intended to subjugate free peoples — *magna latrocinia*, as St. Augustine calls them.

Social corruption resulting from an immoderate desire of *wealth* leads to *servitude*. Love of wealth belittles noble spirits;

⁹⁸ The masses, who find all their good in pleasure of one kind or another, are like true prodigal sons who dissipate and consume what their predecessors have accumulated. Consequently, nations which have succumbed to sensual living rapidly sink from riches to poverty as pleasure becomes more precious to the people than wealth. This is most obvious in the case of Rome when the occupation of that sovereign people was reduced to eating and enjoyment. Every public office, and even the empire itself, was sold to the most prodigal competitor. Sallustius marvelled at a certain type of contemporary who was unable to possess any patrimony himself and could not tolerate it in others (Cf. *Fragm. ex De Civ. Dei*, 2: 18).

⁹⁹ We have already divided this stage into two periods, that of the *founders* and that of the *legislators*. Cf. SC, c. 7.

there is no depth to which a lover of money cannot sink. Besides bearing every hardship that promises some possibility of enrichment, peoples' wealth also attracts the cupidity of rulers who see it as a reason for imposing higher taxes and other burdens. Rousseau, after noting how Alexander, in order to keep the Ichthyophagi under his rule forced them to renounce fishing and live off the produce of the land, adds: 'And the American savages, who wander about naked and live only on what they hunt, could never be conquered. How can you impose a yoke on people who need nothing?'¹⁰⁰ These comments are true, but they go further than I need. Agricultural wealth, if it assists the institution and government of a society, is more to be praised than blamed. A society that regulates natural freedom is not some kind of servitude, but part of the perfecting of humanity. We cannot deny, however, that freedom is lessened. This proves that if love of wealth is excessive, initially good diminution of freedom changes into the evil of servitude.

Social corruption resulting from the abuse of pleasure necessarily leads to *barbarity*; the light of intelligence is extinguished when social corruption acquires predominance in populations.

322. *War, servitude and barbarity* are, therefore, characteristics and effects which follow the corruption of society through excessive desire of *power, wealth and sensual pleasure*. Three kinds of integrity correspond to the three kinds of corruption in peoples.

1. The sign of integrity relative to pleasure consists, as we said, in valuing a healthy, robust, general well-being of person rather than actual pleasure as a constant perfection in nature.

2. The sign of integrity relative to wealth consists in a greater esteem of one's own freedom and independence than in devotion to wealth.

3. The sign of integrity relative to power consists more in love of justice, equity and beneficence towards all than in love of power and glory.

These signs and characteristics of integrity are found in all societies when we examine the most ancient, primitive stage of their foundation. Greece and Rome are our proof.

323. Not far from Heraclea there is a place called Agamo after

¹⁰⁰ *Discours à l'académie de Dijon*, P. 1.

a queen who, for love of hunting, preserved her virginity. The name is a reminder that the pleasure of the hunt, in which all the benefits of a healthy, agile, robust, forceful body are experienced, were preferred to softness of any kind. According to Sallustius, 'at one time, Roman youth learned how to put up with war through sheer hard work; they learned combat in the field as soon as they were capable of bearing arms. And they found more pleasure in stout weapons and war-horses than in prostitutes and banquets.'¹⁰¹ The kind of incorrupt nature we are speaking about is shown by the delight described by Appian when he wanted to encourage the Romans to continue the siege of Veii during the winter: 'Effort and pleasure are of their nature very different, but are joined in a certain natural companionship.'¹⁰² And because country life removes occasions of such corruption, it was said that 'agriculture is a neighbour and almost a kinswoman of wisdom.'¹⁰³ This is the sign of incorruption relative to pleasure.

324. Poverty was held in honour for a long time amongst the Romans who boasted that their private patrimony was small and the common patrimony great. Examples of this are seen in Valerius Publicola and Menenius Agrippa. They saved the State by their virtue, but had to be buried out of public funds; at their death, they did not leave enough to cover their funerals. Cincinnatus is another example. He returned to the plough after being dictator and leading the army to save Rome from extreme danger. Another example is found in sentiments expressed by Fabricius who told Pyrrhus about the contempt for gold and the honourable poverty which in Rome went hand in hand with the most important offices of the magistrature. There are many other memorable actions and sayings which show how Romans at their first stage of society put their own freedom and defence, and then their own power, before the vain splendour of treasure.¹⁰⁴ At that time, even women, who easily

¹⁰¹ *De Bell. Catil.*

¹⁰² Tit. Liv., Dec. I, bk. 5, c. 2.

¹⁰³ Colum., *De re rust.*, bk. 1. — 'Country life teaches austerity, diligence and justice' (Cic., *Orat. pro Roscio Amer.*, n. 71).

¹⁰⁴ When Fabricius told Pyrrhus that the Romans wished to command those who possessed riches, not the riches themselves, he expressed a

fall prey to avarice and vanity, gave up their precious gold ornaments for love of country; the people, still sound and great lovers of freedom, would not allow themselves to be seduced by the Tribunes who offered to divide the land for them.¹⁰⁵ At this stage, the love of wealth had not yet blinded and corrupted the practical reason of the masses.

325. Both in Greece and Rome alike we find facts which prove how at that time equity, justice and magnanimity prevailed over the love of *power*. When Hercules and Theseus fought with thieves, they wanted to use only the arms the thieves themselves had. This shows a certain type of bravery seeking something nobler than mere dominion. When Alexander, to avoid appearing like a common thief, refused to attack his enemies at night, he showed that his desire to dominate was still tempered by some kind of feeling of equity and magnanimity. When the Athenians ruled the seas after the defeat of the Persians, they laid down the amount to be paid by Greece and Asia for the maintenance of the fleet guarding Greece.¹⁰⁶ The Heracleotes refused to pay. The Athenians sent Lamachus with ten ships to demand the sum in question. He left for Pontus in the summer, took the triremes up the river Caleca and devastated the Heracleotean territory. At this point the mountain snows melted, causing a surge of water that drove his boats on to the rocks where they broke up. He was unable to return by

sentiment in which love of power, rather than love of freedom, prevailed over love of wealth.

¹⁰⁵ Livy, speaking about the people's rejection in 266 AUC of the proposition made by the Tribune Rabuleius (to reimburse the poor with public money for what they had spent in the preceding famine when buying grain given by Gelon, king of Syracuse, to the Republic), says: 'The people spurned this as little different from an actual reward given by a kingdom. They had such an INBORN SUSPICION OF "KINGDOM" that even if they were to abound in everything, they would in spirit spurn all its gifts.' This philosophical manner of speaking, 'spurned in spirit' (*in animis hominum respuebantur*) should be noticed: it shows how the principles governing a people's political attitude reside in their disposition of spirit. — Even in 690 AUC, Cicero was able to dissuade the Roman people from accepting the distribution of land offered by the tribune Servilius Rullus in the agrarian law. He did this by reminding them of the harm to freedom threatened by that law.

¹⁰⁶ Olymp. 87, a. 2.

sea, and dared not march overland for fear of the savage inhabitants. The Heracleotes, instead of profiting by his misfortune, gave him provisions and an armed escort for his return with the army to Chalcedon through the territories of Thrace in Bithynia. There are several examples of such conduct in the great days of Greece.

The same can be said about Rome. During Rome's finest periods, the Senate, before declaring war, spent more time discussing the justice of the war than its usefulness. As we can see, love of power was still moderated by a feeling for justice.¹⁰⁷ The Romans, after defeating the Etruscans in battle, treated their enemies with great humanity, looked after their wounded and gave them a zone at Rome itself between the Palatine and Capitoline hills. This was a fine example of humanity and beneficence in victory. Porsenna was greatly moved, and freely restored to the Romans the territories beyond the Tiber ceded to him in a peace treaty. This was another example of how love of virtue overcame and conquered love of power.

Signs of the three kinds of integrity we are discussing can be found, therefore, in the history of the most famous civil societies.

326. The same is true about the three kinds of corruption which correspond to the three kinds of integrity. What we have said clearly indicates that the worst corruption is that which snuffs out social existence by placing all social understanding in sensual desires. As a result, sense remains the sole guide of the people. This kind of corruption is either first or last; it either precedes the existence of a society and thus prevents its formation, or it indicates social discrepancy and thus annihilates the society. In both cases, it shows itself equally incompatible with the existence of civil association [*App.*, no. 7].

Corruption arising from the desire for power and glory can be present in a nation which nevertheless remains upright

¹⁰⁷ 'They went to war as a last resort, not light-heartedly. In their view, only just wars could be undertaken' (Varro, *De Vita P. R.*, bk. 2). The Fetiales, armed heralds sent to declare war, witnessed to the justice due to the Roman people with many oaths and before Jove. This is another proof of the point I am making. — Although it is fashionable today to malign everything done by the Romans, I would prefer to avoid the company of backbiters, whatever the fashion.

relative to wealth and ways of life; freedom and simplicity of life can still be found there. During this period, the nation is wounded, but gives no sign of its weakness. Indeed, it remains on its feet, grows, and provides examples of virtue. Rome continued in this state for some time after the defeat of Carthage (608 AUC), the moment from which we can begin to measure the corruption of the Roman republic. The source of the corruption is immoderate covetousness, unleashed by domination.

Corruption arising from the passion for wealth is itself prior to the corruption consisting in the downfall of the senses. As a result, a nation does not abandon itself to voluptuousness as soon as it begins to lust for riches. For some time, it remains rich, temperate and frugal. Usually this period is also noteworthy, provided wealth is a result of industry; it is, however, extremely brief if riches flow into the State as an effect of aggrandisement. This explains why the wealth of Rome, that is, the spoils taken from nations and the gold that Spain took from the New World, rapidly give way to luxury and immorality in those peoples. War and conquest, not honest work and constant industry, were the sources of this wealth.

Nor should we believe that a nation which becomes powerful must immediately be dazzled and seduced by its own power. Although the possession of unlimited power and enormous wealth is dangerous, it is the decent or immoral origin of these goods which corrupts the masses, not the actual presence of the power or the gold. If power is the natural effect of justice and virtue, and wealth is the reward of industry and wise economy, neither corrupts peoples. Usurped power and stolen wealth serve to corrupt without limit because they themselves are rooted in corruption.

327. It is impossible, therefore, to determine precisely the length of the four stages through which nations pass, or the time they need to be influenced by the corruption proper to each of the three final stages. In this respect, nations move at different speeds. One nation may take a very long time to pass from one stage or kind of corruption to another; a second nation may pass rapidly through all the stages and kinds of corruption. We can only say that humanity itself contains a cause constantly inclining it to abuse power, greatness and material enjoyment. This cause is humanity's lack of an absolute good which fully

contents the human spirit, a lack which makes human nature seek its necessary, total contentment in everything which presents itself under the appearance of good: greatness, power, material abundance or sensual delight. Seeking from these things what they are incapable of giving is the deepest cause of the corruption present in humanity's abuse of them.

328. Besides this universal, permanent cause of corruption, there are also variable causes. The waywardness of innate instinct is found to various degrees in different races. This is the unnoticed, principal cause of differing fortunes amongst peoples. Human generations are marked with their own stamp from their origin, which is the secret, powerful means used by Providence in assigning to nations their destiny.

Climatic conditions influence the temperament and native character of races, although not entirely. The modifications they produce are only accidental.

Two external causes serving to help and accelerate the movement of societies through their determined stages can also be indicated. They are: 1. external occasions, the result of complex circumstances, which allow societies to organise themselves more quickly, establish themselves strongly, and go on to attain domination and wealth; 2. a higher degree of activity inherent in certain races which generally speaking enables populations to act more swiftly and thus achieve more in less time than steadier, slower populations. Here we must note the law governing this phenomenon: 'Increased effort by human beings to attain external good through their own initiative and effort means greater affection for this kind of good, and greater pressure and force on the part of human beings to accelerate their own movements.'

329. Finally, having seen that there is a certain *contentment* corresponding to the first stage, in which the proximate end of a society determined by the practical reason of the masses is the very existence of the society, we can ask if there are also kinds of *contentment* corresponding to the next three stages in which the proximate end consists first in power, then wealth, then pleasure. My answer is as follows.

330. At the second stage, in which the practical reason of the masses seeks power and glory for the country, we have to distinguish two periods. In the first, eagerness for domination and

glory is still modest, limited and just; in the second, power and glory are sought without limit or regard for justice. This second period cannot provide contentment; its only outcome is disquieting, insatiable longings which tear the spirit apart and cease only when the nation's forces disintegrate or evil love of wealth takes their place. On the other hand, given that the desire for power and glory in the first period is limited and subordinate to justice, some contentment of spirit can result from achieving desired power and glory through just, upright means. In this case, contentment is the natural fruit of beneficence and prudence, and of a value that can only be explained as a support for what is right and just.

331. At the third stage (wealth), we have to distinguish different sources of wealth, as we said. Wealth as the fruit of unjust conquests is fatal, especially if the stage of wealth follows upon that of already corrupt power. In this case, there is no intermediary moment when spirits find rest; they pass with great avidity from one excessive, tormented desire to another. If, however, wealth has been achieved by a nation as a result of legitimate power or hard work, this stage is subdivided into two periods. In the first, the practical reason of the masses tends to seek the nation's material well-being, but moderately, uprightly and equitably. Such a desire can be contented and thus constitute a state of contentment for the spirit. However the nation easily slides into the second period, especially if its increase in wealth has been excessive and easily come by. In this period, cupidity erupts like a flood; it knows no limit, it never says, 'Enough!' At this final moment, the masses, although very wealthy, are extremely unhappy and totally without interior peace.

332. We have to say more or less the same about the final stage of luxury and pleasure as we did about the stage of wealth. If pleasure is the result of usurped power and unjust acquired riches, and follows corrupt periods of power and wealth, there is an inevitable increase of tormented disquiet in the nation. If, on the other hand, the desire for pleasure is preceded by a decent period of power and wealth, the stage of pleasure also offers two periods or moments. In one, the pleasures sought are moderate and righteous; in the other, which soon follows the first, naked sensuality reigns without check or shame. In this case, it eats at the roots of civil association.

333. These vicissitudes to which the masses are subject have their hidden explanation in the condition of the human heart. We soon find the reason for historical events if we consider what takes place secretly within individuals. Let me add a few comments on the sequence of conditions in which the mind and spirit find themselves in human individuals. This will throw greater light on what we have said about nations.

334. In the development and journey of the mind and the spirit, we notice that the individual finds certain occasional places to rest which, however, prove provisory and temporary; what was thought capable of contenting the spirit totally is now recognised as insufficient. Realising his mistake fairly soon, the individual rouses himself and continues along the way of thoughts and affections until he appears to have arrived at some other resting place. This, too, soon proves illusory and the journey continues. These halts along the road of thoughts and affections produce two results: they hold back and delay individuals in their advance towards perfect knowledge and virtue, and at the same time prevent them from plummeting immediately to the depths of vice. If we analyse this extraordinary fact of the human spirit, we find that it takes place as follows.

335. When the mind seeks the reason for some fact, it is content with the first apparently true explanation that it meets, and rests in it. If further reflection shows the first explanation to be insufficient or false, or itself in need of further explanation, the spirit loses its former tranquillity and immediately sets out to find another better, truer or deeper reason. The same thing happens with the second reason it finds, and the third, and so on until the last. The delays made by the human spirit for false, imperfect or non-ultimate reasons can apparently vary in duration and even last a lifetime if individuals are not stimulated by some accidental occurrence to reflect on the insufficiency of the reasons they have discovered. The intelligence's pauses and contentment are naturally neither stable nor sure until the true, final explanation of the fact is attained.

336. We can, however, consider the mind as some kind of map for the journeys of the spirit, that is, for the principle governing human operations. What occurs in the mind also takes place in the spirit as it searches for happiness; it overflows with joyful hope of great things whenever some good presents itself,

assuring itself that happiness lies here. Attracted, it loses itself in the search for enjoyment of the good in which it has placed such high hopes. It rests; it is content — but only until its repeated, satiated experience of the good develops into weariness and vexation. Finally, realising its mistake, the spirit concludes that the apparent good was not what it had sought and hoped for. New desires, new searches are undertaken, and the spirit moves on until it comes to some other good. The same thing occurs, and the spirit moves from one good to another with intermittent pauses — like a landslide which, momentarily halted by some obstacle, finally comes to rest on level ground. These pauses and the accompanying imperfect contentment of spirit, although accidental, can be long or short, as we said. This will depend on the opportunities for reflection and progress which we have already indicated in a general way.

CHAPTER 4

A special case: a civil society passes immediately from the stage of existence to that of wealth without passing through the stage of power

337. The *ideal history* of our four stages is verified in the *real history* of the most illustrious nations of western antiquity, but is subject to an exception when applied to the continental nations of the East.

It is only natural that a people dwelling in an extremely fertile region capable of producing everything required for the needs and pleasures of life should soon become soft and take pleasure in wealth, luxury and all kinds of delight. If the same race, already assisted by the climate, is *per se* gentle and sensitive, and marked by an agile, ready mind, it will be drawn to the arts proper to peace rather than to the hard labour associated with war. On the other hand, there is no impelling need to seek in other regions what they find in their own. Consequently, the mass of people inhabiting such rich lands are of a peaceful nature, and their practical reason leads them, almost immediately after the foundation of their civil society, to determine its proximate end in *wealth* and *pleasure* rather than in *power*.

338. Nations of this kind normally pass immediately from the first to the third stage of society (wealth). They then move rapidly to the stage of luxury and pleasure without showing any historical sign of experiencing a separate stage in which they seek national power, or at least without remaining long at this stage.

The great monarchies to the east of Persia, are not a proof of a warlike spirit in their peoples. Indeed they are a clear proof of the peaceful nature of which we are speaking. They were easily overcome by valiant spirits with an ambition to reign. A single battle, in which terror, not the sword, was sometimes the most effective weapon, decided the lot of hundreds of provinces. War was not undertaken by the masses, who docilely accepted the fortunate conqueror as their ruler; it was always the outcome of immoderate ambition, first on the part of two rivals, and then of two families.

What I note here is especially applicable to India which, according to Diodorus Siculus¹⁰⁸ and Strabo,¹⁰⁹ never undertook military expeditions outside the country, did no colonising and was never conquered by other nations (this has to be understood of the remotest interior of that great country).

339. These rich, intelligent populations, having founded their civil society, were naturally prompted to develop classes devoted to agriculture, manufacture and business, that is, to peaceful crafts in every kind of industry, rather than military institutions. And this is precisely what we find in India.

The caste-divisions of its inhabitants, already present when the first families came together in civil society, must have provided many great advantages, especially that of keeping the families united in their common association. By means of castes, families became mutually dependent, and were forced to maintain continual communication for the sake of functions and benefits.

We are not dealing with societies held together by some national spirit tending to glory and domination, but by societies cut off in great part from the dangers causing people to unite for common defence. Well-trying modes of domestic living were sufficient for these societies, which did not need laws [*App.*, no. 8]. In these circumstances, it would be difficult to find an institution more suitable than that of the caste system for holding together families which of their nature were separate and selfish. Moreover, Robertson is completely right when he affirms (whatever others say) that the division of the population into castes destined for different duties and trades had great economic advantages:

It is true that respect for ancestors blocks the spirit of invention. Its advantage, however, is such an ability and refinement in manufacture that Europe, with all its

¹⁰⁸ 'India, an immense country, was inhabited by many different nations, all of whom are thought to be indigenous. As far as we know, they were neither colonised themselves nor colonised others.' He goes on, speaking about the accounts given by the most learned Indians: 'His descendants (the descendants of the Indian Hercules) governed the country for many ages, and accomplished great undertakings. They sent no troops abroad, however, nor colonised other regions' (bk. 2, c. 11).

¹⁰⁹ Bk. 15.

advantages of superior knowledge and assistance derived from better instruments, has never been able to rival the precision of the output.

He goes on:

The division of professions in India and the ancient distribution of people in classes, each destined to a particular type of work, provided such an abundance of the most normal, common wares that internal consumption was satisfied, together with that of all the neighbouring regions.¹¹⁰

340. Besides these economic benefits there were undoubtedly political advantages. Castes accustomed people to work by stimulating competition amongst the different classes; castes provided a type of order and regularity that had great influence on the intelligence, which extracted from this typical order and regularity the principles proper to a certain kind of practical logic; castes made government easy through the division and classification of popular power, and removed causes of intestinal wars by accustoming all the families to fixed habits¹¹¹ and peaceful crafts, and by making war abhorrent to the utility and will of people occupied in preserving and increasing wealth.

341. However, we cannot accept that these practical advantages produced the caste system, although they certainly contributed greatly first to stabilising caste-distinction and then to strengthening it until it was sanctioned even by religious interdict.¹¹² The origin of the castes must be found in a state anterior to that of civil society but later than the foundation and development of families which formed societies to which each family brought its own jealously maintained way of life, its own abilities and its own traditions.

We find traces of hereditary crafts in families in Genesis, the

¹¹⁰ *Ricerche storiche sull'India antica*, appendix 2.

¹¹¹ War disconcerts and breaks up domestic ways of life. Families greatly attached to their customs are therefore naturally enemies of war.

¹¹² It seems probable that the religious prohibition forbidding the passage from one caste to another was established by the Brahmins in more modern times. Nevertheless, it had its roots in the religious veneration of ancestors who founded the families. Divine honours were accorded to these ancestors. Indeed, all Indian castes claim their origin from the gods.

oldest book of all. We read that Jabel, even before the flood, 'was the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle.'¹¹³ This is one example of an entire clan maintaining a craft as it had been received from the patriarch. Jabal's brother Jubal, as he was called, 'was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe'¹¹⁴ — an example of descendants who carefully retained their founder's musical ability and profession. Finally, we have Tubal-cain, the brother of Jubal and Jabal but by another mother, who 'was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron'¹¹⁵ or, according to the original text, 'taught every smith who worked in bronze and iron.'

342. There are many reasons explaining the continuation of paternal crafts and professions in children. Amongst them is the spirit of imitation, the principal if not the only guide of human beings before they mentally form directing principles which allow them to be their own masters. We must also consider, however, the immense value of a new craft in very ancient times. Such a craft would have been looked upon as a domestic treasure and jealously maintained for the sake of the power it gave one family over others. We must also remember that the craft could at the time have been kept easily within family walls. Outside, no one knew how to exercise it. The domestic ambient contained both the craft and those capable of teaching it.

This is an obvious explanation of the distinction between castes or families exercising paternal craft. We consistently find such a state of affairs in all primitive, eastern societies: in Arabia Felix,¹¹⁶ Egypt, Persia, and so on. It is also clear that the same institution was found in Peru under the empire of the Incas.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Gen 4: [20].

¹¹⁴ Gen 4: [21].

¹¹⁵ Gen 4: [22].

¹¹⁶ 'According to another division, the whole of Arabia Felix is divided into five orders. The first contains combatants, who defend the others; the second, peasants, who provide the grain; the third, the technicians and craftsmen; the fourth, traders in myrrh; the fifth, traders in incense, who also transport cassia, cinnamon and nard. These professions are not interchangeable; each person remains in the profession he has received from his ancestors' (Strabo, bk. 15).

¹¹⁷ There are several indications making it probable that America was peopled from Asia, as we can see in Malte Brun. Similarities have been found

Amongst the ancient Greeks there are clear traces of traditional crafts and professions. For example, all the descendants of Esculapius were doctors. The degree of nobility inherent to families was dependent on the capacities and professions handed down from generation to generation; the great deeds of the individual members were attributed to the families rather than to the individuals themselves.

343. All these considerations are especially applicable to India where traces of the originally different families clearly remain after their union in civil societies. In fact, the weakness of social bonds has prevented the complete fusion of those families.¹¹⁸ Wherever the stage of domination and glory is lacking in a nation, the bonds uniting the masses remain weak. There is no great, single, public aim capable of arousing enthusiasm which concentrates the thoughts, interests and will of all. In other words, there is no single, common will, as it were, to absorb all the citizens and enable them to forget and sacrifice their family affection and customs for the country.

in the physical characteristics, the speech and customs of the peoples of North America and the Tungus, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Tartars and other nomad tribes of Asia who live near the Bering Straits (*v. Fischer, Conjecture sur l'origine des Américains*; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, and the works of A. Humboldt). Humboldt notes (*Essai politique sur la Nouvelle Espagne*, vol. 1, p. 502) that even now the Tchuktchis cross the Bering Straits every year to fight against the Americans. Rask, professor of literary history in the university of Copenhagen claims in his *Dell'Antichità della lingua Zend e dell'autenticità del Zendavasta* (1826) that the languages of the Telugus and of the inhabitants of Kanara and Malabar, and of others living now on the eastern coast of India and the lands south of the tropics, have close similarities to the Tartar and Finnish languages spoken in northern and central Asia. — Traces of Asiatic Sabaism have been found in America. The Egyptian Pharaohs called themselves *Children of the Sun*, as Champollion junior discovered. The ancient rulers in India were also proud to be children of the Sun (Diod. Sic. bk. 2, c. 11). Even now the second class of Hindus, the Kshattriyas or warriors, is divided into two orders, one of which descends from the Sun, the other from the Moon. Garcilasso della Vega notes in his memoirs that the same double origin is claimed for the most noble families of Peru.

¹¹⁸ 'Everywhere, the three superior castes, although possessing their own separate dignity, are distinguished *en bloc* from the inferior castes not only by their religious and political privileges, but also by their colour (white) and their facial characteristics.'

In India, therefore, families still retain their patriarchal greatness.¹¹⁹ More interest is shown in local, rather than national government, and local government itself is run on family lines.¹²⁰ Indian languages themselves have never become a single national language; they have remained multiple and distinct.¹²¹

Great force was given to domestic customs considered as honorific for the house and practically useful. As I see it, these customs were the origin of the political and religious establishment of the castes. The stability of the private life of the Indian

¹¹⁹ 'Hindu houses are necessarily large. If a man has twenty children, they remain with him even after they marry. Uncles, brothers, children, grandchildren live together until their number forces them to separate' (Mrs. Graham, in the diary of her sojourn in India, 1809–1811). The ancient Manu codex prescribes that if a family wishes to remain together, the eldest male takes the place of the dead father and administers the common property, providing for the needs of the family as his father did.

¹²⁰ The following is a description of the immediate, family government in which alone Indians are interested: 'The *Patel* (the name given to the head of this kind of local government) governs his village, which forms a small republic, with his twelve *Ayangandi*. India is simply a mass of these small republics, the inhabitants of which are concerned solely with their own *Patel*. They have no interest in the destruction or dismemberment of the State. Provided the integrity of their own little municipality is respected, it does not matter to them who governs the principality, because their own internal administration is not affected. The *Patel*, or mayor as we might call him, is at the same time tax collector, magistrate and principal doctor in the village, as well as overseer of the transactions of those to whom he administers' (Langlés, *Monumenti dell'Indostan*, t. 1, p. 213). The secret of the eastern empires, which enables them to rule over innumerable provinces, was their non-interference with the particular interests of families, tribes and municipalities. They left the various peoples to live according to their own customs or family or tribal law. Imperial rulers were content with certain gifts, acts of deference and a general military command which above all provided an air of pomp to internal proceedings. Consequently, they were not a burden to the peoples over whom they ruled. On the contrary, they provided a fine show which simultaneously induced wonder and reverential fear.

¹²¹ These surviving, distinct *languages* do not allow us to conclude that there were never any great kingdoms in India. Indications of their presence are indeed provided by ancient historians (*v.* Diod. Sic., bk. 2, c. 11). We can, however, conclude that the influence of these kingdoms was not sufficient to intermingle races in such a way that their languages would grow closer and identify.

people¹²² — a stability which tempers the absolute power of their rulers and renders them less harmful¹²³ — has also been rightly attributed to these customs. The rights and privileges granted by custom to castes are intangible; no force or imperial will could abolish them.

344. A very important consequence flows from this. The third of the four Indian castes is called 'Vaisyas', that is, the land-worker and business caste. Agriculture and commerce are, therefore, necessarily protected by the constitution of the State. This is not a written constitution but one rooted in the customs, opinions and spirit of all the people.

The advantages of these restrictions imposed on the authority of the ruler were not limited to the two highest orders of the State, but were extended, up to a certain point, even to the third class dedicated to agriculture.¹²⁴ —

In every part of India where Indian princes have maintained their dominion, the ryot, a modern name for tenants, hold their goods in what can be considered perpetual tenancy. The rent is regulated according to the initial measurement and estimate of the land. This method is so ancient and so in keeping with Indian ideas about the distinctions between castes and their respective duties that it is invariably maintained in provinces conquered by Muslims and Europeans, and is considered as the basis of the whole financial system of these two powers. In remotest times, before the primitive institutions of India were overthrown by the conquerors' violence, the work of the tenant, on which depended the subsistence of every member of the municipality, was as secure as the tenant's title to the land. Even war did not interrupt his labours, or endanger his property. As far as we know, it was quite common to see two enemy armies fighting one another while the peasants continued to work and harvest quietly in a nearby field.¹²⁵

The merchants, who also belonged to the agricultural caste,

¹²² Cf. Robertson, *Ricerche storiche sull'India antica*, Appendix 2 and 3.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Strab., bk. 15.

were treated with equal respect. As a result, the government never put any obstacle to commerce.

Consequently, commerce with India has remained the same throughout the ages. Gold and silver have always been brought in by others to buy the same goods which India still provides to all nations. From Pliny's time down to our own days, India has always been regarded and detested as a whirlpool that swallows the wealth of all other regions. Riches flow into India, but never come out.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Robertson, *Ricerche storiche sull'India antica*, Appendix 3.

CHAPTER 5

The quantity of intelligence required to move the practical reason of the masses in the four social stages

345. Let us sum up what we have said. First, we stated that civil society cannot be formed without the presence of a certain quantity of intelligence in the families and individuals who compose this society. It follows that society is possible if intelligence remains active in the masses, impossible if intelligence is sluggish and almost inactive. Moreover, if intelligence, after being stimulated, either comes to a halt or goes completely astray, the society once formed either ceases or disintegrates as a result of internal convulsions. Finally, the measure of intelligence actually used by the reason of the masses is in proportion to the length, tenacity and animated life of civil society. With these principles in mind, it becomes clear that the formulation of a philosophical theory of politics depends upon seeking 'the measure of intelligence put in motion by the reason of the masses at each of the four social stages already indicated.'

346. This investigation presupposes some psychological teaching springing from observation. The doctrine states that although people are all naturally gifted with some intelligence, the *proximate power* for using it is not given by nature, but acquired and dependent on all the particular circumstances which aid and occasion human intellectual development. Granted an equal intellectual power in two or more people, therefore, the *proximate power* for using it, on which alone depends their social aptitude, can vary in extraordinary ways. The degree of use that human beings make of their understanding is not in proportion to the breadth and force of the power they have received from nature, but to the *proximate power* they have gained in its use. My question, therefore, 'What measure of intelligence is activated by the practical reason of the masses in each of the four social stages?' is equivalent to: 'What quantity of *proximate power* in the use of one's intelligence is acquired by the masses in each of the four social stages through which they usually pass?' or 'How much does each of these

states necessarily influence the intellectual development of the reason of the masses?’

347. If I wished to note accurately the absolute *power* of the masses in the use of their intelligence, I would have to take into account the religious and moral teachings preserved by tradition in families, or taught by some special instructor. This, however, is not my aim. The problem concerns only the degree of *power* which the masses must draw from the *proximate end* of civil society, that is, the end they have determined at the different stages. In other words, we are trying to see ‘if the use to which the masses are brought in the employment of their intelligence is greater when they found the society, or when they are intent on making it powerful and glorious, or when they think only of enriching it, or finally when their only care is to enjoy its accumulated riches.’¹²⁷

348. We have to decide, therefore, which concept is most suitable for fertilising the intelligence: the *concept of society*, that is, the object of the mind in the first stage; the *concept of power*, the object of the mind in the second stage; the *concept of wealth*, the object of the mind of the masses in the third stage; or the concept — rather, the *use of pleasure* at which the masses aim and to which they tend at the fourth and last stage. We have to establish whether, amongst all the ideas and thoughts of the mind, there is always one, more complex and fertile than all the others. Moreover, the development of the whole mind is solely the development of this most eminent thought.

Consequently, we can and must measure the possible development of the intelligence itself (that is, the extension of the

¹²⁷ How do human beings acquire a certain quantity of *proximate power* in the use of their own intelligence? — I have set out some laws (*NE*, 2: 521–527) guiding the use of intellectual acts to which human beings are drawn by certain exterior occasions, chief of which is the speech they receive from the society in which they are born, and the notions which are communicated to them with speech. Through this initial development they come to establish the ends of their actions. These *ends* which they propose for themselves provide the *proximate power* over the intelligence of which we have spoken. The more elevated the ends, the greater the *proximate power* for using the intelligence. If they place no end before themselves, they have no power at all to move their reason. Proposing an *end*, however, involves an act of will. The dominion that we acquire over our own mind depends in great part, therefore, on the activity and uprightness of the will itself.

proximate power acquired in the use of the intellectual power) solely by the elevation and ensuing fertility of the thought or concept that forms the apex of each person's intelligence. In other words, the measure of the proximate power we possess in our use of intelligence is in proportion to the virtual extension of the thought dominant in us as the end for which we operate. As we have seen, this dominant thought varies in the mind of the masses in the four social stages: it is either the thought of the existence of society, the thought of power, the thought of wealth or finally the thought of pleasure. Our question is: which of these thoughts gives rise to greater development in the human understanding? To solve the question as exactly as possible, we have to discover certain distinct characteristics of intelligence which we can use as accurate measures of each individual's use of intelligence.

349. If we wanted to know in general which objects were the most suitable for exercising the intelligence, I would without doubt indicate *spiritual* objects. Our query is limited, however, to seeking the most suitable object for exercising the intelligence amongst the four ends which the masses propose for themselves at the four social stages. Because these objects are all external, I must limit my investigations to seeking the *notes* that indicate varying use of intelligence when its objects are for the greater part material. These notes can be reduced to four, and are derived from *number*, *space*, *time* and *abstraction*. From each of them we can derive a rule for measuring the quantity of intellectual movement.

350. Intellectual action corresponding to external objects is distinguished from sensual action in the following ways: intelligence conceives 1. several objects (*number*); 2. objects which are either not present, or as distant as imagination can make them (*space*); 3. past and future objects, as well as present objects, in a given instant of time (*time*); 4. general, abstract objects as they have been formed by the intelligence itself, as well as entire, perfect objects as they are in reality (*abstraction*).

The *rules* that can be drawn from these four *notes* proper to intellectual activity are the following.

Relative to *number*: 'There is greater use of intelligence when this faculty extends to a greater number of objects, or embraces a more complex, multiple object.'

Relative to *space*: 'There is greater use of intelligence when its object is more distinct and distant from the intelligent subject or from other objects with which the mind is occupied.'

Relative to *time*: 'There is greater use of intelligence when the object of the mind and will is further away in time.'

Finally, relative to *abstraction*: 'There is greater use of intelligence when the object is more general or abstract.'

351. Let us apply these rules to the four *ends* which the reason of the masses presupposes during the four social stages. We shall then see which of the ends provides greater impetus for the intellect.

I. We begin from the final stage in which the proximate end of the masses is that of enjoying the greatest possible abundance of sensual benefits. At this point the activity of the sensuous instinct totally lacks any of the four distinctive notes of intelligence; on the contrary it is furnished with notes directly opposed to those we have indicated. It is true that sensation producing instinct contains a twofold principle, that is, a subjective and an extrasubjective principle,¹²⁸ but this does not affect the fact that sensation is always particular; it is one, simple and therefore altogether lacking in *number*.

It may be objected that it is possible to have several sensations simultaneously, or that a single sensation can have various parts. This, however, does not multiple the sensation because no sensation has any part which includes and enfolds another part. The contrary occurs in intelligence: a single complex and multiple thought can include many others. Sense, therefore, lacks the first note we have assigned to intelligence, that of *multiplicity*, and has in its place the contrary note of *simplicity*.

352. In the second place, absent stimuli cannot move sense. In every sensual operation, the space between the feeling principle and what is felt vanishes; that which feels and that which is felt form only a single sensation. These are simply real relationships found in the sensation by the intelligence which analyses sensation; nothing more. Just as the note of *distance* is proper to the intelligence relative to its object, so the note of *proximity* or rather identification is proper to sense.

353. In the third place, sense, contrary to intelligence, does

¹²⁸ Cf. my analysis of sensation in *NE*, 2: 878–960; *AMS*, 367–494.

not perceive any past or future extrasubjective element. Just as the proper note of intelligence is to extend itself to past, present and future, so the note proper to sense-activity is to operate only in the *present*. Consequently, *sense* always acts *swiftly*, and tends to annul time as it annuls space. Intelligence, on the contrary, reaches its future object by expectation and successive operations.

354. Finally, abstraction has no part whatsoever in sense; there is nothing *ideal* in sense. All that occurs in the order of sensations pertains to reality. This is a new kind of opposition distinguishing the activity of sense-instinct from that of intelligence.

It is obvious from what has been said that acting according to sensuous instinct does not presuppose any use of reason, and that in the final state of degenerate society reason comes to find itself eliminated and superfluous.

355. Is it not true, however, that sensations stimulate the intelligence to rise from its immobility? — It is true but, as I have shown elsewhere,¹²⁹ the intelligence does not go further than the act of intellectual *perception*. Sensation does not contain a sufficient reason for moving the intelligence beyond what is necessary for the perception of external objects. *Imagination* does indeed associate itself with *sensations*, and draws the intelligence one step further, that is, to the *first pure ideas*.¹³⁰ *Speech*, received from society but concerned only with physical needs, also draws human understanding within the ambit of physical needs, to the first, most necessary *abstractions*. Here, however, all movement ceases.

356. Such development does not exceed that of savages, and is indeed less than that found in certain savage, nomad tribes. In this state, intelligence does nothing of itself; it follows the feelings, whose slave it becomes. Such limited use of intelligence is insufficient for the existence of civil society which needs a great deal of *foresight*. The social human being must be able to move

¹²⁹ *NE*, 2: 515–520.

¹³⁰ Animal *imagination* leads animal instinct to act far more effectively than *actual sensation*. I have already shown the presence in the animal of extended and lasting feelings which offer some explanation of the appearance of society amongst animals, that is, of gregarious living (*AMS*, 367–494).

his understanding with some freedom; he has to estimate things still a long way off, connect the past with the future, calculate the future on the basis of the present and the present on the basis of the future. All this is impossible for an intellect limited to the movements of sense. Such an intellect is like a bird tied to the back of a tortoise.

Could we ever imagine a civil society formed by Caribs? Rousseau, describing these men of nature, the type of perfection he depicted in the satire with which he lampooned the society of his own time, says:

Their soul is in no way disturbed; they abandon themselves simply to feeling, without any idea of the future, despite its proximity. Their plans, as limited as their outlook, scarcely extend to the end of the day. Such is the degree of foresight found amongst the Caribs even today. In the morning they sell their bed of tree-wool, and return crying in the evening to buy it back. It has not occurred to them to foresee that they would need it the next night.¹³¹

The intelligence of the masses, slaves to material, sensual delights, approaches this condition, at which the Roman people had gradually arrived as they moved from decadence in the republic to extinction at the time of the empire.

357. The principal difference distinguishing savages prior to society and savages (if I may call them that) who exist as their societies come to an end, is that the intelligence of pre-civilisation savages has never been greatly moved; that of post-civilisation savages has been subject to great movement. An intelligence in movement is not easily brought to a halt; it is communicated from father to son through language and great traditions, independently of other circumstances. Even in corrupt citizens, who ask nothing more of society than base, sensual delights, there remains some inherited movement, a kind of oscillation self-propagated in the mind, despite the lack of any movement of their own intelligence arising from the end of society. At this stage, the ancient forms of government are preserved, although only under the form of appearances and formality, without feeling or life.

¹³¹ *Discours sur l'origine*, etc. P. 1.

The same language is maintained for a long time, although no one understands its fundamental meaning; lies are its only output. The authority of the ancestors is maintained; their decisions and principles are reiterated, although often only for the sake of rendering their meaning vain by captious, learned interpretations. Or perhaps they are mocked by being taken seriously when favourable, and rejected as out-of-date when unfavourable. Literature also is preserved, but in its exhausted condition it simply repeats what has been said without any true taste for beauty. There is no originality, no life; bored, degenerate minds find it impossible to do anything for themselves.

358. What is the purpose of all these traces of intellectual movement? Their aim is to find the means for contenting common sensuality, the end of brutalised society. At this point, sensual pleasure itself seems to nourish intelligence, which it stimulates to find means of increasing its own abundance.¹³² This, however, is not the case. If the movement of the intelligence were not pre-existent, sensual pleasure could never generate it. But when the intelligence is already aroused by preceding causes, the desire for pleasure uses it for its own purposes. If, on the other hand, no other cause intervenes to maintain the understanding in action, its activity insensibly diminishes until the intelligence of the masses loses all social action and society naturally perishes.

359. Another reflection needs to be added. Citizens who see the greatest possible enjoyment of material attractions as the sole end of society may have inherited a great measure of intelligence from those who have gone before them, that is, they may have a great *proximate power* for making use of intelligence. In this case a visceral, murderous conflict normally arises internally between inherited moral principles and the frenzy provoked by sensual pleasure. The intelligence, which is very active, only serves to push corruption to the extreme. It uses its

¹³² It is almost impossible to imagine that in the last century the spirit of sophistry would set out as a serious argument that luxury and sensual pleasure stimulate industry in human beings. — Nevertheless, Italy, our own Italy, produced Gioia who gave his support to such immorality amidst a mob of admirers who with their usual enthusiasm applauded this *outstanding* individual.

resources simply to seek means of refining delight, and even plunges with incredible speed to the depths of corruption and wilful malice. At the same time, the senses, irritated as they are, tend to dull the intelligence and avoid the intolerable burden of its activity.

Consequently, the senses give rise in human beings to disquiet, accompanied by dark hatred for the principles of reason which it would if possible annihilate. From the collision between all these conflicting causes a kind of delirium arises. Human beings no longer reason; they blather endlessly about whatever forms the object of their attention, thinking themselves much wiser than all their predecessors, whom they despise and mock. When the masses are corrupt, this delirium is perceived by only a few individuals. Nevertheless, it leaves obvious signs of its presence in history which enable future ages, immune from that corruption, to recognise and note them.¹³³

This is the principal difference between the state of the savage and the social state at the last stage of corruption. Both contain a suitable cause for stultifying the intelligence. In savages, this cause produces its effect; in the members of corrupt society it also produces its effect, but not completely nor so soon, granted the special circumstances which impede it. In savages, therefore, we find intellectual *lethargy*, in the members of materialised society, *delirium*; in savages, *apathy*, in the members of materialised society, *frenzy*. Both *delirium* and *frenzy* would undoubtedly auto-destruct if society were left to itself,¹³⁴ to be succeeded by the death of intelligence and an immobility and apathy not unlike that of savages.

360. II. The *proximate end* of society determined by the

¹³³ One of the most usual, obvious *signs* of the delirium we are describing is the twofold division of the masses, one part of which is given to *unbelief*, the other to *superstition*. In *Frammenti d'una storia della Empietà*, I have indicated how these signs appeared in the Roman empire. The same reflections can be made relative to our own times, especially in nations where wealth and immorality is greatest. We see innumerable, strange *religious sects*, that is, *superstitions*, spring up daily in the midst of a mass of unbelievers.

¹³⁴ Providence, which watches over nations, seems not to permit this final stage; we shall try to explain why later in the work.

masses who have reached final corruption is not, of itself, capable of arousing any use of intelligence. It cannot, therefore, provide people with any *proximate power* over intelligence. But what degree of suitability for stimulating intelligence is present in wealth, the end to which civil association tends at its third stage?

361. Again, we first have to separate the measure of intelligence inherited by a nation from that which it obtains from the social end proposed for itself. A nation which has passed from the first and second stage has already developed to some extent; the masses have acquired some degree of *proximate power* over the use of their own understanding. When this nation arrives at its third stage, it preserves its degree of *power* over the use of the understanding which it has acquired in the preceding stages and handed down from father to son through speech and education. The intelligence received from ancestors is not however the intelligence proper to the age in which the descendants now find themselves; it is a less lively, almost stagnant intelligence. Nevertheless, this measure of intellectual power is used by the masses who have reached the third stage, although the object of its use is no longer that intended by their predecessors. It is now employed relative to the new *proximate end* provided for society. In other words, it is used to discover the means for rendering society *affluent*.

362. The acquisition of wealth is the kind of object for which reason can work without necessarily positing any limit to its activity. This is true at least about the part of reason which has feelable things as its matter. Agriculture, manufacture and trade exhaust and overcome human intelligence. Such objects lend themselves, therefore, to keeping reason occupied however well developed it may be. Our question, however, is concerned with the degree to which this kind of object lends itself of its own nature to the development of reason, that is, we want to know what use of intelligence would be stimulated in a people whose desire for such objects was not preceded by any notable intellectual development. What *proximate power* adapted to the use of their understanding would give them the thought and desire of wealth? This is what we have to decide.

363. It is easy to see that agriculture supposes a more restricted use of intelligence than that required by crafts, and

that crafts require a lesser use of intelligence than commerce.¹³⁵ The truth of this will be clear if we apply the rules we have drawn from *number, space, time* and *abstraction*.

The immediate objects of *agriculture* are few. The place where the cultivator labours is limited and always the same because agriculture binds families to the soil. The cultivator's intelligence is limited in its foresight to a period of a few months, that is, from sowing to harvesting. Finally, the abstract ideas required by peasants are very few.

In general, *crafts* presuppose agriculture as the basis of the raw material on which they work. The number of objects on which the intelligence has to work in establishing and maintaining social crafts is much greater than that needed by agriculture. Moreover, understanding has to make an effort to unite crafts with preceding agricultural life. It needs to find tools suitable for each craft, study their relationship and their effect, and search for the best way of using them. Again, crafts are innumerable; their discovery is marked by an indefinite progression. They do not bind human beings to some determined piece of land, nor do they limit the intelligence to a determined time (their production is continuous, not periodic like that of agriculture). Finally, crafts require a good number of abstract ideas, at least from their inventors. Everything is reduced to co-ordinating means to an end. But to conceive an object as a means or instrument for obtaining a determined end is to conceive it already in an abstract way.

364. The development of intelligence is, however, furthered more by *trade* than by crafts. I do not mean the kind of trade that depends upon minimal, internal consumption, nor simply the sale of a country's products and manufactured goods to foreigners whose intention is to transport them elsewhere, as the Egyptians¹³⁶ and Indians did. I am referring to trade in the hands

¹³⁵ I am not speaking about the art of hunting, fishing and pasture which are not proper to civil society, but precede it.

¹³⁶ 'The fertility of their land,' says Robertson, speaking about the Egyptians in his *Ricerche sull'India*, 3, 'and the mildness of their climate generously provided them not only with what was necessary, but also with luxuries. Thus they were so independent of other nations that one of their fundamental, political rules entailed the renunciation of all external commerce. As a result, they held all seafarers in abhorrence as profane and

of those who themselves transport their goods to the most distant places. This is trade on a grand scale. It was exercised in antiquity by the Phoenicians and Carthaginians and in modern times by the Italian republics, by the Dutch and the English.

365. There is no doubt that this kind of trade requires a greater use of intelligence than crafts or agriculture. Intelligence extends over an immense *number* of objects. There is a vast multitude of various peoples and customs to cope with, as well as innumerable goods of all kinds. The talent of trading countries lies in their constant awareness of whatever renders their trade easier and more profitable; they are continually working on means of transport by sea and land, on navigation, new roads, the domestication and maintenance of animals for carrying goods, mechanical devices for the construction of carts and boats, on the art of minting money, and so on.

In short, there is no limit to the number of objects which the intelligence of trading nations has naturally to keep in mind.

impious, and fortified their own ports to render them inaccessible to foreigners' (Cf. Diod. Sic. bk. 1, and Strabo, bk. 67). This comment by the English historian is not altogether exact. The fertility of Egypt does indeed explain why the Egyptians neglected trade with other nations, but it does not explain their abhorrence of navigation and their political principle of avoiding the exercise of trade. We should remember rather that civil society in Egypt was founded on domestic ways of life, as we have seen also in India: the castes prove this. In the same way, Egypt was a peaceful society; it did not tend to dominion or to wealth. Scarcely touching its second stage under Sesostris, it passed quickly to its third. These oriental societies draw their subsistence, order, stability and durability from domestic habits, and principally from the division of the people into castes. The castes themselves thus became the belt-irons holding together the fabric of their society. The great utility of these castes and the respect shown to the ancient heads of families (who were converted into an equivalent number of divinities) brought about the consecration of such usages by religion and their commemoration in sacred books. According to Cicero, the Egyptians venerated animals as gods which were very useful to them. We need to note that nothing is more contrary to the preservation of such customs, carried over from domestic to civil society, as travelling and contact with foreigners from whom alien habits and principles are obtained. Hence the abhorrence of navigation and trade. This also explains the uselessness of Sesostris' attempts to make Egypt a warlike and trading nation although, if we can trust the dubious authority of Nymphodorus (*Delle cose barbariche*), he seems to have had greater success when his policy was to unnerve and emasculate the people.

Relative to *space*, trade (which puts the most distant nations in communication with one another) extends further than any other profession. Relative to *time*, the *foresight* of traders extends indefinitely so that today traders have become the best indicators of future political events. Finally, considerable use of the faculty of *abstraction* is a necessity in a certain kind of industry where so many means have to be co-ordinated, and even subordinated to one another in a chain of distribution where each is conditioned and ordered to moving another. As we have said repeatedly, every means requires some abstraction on the part of the mind; and a long series of concatenated means requires a series of elevated and complicated abstractions.

366. There is no doubt, therefore, that large-scale trade sets in motion amongst nations exercising it a greater quantity of intelligence than that required for manufacture and agriculture. It provides the kind of intellectual stimulation for the masses that ensures a much greater *proximate power* in the use of their intelligence.

367. III. Nevertheless, it is the second social stage which prompts the movement of the greatest quantity of intelligence in nations, and gives the masses the greatest *proximate power* for applying their own understanding. At this stage, civil society tends to power and dominance over others. This *end* seems to have no limit in number, space, time or finally abstraction. The desire for power and glory, nourished by prosperity — as we can see in Rome — has a wonderful capacity for sharpening minds, increasing the strength and courage of the masses, and developing all their natural faculties. A conquering people is normally superior to all others for its political outlook and for valour until the corruption proper to this and the following stages intervenes to limit and regulate the intellectual activity of minds.

Moreover, when a people with a single will extends the confines of the State and conquers others (as, for example, when Fabricius could affirm that the Romans wanted not gold, but the possessors of gold), it has risen above all family usages and moved away entirely from domestic society. With the removal of the limitations of paternal residence, families have grown closer, been perfectly fused and have formed a single body. *Civil* society now dominates *family society*, the government is

perfectly constituted and rulers can form *laws* with which to regulate nations. These laws replace the *ways of life* proper to peoples who do not altogether escape from the bonds of domestic customs¹³⁷ and cannot make such rapid progress as totally united and civil peoples.

368. We need to reflect that a nation in which civil government can make itself strong and dispose of things with a universal outlook without encountering insuperable difficulties from families possesses a perpetual fount of intelligence, that is, civil government itself. This is especially the case where the people govern themselves. Government is under a continual necessity of making the greatest possible use of intellect; to govern means to reflect and to calculate. As a result, the masses normally attain great, continual power over their own intelligence whenever they exercise government, or whenever government is exercised amongst them with their consent.

Such universal governments, free to tend to the common good,

¹³⁷ It is incorrect to speak about Egyptian 'laws'. Egypt did not have civil laws, properly speaking, but ways of family life consecrated by religion, as we said about India. Such ways of life limited the power of the king and blocked government. Indeed, they impeded the constitution of perfect civil government. 'The kingdom was hereditary,' says a historian too little regarded today. 'But according to Diodorus (bk. 1), kings in Egypt did not behave as in other monarchies where the only principles of action were the ruler's own will and good pleasure. Egyptian kings were more strictly obliged than others to live according to *laws*. There existed special laws, put together by a king, which formed part of what the Egyptians called *sacred books*. Thus everything was regulated by *ancient custom*; it never occurred to them to live differently from their ancestors.' — 'I have already pointed out that the food and drink of the kings was regulated by laws which governed both quantity and quality. Only ordinary food was served at table; the aim was to satisfy their natural needs, not delight the palate. The laws would almost seem to have been dictated not by a legislator, but a conscientious doctor intent only on preserving the health of the ruler.' — 'The best part of Egyptian laws was that everyone was trained mentally to observe them. A new custom in Egypt was something to be marvelled at (Plato, *Tim.*); everything was always done in the same way, and exactness in little things provided support for great things. There has never been a people which preserved its customs and laws for so long' (Rollin, *Histoire Ancienne*, t. 1). These characteristics show clearly that the so-called civil laws of Egypt were rather ways of life which had come to be written down. The legislator did not invent, but compiled or at most made a choice of what to write.

do not surface in nations restricted to the acquisition of wealth through manufacturing industries. These nations do not produce sufficient use of intelligence to break family ties, as I said, and form a city into a compact body dominating all private interests. Only large-scale trade produces a sufficient measure of intelligence for this. It is true that certain great, powerful nations, such as Tyre and Carthage, sprang from trade and became warlike as a result of trade. But these nations, too, for whom trade had generated *power* and a *civil government dominating* family institutions, finally had to give way to those other nations in which the *stage of power* naturally succeeded, without having to burgeon again from *wealth*, the *stage of social existence*.¹³⁸

369. IV. The first stage does not develop the same quantity of intelligence in the masses as the second stage; the use of intelligence in the first stage is sounder, incorrupt. During this period, the *proximate end* of society is restricted to its existence, foundation and defence; no one as yet wants to extend the country's boundaries.¹³⁹ The end, as we said, is pure and immune from all injustice, and can only be useful for the country. Love of country is as sincere and strong as nature, without over-emphasis and exaggeration as it is at the second stage.

¹³⁸ In trading nations which used power as a means of wealth, the stage of power follows or rather depends on that of wealth, with which it mingles. We know, for instance, that the Phoenicians conquered several ports belonging to the Idumeans on the shores of the Gulf of Arabia; they also took possession of Rhinocolura on the Mediterranean. They did this to take advantage of the trade route to India (Diod. Sic., bk. 1; Strab., bk. 16). This was how trade led the nation to conquest.

¹³⁹ The historian Justin had some idea of the first two social stages. This is how he describes the initial stage of nations: 'It is normal to defend rather than extend the boundaries of the empire. Kingdoms are all limited to their own countries.' Then comes the second stage, of which he wisely remarks: 'When they have overcome their neighbours, the newly-acquired populations strengthen them for action against others. Each new victory provides the tools for the next until all the peoples of the East have been conquered (Bk. 1, c. 1). Nothing could be more exact. — Appian notes moreover that the wars undertaken by the Romans prior to the third Punic war were all defensive (*De Bello Punic.*). The duration of Rome's best period can therefore be measured exactly from the foundation of the city to the destruction of Carthage or to the war with Antioch, when the Romans grew wealthy and tasted the delights of Asia (607 AUC).

370. Let us conclude. A greater quantity of intelligence amongst the masses is put into motion at the second stage when their collective will tends to make the country glorious and dominant; the first stage, on the contrary, is characterised by a less extensive but more logical and moral use of intelligence.

At the third stage, the degree of intelligence developed amongst the masses, although less than that of the second stage, varies in accordance with the masses' tendency to abundant wealth by means of trade, manufacturing industries or agriculture. The masses who tend to riches through trade acquire a use of intelligence comparable to that of nations intent upon domination. The masses who tend to riches through manufacture develop less intelligence than trading peoples, but more than those dedicated to agriculture. Finally, the masses who draw their wealth from agriculture normally use their understanding more uprightly, although less powerfully and within their own limited sphere, than artistic and manufacturing countries. Agriculture, we should note, has a close relationship with the task of founding civil societies; agriculture and the establishment of societies both help to preserve the good sense of populations.

The last stage, that of pleasure, has no power of itself to develop the understanding. In this final period, the masses, like a prodigal son who squanders and dissipates the wealth left him by his ancestors [*App.*, no. 9], begin insensibly to weaken and use up the power acquired over their intelligence.

CHAPTER 6

A provident law governing the dispersion and vicissitudes of peoples

371. We can now turn our gaze from these sublime considerations to the historical data still available about the dispersion, increase and diminution of primitive peoples, and about the unceasing development of human civilisation. It will not be difficult to discover a providential law which unknown to nations leads them towards universal human good.

372. The whole complex of historical knowledge that we possess, especially after recent discoveries, clearly shows that the different populations covering the earth set out from Asia. The most ancient and noble of books tells us unambiguously that the clan which re-peopled the earth had its seat on the mountains of Armenia. It is probable that the Noachians increased after living there for some time¹⁴⁰ and then came down from Ararat to feed their flocks along the courses of the Tigris and the Euphrates. They would have arrived at Shinar about a century after the flood. Their first mass movement would have been towards the south-west.

From Shinar, the tribes would have dispersed more regularly,¹⁴¹ moving in two directions, south and north. Obviously the southern regions, with their better climate and lands, were the more attractive. Moreover, the families and tribes who migrated to the north soon came up against the great chain of the Taurus, Tibetan and Himalayan mountains which separate southern and northern Asia. It is probable, therefore, that the first peoples to form civil societies were, besides the Babylonians, Chaldeans and smaller races, the inhabitants of Egypt and India. China would appear to have been inhabited a little later.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Josephus, *The Jewish Antiquities* etc., bk. 1, c. 5.

¹⁴¹ Moses signals the epoch of the institution of *ownership* when he says that 'the earth was divided' (at the time of Peleg, Gen 11 [10]: 25), that is, parts of the land were assigned to the different heads of families. Initially, granted the abundance of land and the small population, territory could be used by anyone.

Families which were pushed towards the north as a result of the peaceful division of land (probably by lot) or of the violence inflicted upon the weaker families, must first have increased in number, and then penetrated the sinuous valleys along the rivers. They would also have crossed the mountain barrier and descended into the northern plains, which they would have populated. These new peoples gave the name 'fathers' to the mountains and rivers from which their ancestors had come; the mountains became for these peoples the dwelling place of the gods who generated both heroes and human beings.

Families who moved northwards in Asia occupied Asia Minor at different periods before passing by sea into Europe. They peopled the territories around the Black Sea and Caspian whence perhaps they later arrived again in Europe by land and settled in Germany. Finally, they peopled the immense region known in antiquity as Scythia. It could well be that much later America received its populations from this region.

As I said, this distribution of families is especially indicated by the course of the great mountains, and the rivers which flow from them.

373. Our aim, however, is to discuss the provident law that distributes amongst various peoples, with extraordinary equity and wisdom, the events natural to them. Take, for example, the families whose lot it was to inhabit the finest territories of Asia. As we have seen,¹⁴² they passed rapidly from the first stage, the foundation of civil society, to the third stage of *wealth*. This impeded their national development. The families who migrated towards the north, that is, towards less rich territories, set up civil society more slowly, and passed regularly from the first stage, foundation, to the second, power.¹⁴³ This explains why northern

¹⁴² c. 13.

¹⁴³ Many other circumstances must have influenced the development of these different conditions among contemporaneous peoples. 1. The southern inhabitants of Asia did not experience the needs which normally cause wars. Moreover, they did not feel any necessity for a very active, vigilant government. The family regime provided sufficiently for every desirable comfort. Consequently, the rulers of these nations were never able to acquire the minimum unity and force necessary for active rule. I have already noted that the absolutist forms in the East do not prove the presence of unity and force in the ruler. They are only indications of overwhelming ambition in the

nations must have been at the height of their national development and power when southern nations had arrived at the final corruption proper to luxury and pleasure. When the mutual position and state of nations is expressed in these terms, corrupt nations are in continual danger of conquest¹⁴⁴ from their powerful neighbours who abound with social life. The slightest occasion, which is never lacking, is sufficient to guarantee conquest.

Corrupt people, whose moral virtue and intelligence is exhausted, become daily more immobile and static until they are punished by Providence and at the same time buffeted and renovated by an incorrupt people whose hard way of life, agile intelligence and less fertile lands are rewarded and repaid by the acquisition of better territories, and of other peoples. These nations are handed over to them not simply to serve but rather to re-learn what they have forgotten, and even more, under their new masters' instructions.

374. Perhaps all the conquests of antiquity are explained by this single law. The Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes and Persians perished only when they had each in turn arrived at ultimate corruption in the face of conquerors who showed themselves more lively and powerful. The Greeks, more to the north than these monarchies, reached the stage of power later than the others, whom they overcame. The Romans, more to the north again than the Greeks, subjected the latter. The second stage of civil society, in which a nation is totally engaged in acquiring power, was longer among the Romans than in any other nation. As a result, Rome had greater leisure in which to construct a more perfect civil government.

375. The peoples who expanded into the northern regions of

supreme authority and lazy indifference to public affairs on the part of subjects. 2. The climate, and the abundance of things necessary to life and affluence, must have played their part in enervating and weakening the peoples of southern Asia. Inactivity itself must have given them greater affection for domestic ways of life, and rendered such ways unalterable. 3. If the land was divided not by lot but by free choice, it is probable that the more courageous, adventurous and perhaps less cultured, knowledgeable peoples were content to move towards the mountains. Others, endowed with crafts and greater development, remained as owners of the places they inhabited, and only moved through territories more suitable for cultivation.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *SC*, c. 9.

Asia are divided into two classes, western and eastern. The facts we have noted show that amongst the western peoples, world dominion passed step by step ever further northwards. The peoples of north-east Asia can be seen to bear down continually on those of the south as forcefully as those of the east. There appear, from amongst the Scythians or Tartars, the Huns, who were devastators rather than conquerors, the Turks, founders of the Ottoman empire in countries which they conquered, the Mongols, who overwhelmed Persia, and the Manchus, who took possession of China and reigned there.

Generally speaking, therefore, the peoples of the north are kept by Providence to conquer the south. This is the result of the extraordinary law by which southerners develop more rapidly than northerners, and are thus always at a social stage of weakness and advanced age when northerners are still at the stage of youth and virility. Nevertheless, there is a great difference between eastern and western northerners.

376. The line persistently followed by civilisation does indeed move north-west.¹⁴⁵ The north-eastern peoples have always shown signs of strength without losing their native barbarity. This may depend on peoples in the north-west being the first to have civil government. The north-eastern peoples, on the other hand, preserved the ways of life proper to domestic society, living as they did in tribes or great families. Peoples which have entered civilisation strong in body and spirit but without entirely abandoning domestic society can conquer, but not established totally civilised empires. An individual's ambition, supported and aided by the love of valour and courage produced in the masses, brings about great conquests. The people are strongly united under a chief in time of war. Nevertheless they are not subject to him to the same degree in peace. Their leader can, when he leads them to victory, do anything with them, but is leader only in name when he tries to order their peaceful, common life. The enduring Tartar empires, for example, had their centre in lands they conquered, not in their native territory: Persia, Turkey and China show this, and indicate how the victors were themselves overcome by the civilisation of the

¹⁴⁵ Notice that the north-western movement of civilisation continues into the next hemisphere.

peoples whom they subjected by force. Thus China became mistress of a large part of Tartary after the nephew of Genghis Khan had overrun China and the conquerors had set up their seat of government there.

377. We still have to explain why the peoples of the north-east, although participating in the social stage of power, did not establish fully civil governments in the same way as the north-western peoples. As we said, it is characteristic of the social stage of power to override domestic limits and bring to birth totally civilised societies.

378. It is not difficult to see, however, that the stage of power can only bring about perfect government provided that the power aimed at is profitable for the society as a whole, not for a single person or a few leaders. In the west, society showed itself as an association of individuals; it was the republic as such which wished to conquer; dominion of this kind was destined for the benefit of all the people.¹⁴⁶ In the east, however, society appeared as an association of tribes, not of individuals. The tribes gave their allegiance to an absolute ruler in time of defensive and offensive war. The conqueror, however, made war for himself; the tribes shared the glory rather than the dominion. Individuals took almost no part in the division of booty, and even less in the expansion of government. They were subject to the heads of particular tribes whom they obeyed on the basis of custom, principles or religion without thinking of empire or the conditions proper to a social state. The stage of power in eastern peoples is not, therefore, a truly social stage; the masses do not want power for their own sake, but for the sake of their leaders.

¹⁴⁶ The republican principle present in those colonies which moved north-west found the greatest possible expansion in the origin of these colonies. Let me recall something that pleases many English and French women today. In very ancient Athens, at the time of Cecrops, women were present at public gatherings and voted with men about matters concerning the republic (Cf. Varro, quoted by St. Augustine in *De C. D.*, bk. 17, c. 9). It is also true, however, that Cecrops, first king of Athens, who was responsible for the stability of marriage, expelled women from matters of state when he had the opportunity, as we can see in Varro (*op. cit.*). I want to ask a single question about this: can we rightly call *social progress* a return to customs which prevailed before Cecrops' time? This is the kind of progress crabs make!

Such a disposition on the part of the masses cannot produce any compact and strongly established civil government. This can only occur when perfect government is seen as a necessary means to national power, that is, a power in which all the members of the association participate, as in Greece and Rome.

379. We can, however, take the question further. Why are north-western peoples constituted in well-united republics and civil governments when those of the north-east have never been able to unite in true civil communities?

Let us begin with datum provided for us by the very nature of the fact we wish to explain: north-eastern peoples maintained domestic affections and ways of life more strongly than north-westerners. Careful consideration of this datum leads us to an hypothesis fully capable of answering our question. The hypothesis itself, corrected and modified by the historical information we have about these ancient populations, illustrates the truth of the matter.

380. The hypothesis we use to explain the fact under discussion supposes that populations migrating towards the north-east were composed of various families which moved peacefully in that direction either because they received those portions of land in the first or later divisions of territories or because they were forced to expand in that direction for the necessities of life or through the desire to hunt. Migration north-west, on the other hand, would not have been undertaken by complete, well-established families, but only by individuals gathered together to attempt some enterprise. If this were the case, we would have an explanation for the conservation amongst north-easterners of domestic ways of life and customs; north-westerners, on the other hand, freed from these bonds, would have been able to associate freely in totally civil communities.

This explanation, considered as a hypothesis, becomes historical truth, we said, when modified by reflection and the memories extant amongst ancient peoples.

Certainly, it seems hardly possible that the first human beings to move north-west were individuals associated simply for some undertaking. At that time the world was still unpopulated and empty; there was no reason to go in search of military conquest. We have to believe, therefore, that the first dispersal of peoples took place in families, not as a result of individual

action. Historically, moreover, we know that after the first dispersal of peoples over the earth new colonies were sent from south to north. These later colonies were indeed composed of individuals, that is, of adventurers in search of glory and a new country which would replace the limitations of their old land. History also tells us that the colonies we are describing went north-west. We do not hear of any which went north-east.

381. The geographical situation of Egypt and Phoenicia seems to explain why these colonies of adventurers, coming in large part from these countries, did not proceed north-east. Egypt is very much to the west, and both territories had open before them the Mediterranean which naturally drew them to Greece and Italy.

Moreover, Asia is blocked towards the north-east by the great Gobi desert which makes expansion in that direction very difficult. It also forces peoples desiring to dwell in north-eastern regions to move great distances towards the Pole in order to find pasture or fertile lands. They arrive in lands which, especially in comparison with north-western areas, are cold and inhospitable. I believe that the great impediment provided by the desert, the lands unsuitable for cultivation and the harsh climate in that part of Asia, brought people to Scythia later than to Asia minor or Greece. As a result, immigration to Scythia took place only after domestic society had already developed into tribes, and time had allowed domestic ways of living, which were perhaps already sanctioned by ancestor-religion and civil-family laws, to be strengthened.

This would also explain why in the north-west itself, Germany never seems to have associated in true civil unions under well-united governments. A part of the populations which lived on the coasts of the Caspian and Black Seas seems to have poured into the Germanic regions from Asia, and arrived late in Europe after the long journey taking them over the Ural, Caucasus, Taurus or Emodi ranges and the Balkans. In other words, they arrived only when they were already ordered and established in tribes, each of which had its own unchangeable customs — customs which impeded progress and prevented those families from fusing into a single people.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ During Augustus' reign, Maroboduus established a powerful kingdom in Germany, while Decebalus, king in Dacia, became famous under

382. Let us return now to the western migrations. The very first populations travelling towards the north-west did not arrive at any greater state of civilisation than those who travelled north-east. If the information we have about the Pelasgi in Greece is to be believed, they seem to have returned to savagery. A recent author writes:

This social state of the Pelasgi is lower than that of any of the inhabitants of Asia, of the blacks of Africa who have crafts and agriculture, and of all the pastoral peoples of these two parts of the world who, despite conditions in their regions which impede agriculture, have brought civil society to a high level. It is also lower than the state of hunters in America who are at least familiar with maize and potatoes, and know how to make certain kinds of cloth. It can only be compared with the social condition of Australian aborigines.¹⁴⁸

This was the miserable state of the first *families* who came to dwell in Greece. They were raised from such barbarity by the work of *individual* adventurers who abandoned family restrictions and founded colonies. Sismondi continues:

Nevertheless, the Egyptian colonies¹⁴⁹ led the inhabitants

Domitian and Trajan. The kingdoms, however, were only 'groupings of peoples, the effect of superiority achieved by a warlike tribe under a famous leader. — Weaker tribes were compelled to recognise the sovereignty of the strong tribe, and received territory or a guarantee about the territory they possessed if they provided military service.' — For the rest, Germany was characterised by about forty more or less extended peoples.

¹⁴⁸ I-C-L. de Sismondi, *Les Colonies des anciens comparées à celles des modernes sous le rapport de leur influence sur le bonheur du genre humain*.

¹⁴⁹ And the Phoenician colonies, we may add, especially those founded by Cadmus who gave literacy to Greece (16th century B. C.). — Greece had its finest colonies contemporaneously with the expulsion of the Canaanites from Palestine and Phoenicia under Joshua. The defeats inflicted on these soft, corrupt peoples by this condottiere shook them to the core and dispersed them throughout the world. They founded other colonies in Asia, Africa, Europe, and it seems probable that their ships even reached America. We are all aware of the two famous Tingitane columns which could still be seen in Africa five hundred years after Christ. They commemorated, in Phoenician script, the arrival in Africa of colonies fleeing 'from before Joshua, son of Nave, thief' (Procopius, *De Regno Vandalico*, bk. 2, c. 10). Bochart in his famous book, *De coloniis Phoenicum*, gives a fine description

of the land to the highest degree of civilisation. The colonies taught the local population every useful craft and how to dominate nature. The inhabitants were not driven out or exterminated; they were admitted to the new societies formed by the colonists and united within the colonists' cities where they became more Greek than Egyptian. Everything was Greek: religion, language, customs, clothes — everything belonged to the new country, not to the old. This was particularly true of the political organisation which also was Greek. Here alone is the source of freedom and love of country; here was lit the flame that was destined to illuminate the universe.

383. Note, however, that this is not altogether exact. It is not right to say that 'everything, especially the political organisation, was Greek.' How could it be Greek when Greece was inhabited by populations whose degree of civilisation was on a par with that of Australian aborigines? It would be more appropriate to say that nothing was Greek, and that the political organisation above all was not Greek. Up to this point, Greece contained only a family, not a political element. Everything in Greece was itself foreign, or at least new; the political organisation in particular was entirely imported by those who colonised

of this incident which forced the Phoenicians to leave their native land and migrate to foreign parts. — Thus Providence, in moving the Hebrew people against the Canaanites, did not simply intend that the Jews should enter the promised land. It also aimed at the good of the Canaanites themselves, when it chastised them, and of the whole human race. The Canaanites were growing more and more corrupt. Providence shook them, forcing them to abandon their own vice-infected homes and to break with their families amongst whom they lived under the insoluble bondage of domestic superstitions and blind, narrow customs. Some perished, the rest fled by any available escape-route to exile. In such tragic circumstances, individuals, not families, are the operative force; individuals have to associate, and think of new things and new undertakings. The more knowledgeable and courageous person is better fitted for such conditions. When the fugitives reach barbarous regions, however, a happy mixture takes place between these fallen, civilised peoples and the totally uncivilised native population. The latter learn the principles of human living, and the former, through intermingling with their uncultured neighbours, absorb simpler ways of life together with an example of work and activity in the face of need. The ancient civilisation-process of the human race moves forward. God has never forgotten any people on earth.

that land. Greece's sole contribution was a germ of domestic society, helpful to the new people which was to arise there, if it were not to develop excessively harsh, military forms of government.¹⁵⁰ This seed was dominated by the power of the colonies which possessed knowledge and energy, and contemporaneously provided laws accompanied by sanctions.

384. The formation of compact, strong civil governments which appeared in the midst of the north-western peoples, and then served as the focus of universal civilisation, is dependent on the *association of individuals*, not on the first *association of families*. Individuals, having renounced and left their own families, made up an artificial family, the true beginning of civil governments. This occurred principally in Greece, and was repeated in the surrounding regions so that political association was extended along with the good things of civilisation. As our author says:

As soon as Greece had fused into a single people the aborigines (αὐτόχθονες) and the colonists arriving from Egypt, she began in her turn to extend the civilisation she had received along all the Mediterranean coastline. The colonies of Ionia, Heslos and Doris turned to Asia Minor. Others came to found new city-states in Italy, Sicily, along the shores of Pontus Euxinus, and the coast of Africa and Provence. Everywhere these colonies exercised the beneficial influence on the natives that Egypt had exercised on Greece; everywhere the colonies civilised, taught the art of living, and allowed the original inhabitants to mingle with them. The resulting union soon led the colonies to outdo the local metropolitan centres in population, power, wealth, crafts of all kinds and even in the development of intelligence.

¹⁵⁰ It is essential to preserve intact an element of *domestic society* in the midst of *civil society*. Establishing the extent of this element and its weight in the balance of power is, however, one of the great questions capable of various answers according to the stages and particular conditions of nations. The solution of such questions illustrates to a great degree the wise skill of legislators. It would seem that until our days civil laws have continually weakened paternal authority as the family is gradually absorbed to an ever greater degree by government. This should be considered carefully by those to whom Providence has entrusted the duty of making laws.

385. Here we have to note once more that the adventurous Egyptian and Phoenician colonies mark the most vigorous stage of development in their countries of origin. As I have said, these countries either had not completed or had rapidly passed through the social stage of power. It is, of course, in the nature of things that civil societies should attain the stage of power. Nevertheless, in some countries this stage either comes to grief or does not attain full growth, although the natural effort of the peoples to reach it is obvious even when unsuccessful. I contend that this stage corresponds to the time when new colonies were composed of youth who felt the need to conquer, dominate and expand in greatness and power, but were blocked in their endeavour by the unbreakable yoke of family ties. At this moment, they left their homeland to satisfy their desires elsewhere.

386. The colonists, therefore, were the liveliest, most agile and intelligent section of the country which they had left; it was they who heard more clearly the voice of nature, and felt more deeply the need of complete development. It will be useful here if I quote more at length from Sismondi, especially as his intention is to prove exactly the opposite of what I want to establish. These observations, or rather this historical information, prove that what mattered most to the ancient colonies was not the acquisition of wealth, which they still despised, but the attainment of power and glory. Consequently, it shows that the colonies were animated by the spirit proper to the second social stage which aims at domination and glory and, as we said, presupposes a greater use of understanding.

The Greek colonies were made up of free men coming from all degrees of society. In heroic times, they were led by the king's sons, and later by the *enpatridi* or citizens of the most noble lineage. Nevertheless, a necessary consequence of their undertaking was the need to establish extreme equality amongst the colonists who enrolled for these ventures without wealth or any desire to acquire it.

This is the contempt for wealth which characterises the state of the masses in the second social stage.

This does not mean that they were without ambition, but that they wanted to excel their compatriots in counsel or in

war. They never thought of growing great through wealth, but by eloquence, prudence or valour. They could not expect to find in their new land any food other than that provided by the work of their own hands; like all the others, they received their share of the fields of the colony and had to cultivate them without domestic servants, daily labourers or slaves. This new society, surrounded by enemies or jealous neighbours, refused to harbour domestic enemies in its midst. As long as the lesser peoples of antiquity were mutually independent, slavery amongst them was simply an accident arising from the right of war; it was not an industrial organisation. Work was therefore still held in honour. The chief citizens of the colony did not baulk at manual labour. It was agreed that such work would not occupy all their time, of which a great part had to be spent in civic administration, instruction and defence. Nevertheless, rural industry produces far more than is needed for the maintenance of those who exercise it in countries where the labourer has no rent to pay and the State has no debts, where no part of the production of succeeding generations is mortgaged by fathers to their debtors, where customs are simple and luxury is unknown.¹⁵¹ Today the labourer lives on half his crop and hands over the other half to the owner; at other times, however, the person who worked his own land lived on half a week's labour and could devote the other half to public service.

387. All this shows that the colony was simply an association of approximately equal individuals whose common will was necessarily interested in government. This gradually became the single aim of their thoughts and inevitably constituted a true political society, not simply a communal way of life for masters and servants.

All social interests were debated in the *Agora*, every example was open to common view; all characteristics, however they developed, were public. The study of mankind, the philosophical study of human passions and interests, was accessible to rich and poor alike. Polished language and refined accents were not a sign of social standing because everyone endeavoured to speak with the

¹⁵¹ Especially where the soil is fertile and the weather very good.

same purity of tongue. Any book which occasionally increased the fund of common instruction had a popular influence; Herodotus read his history to the assembled Greeks. — The interests they had in common, the proximity of all the citizens and their constant mutual interaction made the colonies of antiquity a school where all learned from one another.¹⁵²

388. Clearly, peoples in circumstances such as these, no longer separated by family walls as it were, were strictly united under a single, public, civil government. There were, however, other circumstances that favoured the bonding of the citizens, above all, the *city-states* which were founded, in such a way that each was like an ample, common home for all.

The colonists were weak, small in number and left totally to themselves (their mother country gave no thought to their defence). All were eager to build their houses, therefore, within the restricted confines of the city. At night, they slept under a common guard, and went out only at daybreak to their work in the fields. These conditions marked their agriculture in a way similar to that of Provence or Spain where no houses are scattered through the fields, and the peasants all return with their beasts to the village. Certainly, this type of agriculture has serious disadvantages: the labour of peasants and animals is increased, the farm worker cannot take stock of his land or expect abundant harvests, there is no encouragement to lay down plantations, to keep fields tidy or love the soil. The influence of this system on mankind is, however, more important than the production of wealth. For the colonists the feeling for social and civil life was the most important thing to preserve. Country people in villages become more civilised than those scattered over the lands.

389. Moreover, the need for defence also helped to bring about equal conditions for all and remove the danger of wealth accumulating in a few families.

¹⁵² Sismondi, *op. cit.* — Num 35, with its description of the form of the city the Hebrews had to build after conquering Canaan, is worth reading from this point of view. It is the oldest document we have which allows us to see the form of the cities built by the ancient colonies in the countries they conquered.

The colonist who depended only on himself and his companions in the venture did not want fields where he was unable to hear the sound of the war-trumpet calling him to the defence of his city. This was the principle used by the colonial authority to divide lands that had been acquired. It was necessary, therefore, that all should have approximately equal shares so that no one was too far from the walls. The divided lands spread out like concentric circles. The cultivated fields were nearest the fortified precinct; further out, the colony had its pastures where the advancing enemy could easily be spotted. In this way the higher interest of common security brought about territorial equality, whatever the inequalities of wealth amongst the associates.

When we examine Romulus' robber band, we find exactly this kind of association amongst individual rogues without families. The abduction of the Sabine women confirms this.¹⁵³

390. It is clear, therefore, that the most robust civil governments took their origin from the very ruins of family societies. In this we see the *law of compensation*, which Providence posits in the fortunes of mankind. By this law nations are renewed even while experiencing fair punishment and reward. Finally, we see why the constant route of progress followed by civilisation is the same as that of power organised under perfect civil governments. It sets out from a centre in Asia, moves towards the north-west and across this hemisphere to continue in the Americas.

391. I do not want to stop to consider the present state of civil societies in Europe. I do not want to speak of England or Russia, the two most northern nations to arrive at social power. It is enough to note that the struggle which is about to start is a totally new case in history, and in part perhaps a step back from the law we have posited.¹⁵⁴ It is clear to all that the north is

¹⁵³ A proof of the prevalence in Rome of supreme love of country and its laws is found in Brutus' decision to condemn his own children to death, and in similar facts. This spirit of civil association became almost the principle of morality amongst the Romans; it caused Cicero to assign the principle of sociality as a source of morals and of natural right, although on occasion his basic common sense told him that this was insufficient (*De Off.*, bk. 1).

¹⁵⁴ The reason modern societies do not obey the providential laws presiding over the societies of antiquity is the new element in our societies, that is, Christianity which creates new, more sublime laws for the progress of Christian nations.

divided, that the west joins with the south and the east with the north. Civilisation prevails in the first coalition; force in the second. Whatever the outcome of the great, inevitable struggle, the process of civilisation will remain, conquering or conquered.

CHAPTER 7

Summary

392. What has been said enables us to understand how the practical reason of the masses make use of the political criterion we have described. This reason successively places the proximate end of civil society in four different objects each of which, as the aim of the collective or social will, corresponds to some imperfect, temporary contentment.

As the will loses its initial satisfaction, society takes a step forward. The collective will, having lost faith in the illusion created by its own imagination and hope, seeks contentment elsewhere.

393. The instability of popular satisfaction shows that none of the four good objects can provide the full contentment human beings desire. Worst of all, the moderate, just affection the masses have for these objects gradually degenerates. At this point, each good is not only unsuitable for producing imperfect contentment; against every expectation, it causes profound, incurable unhappiness. People in this condition are like drunks who think their only remedy lies in yet another drink. The analysis of such a miserable state of society deserves separate consideration and will be the subject of the following book.

CHAPTER 8

How the error committed by the masses in determining the end of civil society depends for its degree of harm on the form of government

394. What we have said until now about the error committed by the masses in determining the undetermined end of civil society through the instincts of corrupt will is verified whatever the form of government. Nevertheless, we may usefully note that different forms of government can make the corruption of the masses harmful to the nation in varying degrees.

395. It is true that the ruin of the State cannot be avoided if government is in the hands of individuals (even individuals exempt from normal corruption) rather than in the hands of the masses (unless the individuals in command possess the extraordinary moral power suitable for redeeming the masses from their corruption). In these circumstances, the corrupt masses continually evade laws and force the government to certain irregular, excessive enactments which produce a painful, arbitrary and totally ephemeral condition. However, the masses, when excluded from power, at least do not have any direct influence in the downfall of the State. Their indirect role consists in passive, invincible resistance which blocks their understanding of the aims of wise government and prevents their co-operation with it for the sake of public well-being.

396. On the other hand, if corrupt masses are in power, as for example where democracy prevails, they clearly have a direct part in pushing the State to its final destruction. All their vices, ignorance and brutal instincts overflow into the laws and public enactments. This explains why, in democratic States which have reached the extreme limits of corruption, we see an immediate retrograde movement towards aristocracy and monarchy, prompted by the instinct of self-preservation. This prolongs their existence but does not save them.

397. It was this ruinous action of the governing masses, so harmful to the existence of society which, according to Sallustius, caused the precipitous downfall of mores in Rome.

Roman power would indeed have fallen even more quickly and dissolutely if the Caesars had not immediately taken command. The bestial wickedness of several of these emperors did not lay as heavily upon the laws and decisions of the State as would the ignorance, confusion and insanity of the Roman populace if the masses had continued to act as legislators and controllers of public affairs. The corruption of all the people far exceeds that of a single individual or several individuals, however perverse they may be.

398. The influence of the people, according to the level of their intellectual and moral condition, as arbiters of public affairs can be seen more easily if we consider what is taking place at present amongst populations which cannot really be called corrupt, but are nevertheless affected by the prejudice, passion and degree of ignorance usually found amongst the multitudes. I am speaking of America, and would draw attention to the reflections of an author who has lived a long time in the United States and notes with rare impartiality the good and evil of that government.

In Europe many believe but do not say, or say without believing, that one of the great advantages of universal suffrage is the way in which men worthy of public confidence are called to direct public affairs.

For my part, I have to say that what I have seen in America does not encourage me to think like this. When I arrived in the United States, I marvelled at the worthiness of those who were governed and the lack of worthiness amongst those who governed. It is a constant fact that at present noteworthy people are called so rarely to public office in the United States. We have to recognise that this has occurred to the extent that democracy has overstepped its ancient limits. Clearly there are far fewer statesmen in America now than half a century ago.

Whatever you do, it is impossible to raise the intellectual standard of the people above a certain level. It is as difficult to conceive a State in which all human beings are enlightened as it is to think of all the citizens as rich. These are two co-relative difficulties. — Long study and many different notions are required to form an exact idea of the character of even one person. — The people never have the time and means for this kind of labour. Furthermore, judg-

ments always have to be made hastily, and on the basis of what is immediately clear. The result is that charlatans of all kinds possess the secret of pleasing the people while the people's true friends make a disastrous showing.

399. This is how the degree of ignorance characteristic of the people produces its effect in their decisions when public power depends on the populace. The same may be said of the particular vices which in democracies play too great a part in the determinations of the people.

It is not that democracies always lack the capacity of choosing worthy persons; they lack the desire and the taste for such a choice.

We must not deceive ourselves: democratic institutions develop an extraordinary feeling of envy in the human heart. This is not because such institutions offer everyone the opportunity of being on a par with others, but because these means continually fail in the hands of those who use them. Democratic institutions arouse and deceive the passion for equality which it can never satisfy. Complete equality slips daily from the hands of the people just when they seem to grasp it; its flight, as Pascal says, is everlasting. The people are agitated as they search for this extremely precious good which is near enough to be known, but too distant to be tasted. The possibility of success moves them, but its uncertainty irritates; the people become disturbed, then tired, then embittered. Whatever moves a step ahead of them seems an impediment to their desires; no superiority, however legitimate, is looked upon favourably. ...

In the United States, the people do not hate the upper classes but bear them little goodwill, and are careful to exclude them from power. The people do not fear great minds, but find them unattractive. In general, anything established without the support of the people will win their favour only with difficulty.¹⁵⁵

400. If these passions develop in an incorrupt multitude, such as that of America, and have an influence in such important matters as the choice of who holds public office, then in a democratic government a totally ruined people will spawn a great

¹⁵⁵ *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, t. 2, c. 5.

ignorance and perversity in public affairs. The different States themselves of the American Federation show a gradual worsening in the choice of public functionaries as the ignorance and moral ruin of their citizens increases.

As you go further south in the States, where the social bond is less old and strong, where instruction is less wide-spread and the principles of morality, religion and freedom mixed in a less fortunate way, everyone notices that great minds and virtue become increasingly rare among those who govern.

Finally, when you reach the new States of the south-west, in which the social body is still made up of an agglomeration of adventurers and speculators, it is difficult to discover who has been entrusted with public power. You find yourself asking what possible force, independent of the legislature and politicians, enables the State to grow and society to prosper.¹⁵⁶

401. These examples are sufficient to indicate how the vices and ignorance of people under democratic government bring society to its downfall, if they increase beyond a certain limit. If, however, it is not the people *en masse* who govern, but a few individuals, it is certain that the State will not perish so quickly, however bad the choice of these individuals. It is impossible for the ignorance and brutality of these men to harm the State as much as the ignorance and brutality of disreputable masses whose desires go unchecked.

402. Our example again need extend no further than America. In particular, we can limit ourselves to a single point, the choice of the legislature. A bizarre contrast has been noticed between the quality of persons sitting in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. The assembly of Representatives at Washington presents an altogether populist aspect: a few outstanding people, small town lawyers, traders and even illiterate people of the lowest class, make up the body. This is the result of popular choice. The Senate, on the other hand, is composed of the best-known names in America: eloquent lawyers, famous generals, able magistrates, and well-known statesmen. This is the choice made by the legislature of each State. Although the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

legislators of individual States, chosen by the people, may not perhaps be the best persons available, their election of Senators is much superior to the choice made by the entire mass of the people when they vote for their Representatives.

It is easy to foresee the time when the American republics will be forced to extend the use of the two grades in their electoral system if they do not want to suffer shipwreck on the hazards of democracy.¹⁵⁷

403. In certain nations (China is one example) the mass of the people is corrupt. Nevertheless, these nations survive through the intellectual aristocracy which presides over the government. Although China has neither a strong government nor one which has made progress along the path of progressive civilisation (which is proper only to Christian nations), its rulers are sustained in virtue of assiduous studies that preserve a certain grade of intelligence amongst the mandarins. This grade is sufficiently high to maintain the stationary existence of those societies — an existence which, however, will fall away of itself as soon as China encounters more civilised Christian nations [*App.*, no. 10].

404. Finally, Christianity, by placing individuals as teachers and pastors at the head of the great religious society, indicated the form of a natural government. But it also requires those individuals to be beacons of holiness and wisdom, consecrated exclusively to the good of humanity under the totally divine influence and power which Christianity itself adds to their rites of consecration. Christianity insists that such leaders should exercise their magisterium in the most conscientious way; and to provide for the best possible choice of leaders, it gives them alone the right to elect their successors and send them forth perpetually in the name of God. It also furnishes the leaders' disciples and flocks with enlightenment, teaching and standards of judgment that enable them to distinguish good and bad teaching and conduct in the individuals who govern them. The same gifts enable the disciples to discern true from false teachers, and the voice of the shepherds from that of mercenaries and wolves. In doing all this, Christianity has solved the great

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

problem: 'What are the best possible guarantees against abuse by individuals who govern?' Christianity shows that these guarantees all lie in the good conscience of rulers, and in the moral enlightenment and conscience of those who are governed. Political theory has no consistency outside these Christian guarantees. All constitutions and all forms of government, whatever the effort which brings them about, have a weak side, a kind of immense breach through which pours the most outrageous, vicious violence, despotism and murderous desires.

405. In conclusion it is clear that human societies, when abandoned to themselves without any extraordinary, powerful leader to brake and redirect them, move on gradually, but fatally and ineluctably, to irreparable ruin. We may indeed ask if such a powerful leader and saviour of human societies really exists. Is there some extraordinary person whose sagacity enables him to rise above his fellow-citizens and the entire society whose child he is? — We formulate our answer by examining the power of individuals' *speculative reason* over the *masses*, and by seeing whether this reason has sufficient power to hold back the masses in their course. In other words, can this speculative reason redirect the masses so that they govern their social wills and their actions with the political criterion we have indicated, that is, a criterion which requires that society should always look to the contentment of its members and to acquiring nothing more than those special benefits helpful to producing contentment?

CHAPTER 9

The power of individual speculative reason in leading civil societies to their legitimate end — Individuals who prepare the way for the foundation of civil governments

406. Domestic society is prior to civil society; individuals are prior to domestic society. *Individuals* and *domestic society* each contribute an element of their own to civil society. It is extremely helpful therefore if, in clarifying our knowledge of the entire nature of a given civil society, we know the condition of the families and the individuals who preceded the society.

What has been said in preceding chapters shows very clearly the extent to which the condition of family society, and of the individuals who from the beginning compose civil society, plays its part in providing society with its own nature and mould.

407. Families are made up of parents and children. There is no doubt that the children receive from nature some part of their physical, intellectual and moral constitution. What they receive is in the hands of Providence; here, human beings can do nothing and foresee nothing. This part of the innate constitution is partly preserved in further generations, and partly changed. The immutable part of the original constitution becomes the distinct characteristic of races; the mutable part forms the individual character. As I was saying, human foresight does not reach out to either part and cannot make reliable calculations about either; Providence has retained them as its tool in the government of human affairs. All this comes about according to deep, hidden laws which we cannot deal with here.

408. The hereditary element furnishes the family character; the new element furnishes the character of different individuals in the same family. These two portions of each person's innate constitution are not found in equal proportions. One or other is predominant.

It is abundantly clear that individuals will not leave the family if the original, fixed portion proper to the race prevails; the family is united, fortified, by this element. It is equally clear that individuals will scarcely recognise themselves as belonging to

that family if the new, individual portion prevails over the initial clan-element. In this case, the family itself will not bestow on individuals the same strict bond of membership; these individuals appear destined either to remain isolated¹⁵⁸ or to found a new family or to undertake some more universal work. They may, for example, take on the role and office of wise men or adventurers. Generally speaking, we can believe that the founders of societies belong to this kind of human being.¹⁵⁹

Obviously, it is Providence alone which brings them to birth, tempering the two elements in them to achieve this effect. It is impossible to escape from the necessary truth that it was 'the Lord who scattered the nations abroad over the face of the earth.'¹⁶⁰ There is no doubt that only the Creator predestines the nature of different nations; he alone predestines and mixes in an ever-varying but wise way the two elements in the innate constitution of individuals.

409. Everyone, parent or child, is bound by these two elements of the innate constitution to which education, which modifies the children's constitution through their parents' action upon them, is added as another factor. Here I take 'education' in its most general meaning. This new cause, which has

¹⁵⁸ This explains the natural origin of the *poor* and the *proletariat*. The isolated individual is weak and abandoned. A similar explanation may be given for the natural origin of the immensely rich and powerful. Individuals not totally loyal to their families tend towards greater associations which render them stronger than people tied to their own families.

¹⁵⁹ Genesis, chapter 10, contains the only clear, extant records of the most ancient origins of things. They describe the first families who took their origin from the three sons of Noah. Nimrod, a mighty man, the son of Cush and grandson of the founder, Cham, belonged at least to the initial stage of dominion, if not to the first civil society itself. However he appears in the Genesis narrative without family and as an isolated individual. The sacred history at this point interrupts the series of fathers and sons; it does not say that Nimrod generated anyone, but only that 'he was the first on earth to be a mighty man.' Reputable authors add that Nimrod rebelled against subjection to his great-grandfather, Noah. This would explain his name which means precisely 'rebel'. — All this shows that Nimrod, a violent man, must have had a constitution in which the original element of the clan was almost totally overcome by the individual element. Nevertheless, this did not deprive Nimrod of his freedom to choose to do good or evil.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Gen 11, 8–9.

considerable influence in the formation of human individuals, must also be divided into two parts, one traditional and fixed in the families, the other new and added by the teacher on his own account, that is, by the father of the family, who draws it from his individual reflections.

410. It is easy to see that these two parts of human *education*, each of which adds its own contribution to the individuals it forms, correspond in a certain way to the two parts already distinguished in *generation* — each of these furnishes its own element to the innate constitution of human beings. It is also easy to see that the proportions in which the two inborn elements are mixed in the teacher, that is, in the father of the family, will correspond to the degree in which they are mixed in the teaching and education given to the children by the father. If the clan-element dominates in the innate constitution of the father, the traditional element proper to the family will dominate in the teaching or education of his children. If the new, individual element dominates, the father will communicate to his children his own individual reflections and discoveries rather than the treasure of teaching and belief received from ancestral tradition.

411. What is said about fathers relative to their children must be repeated about children relative to their descendants. Every new *generation* has 1. a *clan-element* given by nature and a corresponding *traditional element* provided by education; 2. an *individual element* also given by nature, and a corresponding *individual element* communicated to the new generation by the education received from the father. These elements multiply from father to son; they are mixed in various ways and modified in total dependence upon the deep, hidden dispensation of Providence, which secretly but infallibly directs humanity to its own ends.¹⁶¹ It is obvious that the *clan-element* tends to conserve; the *individual* element to innovate.

412. Both elements, each destined for a necessary duty, are

¹⁶¹ Scripture frequently asserts that human generations are divided and led by God. This theme is developed especially in Psalm 32 where it says that ‘the thoughts of his [God’s] heart [are] to all generations’, that ‘he beholds ALL the sons of men’ and that ‘he has made the hearts of EVERYONE of them’ [Douai].

precious. The first has to maintain the physical, intellectual and moral riches of mankind and prevent their dispersal; the second is designed to develop human faculties and stimulate progress along the threefold path of physical, intellectual and moral good. It could be said that the first of these two elements is the principle of the system of *resistance*, the second the principle of the system of *movement*. When we abandon our modern, antagonistic parties, they will see that if *movement* were all, everything would, by the same title, perish; if *resistance* were all, everything in the human race would stagnate. At this point, those who love resistance will respect those who love movement. Neither of the two classes would want the other to be eliminated; each would recognise how necessary for itself is the other's existence. Together they would work for common happiness, the final object of both; they would work without friction and bitterness, according to the laws and impulses of their opposite natures. These two factions are found in the most ancient ancestors of human generations. In Sem, as we can easily see, the *clan-element* prevailed, in Japhet the *individual element*. Thus, Sem became the ancestor of the static nations and Japhet the ancestor of the progressive nations.

413. However, we must not take things too far. Everything good of itself in human affairs is subject to corruption. This is true of the two elements we have mentioned. They are both liable to abuse, and thus become sources of evil. The original clan-element, which is valuable as long as good traditions and useful customs are maintained, becomes extremely harmful when errors and harmful customs form part of family life. This element blindly preserves good and bad things — and perhaps bad things more tenaciously than good. At this point divine Providence, making use of the individual element which it sets against the clan-element, stirs up wars and revolutions to enable decadent, corrupt and divided families to renew and purge themselves.

414. We must not believe, however, that error, superstition and vice are inherent to the dawn of mankind. Christianity is not alone in teaching the contrary; everyone who acknowledges God as the author of the first human family believes that this family was created perfect and furnished with the knowledge

and necessary force to practise virtue to the fullest extent. This knowledge, if it had been faithfully transmitted to posterity, would have formed humankind's true, solid wisdom. Its alteration and loss have to be sought in the *individual principle* which tends to innovation, and can be turned to good or evil by the free will of individuals.¹⁶²

The *individual principle*, therefore, introduced formerly unknown errors and superstitions into families. Clearly, the *clan-principle*, the conserving principle, is harmful, not beneficial, when this occurs; it now works to render unchangeable the harm wrought in families. When families reach this term, the pitiful seed sown in them by the *individual principle* can be rooted out only by the destruction and disintegration of families, as we have said. This also is the work of the same individual principle from which spring all kinds of warlike enterprises.

415. At this point, we find our argument has led us to God and to the teaching and grace he communicated to the first family. We have thus arrived at something superhuman. This element also has to be borne in mind as we list the factors which human beings have posited in the formation of civil societies. We have three principles, therefore, which have played a part in the formation of civil societies, and which contain the summary causes of their different natures:

1. a *divine* principle which is traditionally preserved;
2. a twofold *clan-principle*: a) *inborn*, given by nature, b) *acquired*, received through education;
3. an *individual* principle which is also twofold, that is, a)

¹⁶² Romagnosi exaggerates when he affirms that 'the increase, development and division of professions in a given people is as much the work of nature as the growth, extension and fruition in plants' (*Questioni sull'ordinamento delle statistiche*, q. 6). — In the past, all human events had to be explained by the free will of a few individuals; now we recognise something independent of human beings in the movement of nations (some invisible hand that guides this movement), and we want to hear no more about free will — everything happens of itself in the nature of things. This is the exaggeration which has entrapped our modern historico-fatalist school! — Vico discovered an important truth when he observed that 'nations follow certain fixed laws as they progress.' Abuse of this truth produced the harmful error that we have indicated.

inborn and b) acquired through progressive use of one's own inborn principle. Both the *clan-principle* and the *individual principle* undergo some alteration in every new generation.¹⁶³

416. These are the three principles that make civil society possible by furnishing the individuals who compose it with the quantity of intelligence required for its formation. It is clear from what we have said that a great part is played by individual reason in the movement to civil society.

417. However, civil society needs other preliminaries when human beings have degenerated into wild, savage living. The first necessity is the restoration of the divine element; a uniform, external cult is required. As we have seen, all founders of the first civil communities were eager to ensure this.¹⁶⁴ The second necessity was instruction which enabled people to distinguish between years and months. An example of this may be seen in the account of Phegeus, son of Inachus, in the Peloponnesus.¹⁶⁵ It was necessary to institute marriage, which in Attica is attributed to Cecrops;¹⁶⁶ the use of the alphabet was necessary, and

¹⁶³ The reader will gather from this outline the necessary principles underlying a complete *History of Humanity*.

¹⁶⁴ Hyginus tells us that Phoroneus, son of Inachus, acquired the kingdom of Argolis because he erected an altar to Juno. This occurred about 1800 BC, during the life of Abraham. Tatianus says: 'After Inachus, under Phoroneus, the hunting and pastoral life of human beings took on a milder and more elegant form.' Clement of Alexandria (Bk. 1, *Strom.*) is able to quote a passage of Acusilaus of Argos, who affirms that Phoroneus was the *first man*. Nevertheless, it is claimed that Pelasgi, who succeeded Phoroneus after a gap of centuries, gave his name to the Pelasgi who, as we noted, were complete barbarians, totally without civil development. In other words, those populations reverted to barbarism after Phoroneus. — It is said that Cecrops was the first among the Greeks to call Jove 'god'. The many other things he contributed to unify human beings by means of a single cult offered to the divinity can be seen in Eusebius (*Praepar. Evang.*, bk. 10, c. 2), in St. Epiphanius (bk. 1, §1) and in St. Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, 18: 9).

¹⁶⁵ 'They thought Phegeus, brother of Phoroneus, was worthy of great honour because he had set up places of worship for the gods in part of his kingdom, and had taught his people how to keep track of months and years' (Aug. *De C. D.*, 18: 3).

¹⁶⁶ Cecrops was the first Athenian to join one woman with one man. Before his time, they had come together promiscuously in common marriages (Athenaeus, bk. 13). — Cecrops reigned from about 1550 BC. during the lifetime of Moses.

they say this was brought to Boeotia by Cadmus;¹⁶⁷ there was a need to teach people agriculture, as Triptolomus did in Eleusis and elsewhere;¹⁶⁸ finally, wild beasts and highwaymen had to be destroyed to enable people to work, plough and clear the land in safety, a work carried out by the Herculean and Theseusian types of antiquity.¹⁶⁹

418. All these and other works are preliminaries to the institution of civil societies;¹⁷⁰ they remove the obstacles to common civil life amongst human beings, and provides the understanding with its necessary development. All the labour, or almost all of it, depends upon the speculative reason of certain eminent individuals; the individual element works for the universal good of the masses.

¹⁶⁷ The Phoenicians who came with Cadmus brought a great deal of instruction to Greece including literacy, which the Greeks lacked (Herodotus, 5: 58). It is scarcely possible to conceive mentally of an alphabetical civil society. We may say, therefore, that as *speech* is the means of communication in family society, *writing* is the means of communication proper to civil society. — Cadmus was king of Thebae about 1519 BC.

¹⁶⁸ Triptolemus lived about 1409 BC.

¹⁶⁹ Hercules the Theban lived about 1280 BC. — Theseus reigned in Athens about 1236 BC.

¹⁷⁰ These labours continue after the establishment of society. Clearly, however, civil union could not have begun if the works we have enumerated had not been carried out to some extent beforehand.

CHAPTER 10

Continuation: founders and first legislators

419. What has been said in the preceding chapter indicates high praise for the principle of individual activity which, however, cannot be considered as all powerful. Many great men have tried and desired in vain to carry out for the public advantage things that mediocre people have later achieved. Some suitable disposition amongst the masses is always necessary if the action of individuals is to produce any great effect on them. This disposition is difficult to observe, but it is undoubtedly real, and the major force in what is achieved. Without it, the masses do not understand what individual wise men are saying; they remain unmoved by appeals and stand firm against efforts to effect some result. The suitable disposition of which we are speaking is manifested amongst the masses only at the moment designated by divine Providence, neither sooner nor later. It works and reaches its effect secretly in the heart of families through the three above-mentioned principles: 1. the divine principle; 2. the clan-principle; 3. the individual principle, all of which are tempered in various ways in succeeding generations.

420. The same may be said about *Founders* and *Legislators* of civil societies. Founders would not have been able to establish cities unless the masses were furnished with a certain quantity of proximate power over the use of their intelligence and already prepared for what they considered as necessary association. When the mass of people are suitably prepared and mature, only the occasion for union is lacking. This is provided by some superior individual who feels more than others the need felt by all. This individual's intelligence is better suited than that of others for involving him in society, although all are more or less ready for society. This person places himself at the head of the masses and, by making himself worthy of the post through his courage and prudence, interprets and fulfils the universal desire. At this point, the masses crowd around him like bees around their queen. Thus two causes are responsible for the foundation of civil societies: 1. a disposition on the part of

the masses corresponding to 2. the activity of an individual who rises from and above the masses. The necessary correspondence between these two causes is fixed and harmonised not by human beings but by God.

421. The same can be said about the first legislators. Laws are powerless if they are not rooted in the way of life or the moral and intellectual dispositions of the people. Particular laws are only relatively good; the perspicacity of legislators consists simply in penetrating the common thought and desire. By that, I mean the part of thought that is upright and just (some part normally remains upright in the depth of the human heart). The legislator's skill, therefore, consists in measuring with a glance the kind and quantity of intelligence in the masses to which he can appeal, and the quantity of mobility or immobility in their way of life. Only through such observations, which his skilful mind embraces and unites in a single thought, does he arrive at laws in which all that is good in the opinions and will of all the people is transfused, and which contain teaching proportioned to the common state of mind, that is, to a new good seen, understood and felt by everyone.

CHAPTER 11

The power possessed by the reason of individuals in the reformation of nations which have arrived at the ultimate stage of corruption

422. Civil societies are founded and furnished with laws as a result of harmonious agreement between the masses and the individuals who, with the masses' approval, have become their leaders. Both parties work with the same aim: the masses through certain hidden dispositions and attitudes, individuals with visible, zealous activity. Matters change, however, when the masses have reached ultimate social corruption after passing through all the stages of their natural existence. In this state of moral flaccidity, every generous word either falls on deaf ears or becomes the object of mockery. At this point, can the individual, alone and unaided by the masses, redeem them from the degradation to which they have fallen?

If such a work is possible, it can only be accomplished by one of three classes of persons: 1. *conquerors* or 2. new *legislators* or finally 3. philosophers. We need to examine the power possible to each of these classes in the reform of civil society which has arrived at its ultimate stage of corruption. We shall begin with conquerors.

CHAPTER 12

Continuation: conquerors

423. First, conquest itself is not dependent upon the whim of any human individual; it, too, requires a disposition on the part of the masses who are conquered. No flourishing nation has ever been conquered because every conquest presupposes some decline on the part of the people conquered. It is consistently true that

‘sovereignty passes from nation to nation
on account of injustice and insolence and wealth.’¹⁷¹

Once the conquest has taken place, however, can the conqueror reanimate the decrepit nation he has conquered? Can human beings achieve such a feat? — Certainly the question is not applicable to conquerors who flood over nations like a raging torrent, destroying all that lies in their path without establishing any stable domination in the midst of the nations. At most, such victors are like strong winds that purify pestilential air without curing the plague.

424. Conquerors who preserve their dominion over the vanquished are of two kinds. Some tend to better the countries they have conquered by mixing and harmonising their own people with the vanquished; their aim is to produce a single people. Others want to dominate forcefully with all possible pressure. In the first case, conquerors and conquered rebind the *societal ties*; in the second, only a *bond of dominion* exists.

425. Here again it would be a great error to believe that either of these two things depended solely on the decision of the individual conqueror. This is certainly not true. The outcome depends principally, if not wholly, on the degree and nature of the corruption reached by the conquered nations.

If the degree and nature of corruption is remediable, the conquering people will easily establish brotherhood with the vanquished, and maintain in their midst only the superiority proper to the rulers in their own nation. Careful thought shows that it is only widespread vice in conquered peoples which

¹⁷¹ Sirach 10: 8.

excites anger, contempt and diffidence about them, as well as desperation about obtaining any good from them. Outside these circumstances, it is never in the interest of conquerors to destroy the vanquished, but to unite and incorporate them into their own society, using them to strengthen the conquering nation. In this case, corruption is almost always remediable when peoples who have not passed through all the social stages are only initially corrupt. In fact, the Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek and Roman colonies were able to civilise, not destroy, the peoples amongst whom they had established themselves.¹⁷²

426. When, however, the conquered people is debased, the natural consequence of conquest is *servitude*, harsh or mild according to the level of corruption in the vanquished. If the servitude is mild, the conquered people live united in the midst of the conquerors, have the benefit of judgment according to their own legislation and under their own native judges, and are able to maintain their own religion and observances. Servitude

¹⁷² The Roman colonies brought the idea of government, as well as crafts and branches of knowledge, to the peoples amongst whom they dwelt. This idea, as we said, is a great source of civilisation. The policy came about as a result of the commanding nature and fine capacity for government possessed by the Romans amongst whom the social stage of power developed and endured longer than amongst any other people. 'Rome was not a Greek colony, but owed its civilisation, laws, language and religion to Italian peoples educated by the Greeks. Rome was not content, as the Greeks were, with taking its crafts, language and philosophy from place to place. It wanted to dominate wherever its armies penetrated. The Greeks sowed new, independent peoples on the shores of the seas; the Romans tended to unity. Although they spread their colonies wherever they bore arms, these colonies, images of the great city, were only garrisons of a great people, not germs of new peoples. Nevertheless, they were destined to mix with the indigenous peoples, to communicate to them all the progress Rome had made in crafts and social sciences, and to set them on the road to civilisation. The Roman colonies were responsible throughout the ancient world for the primary education of mankind' (Sismondi, *Des colonies des Anciens comparées à celles des modernes*, etc.). According to Cicero, 'The Romans set up colonies in suitable places with so little danger of suspicion because they seemed the outposts of empire rather than cities of Italy' (*De Agr.*, 2: 27). 'With so little danger of suspicion' shows that the people feared oppressive power on the part of military colonies. Cicero won the case against the agrarian law of P. Servilius Rullus by making the Roman people fear that the location of colonies in badly chosen places would be an attack on their freedom. Cf. Cicero's speech on this matter, ch. 27 ss.

in this case is proper to the nation rather than individuals who do not, however, own the land. This was the servitude of the Hebrews conquered by the Babylonians.

If corruption is extreme, servitude is also necessarily extreme. The conquerors' anger is raised to such a pitch that slavery is a kind of favour reserved for the dross who have escaped slaughter. This deep, moral anger is easily seen in the northern nations when they overthrew the Roman empire. The overbearing pride of Attila and other barbarians can only be explained by the contempt with which they regarded Roman corruption.¹⁷³

A modern author speaks very aptly of Rome's downfall at the hand of the barbarians:

The Empire's critical moment was that in which the barbarians, comparing themselves with the Romans,¹⁷⁴ judged themselves superior in virtues, which alone justified in their eyes the right to own and command. This judgment was first expressed by the Gauls. They saw from close quarters the increase of vice amid Roman greatness whose total weight they felt, but which they also sustained with their wealth and courage. When Florus and Sacrovir attempted to make the Gauls rise under Tiberius, they made clear to their compatriots that Italy was denuded,

¹⁷³ Attila's frequent insults, conveyed by his ambassadors to the Roman emperors of his time, are well known. He and his nation felt the need to impose themselves on the Romans. The leader is, in fact, incapable of achieving anything unless he finds the nation he guides to victory responding to his thoughts and seconding him with an eagerness equivalent to his own. Priscus, a contemporary of Attila and one-time legate to his court, relates that this ferocious warrior sent a message to Theodosius urging him to come to terms with him. 'Otherwise', he said, 'he (Attila) would not be able to restrain any longer his people's overwhelming ardour for battle' (*Excerpta ex Historia Gothica Prisci Rhetoris de Legationibus, in corp. historiae Byzant.*, Paris, 1648).

¹⁷⁴ When does a nation begin to compare itself with other nations? — This requires a use of intelligence that is activated only at a certain epoch when the intellectual development of the nation has reached a determined level. Before this epoch, the nation is involved with itself, and acts instinctively without comparing itself with others. At most, it will go in search of the booty it may need. Glory and moral emulation, which make the nation capable of thinking itself more virtuous and courageous than others, is not yet the object of its stirrings. The moral and intellectual development of nations has to be noted carefully. This alone provides a causal explanation of all external happenings.

the population of Rome fearful and the armies without any power except that provided by foreigners.¹⁷⁵

427. Abhorrence of Roman vices alienated the barbarians from Roman civilisation which they saw clearly but were unable to separate from the vice they beheld. They were also aware they could not oppose civilisation with civilisation, government with government. Consequently, they felt they could only confront civilisation with ferocity, and stable government with military alliances. When the Germans under Civilis took Cologne, they required as a condition for an alliance with the inhabitants of the city, that the walls, which they called 'out-posts of servitude', should be dismantled. 'The most ferocious animal loses its natural courage if it is caged for a long time. — Let both us and you be free to live along both banks of the river as our ancestors did. As nature gave the light of day to all mankind, so it opened the whole earth to the courageous. Return to the customs and usages of your fathers; abandon these pleasures which are more helpful in prolonging Rome's domination than any armies. Then, purified and regenerated, your days of slavery will be over; you will be surrounded only by equals, and perhaps by subjects.'

428. Peoples at the stage of power are therefore stimulated to conquest by a secret, moral feeling which constantly urges them to fall upon and even to savage weak peoples whose vices they despise. 'I will send for all the tribes of the north, says the Lord, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these nations round about; I will utterly destroy them, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting reproach.'¹⁷⁶

429. The conqueror of nations which have reached the voluptuousness of final social corruption¹⁷⁷ has no power to

¹⁷⁵ Tac., *Ann.*, 3: 4. Cf. *Rome et les Barbares* in *Bibliothèque Universelle de Genève*, August 1837. Civilis used the same kind of arguments to rouse the Germans against the Romans (Tac., *Hist.*, 4: 12; *German.* 29).

¹⁷⁶ Jer 25: [9].

¹⁷⁷ The corruption of certain individuals is not to be confused with that of the nation as a whole. This important distinction may be clarified by the comments I made on the corruption of nations in *Esame delle opinioni di M. Gioia in favore della moda*, inserted in *Opuscoli Filosofici* (vol. 2, p. 107 ss., Milan, Tipografia Pogliani, 1828).

regenerate the vanquished. All that he can do is decimate them and reduce them to slavery. In this way the plague of slavery entered mankind.¹⁷⁸ It is not the effect of overbearing power on the part of certain human beings, as commonly believed, but the result of the corruption of the social masses. We are dealing here not with the oppression of individuals, but with the establishment of slaves as a formed class of people recognised by laws.

430. Here we must consider carefully that, if slavery were a passing condition in the ancient world (a period of expiation and purification for the corrupt masses), some power could be attributed to the individuals responsible for the amendment of subject peoples. This, however, is not the case. Slavery in the ancient world never came to an end. It was an irremediable wound. When the masses reached the bottom of this abyss, there was no possibility of their rising again. A clear proof of this is the fact that the slave population continually increased in antiquity along with the march of human affairs; it never decreased. The times of greatest civilisation were precisely those in which the number of slaves grew. Ancient civilisation could do nothing for them.¹⁷⁹ The contrary cannot be proved

¹⁷⁸ The more peaceful nations of southern Asia either did not have slaves in the Greek and Roman sense or had them only much later. This is explained by the lack of wars. Arrian, according to Megasthenes, wrote of India: 'The wonderful thing is that in India all Indians are free. None of them is a slave. In this, they are like the Spartans. The Spartans, however, have the Helots for servile duties, although they do not use other slaves; but the Indians have no slaves of any sort' (Arrian, *Storia Indica*, c. 10). Romagnosi wants to deduce from this passage of Arrian that the Codex Manu, which mentions slaves, 'was not from India properly speaking, but from another country in which slaves existed' (*Supplementi ed illustrazioni alla seconda parte delle Ricerche sull'India di Robertson*, §5). He did not notice, however, that Arrian perhaps takes the word 'slave' in the Greek sense, that is, in the sense of people understood as things, not as persons. India had the Sudra caste, whose members could not rise higher in society than service to other castes. It is perhaps of these people that the Codex of Manu is speaking. In the second place, India cannot be considered as a single nation, but as a complex of nations. What Arrian says could therefore be true of one nation; what the Codex of Manu says, of another.

¹⁷⁹ At the time when Athenian activity reached fever pitch, Attica had twenty thousand citizens and three hundred and fifty thousand slaves. It is calculated that in the whole of Greece there were six times as many slaves as citizens.

from the fact that each master had the faculty of freeing his slaves. This itself was an effect of seigniorship. Moreover, freedom depended on the spirit of the owners; public liberation *en masse*, or ordered by law, was unheard of. Nor is there any example in antiquity of slaves, considered as a body, rising intellectually and morally to a point where they acquired the capacity for using their freedom and thus being worthy of regaining their liberty. Indeed, neither masters nor laws ever freed masses once enslaved; nor were the masses ever able to regain sufficient force, will-power, intellect or virtue to escape from their penal condition. In thousands of years of ancient history, we see only rare attempts, such as that of Sertorius, on the part of slaves to gain freedom. No attempt was ever successful.¹⁸⁰

431. The civil redemption of peoples was not within human power as the redemption of individuals was. Only the supernatural principle, the new element placed in humanity by Christianity, could redeem and reunite decadent peoples dispersed in slavery.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ The Mosaic laws were more humane towards slaves than those of other nations. In fact, the word 'slave' does not have the same meaning for the Hebrews as it does for the Greeks and Romans. Hebrew legislation always respects the *personship* of the slave. Moreover, amongst the Hebrews, slaves had to be freed every Sabbatical year. If they refused their freedom and preferred to serve their master, as sometimes happened, they could not regain their liberty. These laws were, therefore, exceptions in the whole of the ancient world. They can only be explained through reference to God, who had given them to his people.

¹⁸¹ The various disturbances and wars brought about by slaves in antiquity are mentioned in C. Cantù's article, *Schiavi Romani* (*Rivista Europea*, 15th November 1838).

CHAPTER 13

Continuation: the second legislators; philosophers

432. As we have seen, conquerors cannot heal the masses that have reached final social corruption; they can only dissolve corrupt societies and make slaves of their members. But can such a great work be undertaken with more hope of success by the reason of individuals who attempt to remedy social evils through coercive laws or philosophical teachings?

The facts show clearly that in the ancient world both classes of individuals were powerless. Let us look also at these final efforts of nations doomed to destruction, at these generous but vain attempts of mistaken individuals, ignorant of the immense difficulty of the work they undertake and of the limitation of their power over the masses.

433. I would first point out that the laws of which we are speaking here must be carefully distinguished from those of the first legislators who brought order to nascent societies. The *second legislators*, who belong to the final stage of social corruption, make laws with the sole intention of providing some bulwark against the universal corruption threatening to destroy the very foundations of society. These laws are not designed to bring order into society. They are necessarily coercive and intended to restrict abused common freedom. As such, they present themselves as somewhat hard and bleak; they are too detailed, sometimes rather odd and often contain what is in effect unjust and excessive — although at the time they seem neither odd nor unjust in any way to the legislators.¹⁸²

¹⁸² I will speak later about censal or sumptuary laws, which belong to this class of laws. — The formation of laws restricting freedom is accelerated by political parties, wars and conquests; the conquerors have to take precautions against those they have conquered. — In India, according to the Codex Manu (c. 9, v. 44), ‘the land is the property of the person who has cultivated it.’ This is the primitive law. Strabo (bk. 15), however, tells us that all Indian lands were the property of the sovereign. This is the later, restrictive law, and probably the result of conquest. — Arrian narrates (*Historia Indica*, c. 12, §8 and 9) that learned people in India could come from any caste whatsoever. This is the primitive law. But later documents tell

434. In the same way, we have to distinguish moral laws invented by sages when society has reached old age, and the opinions about virtues and vices which hold sway over the masses in the infancy of society. Although people may not know how to express these opinions well, such laws are free from error and (this is much more telling) efficacious.

435. Both *second laws* and *philosophical teachings* presuppose progress in intellectual progress, that is, a higher order of reflection. In general, every provision destined to adjust disorder supposes intellectual reflection on the disorder and on the means for correcting it. The first ways of ordering society, and the moral opinions which first govern the masses, appertain to a lower order of reflection than coercive laws and philosophy. We need to ask, therefore, how certain individuals reach a higher order of reflection at the moment the masses allow their intelligence to stagnate in idleness.

436. This transition to coercive, preventative laws, and to philosophical teachings, must itself be attributed more to necessity than to individual decisions. We must not lose sight of the nature of the ancient world which forms the object of our considerations.

437. The history of civil societies in antiquity shows that this necessity comes about in the following manner. Trade or war greatly developed a nation and set in progress a considerable

us that in India the Brahmins formed an exclusive caste of learned men (an hereditary caste like all the others). This was the later, restrictive law. — The prohibition about reading the Vedas, that is, the books of wisdom which were reserved for the Brahmins, cannot be a primitive law; it must be numbered amongst those promulgated in societies already old. The same may be said about the abhorrent Pariah or Chandala caste who are not mentioned expressly either by Arrian or Strabo. — In every people which has endured long on the face of the earth, it is easy to note a quantity of such laws which are sometimes necessary in difficult times, but are always troublesome and capable of making government burdensome to those who are governed. Let me offer one example amongst many, even amongst Roman laws. Rome forbade the conquered Carthaginians to learn Greek and study Greek literature. According to Justin, ‘A decision was taken in the Senate forbidding all Carthaginians to study the Greek tongue or literature. The aim was to prevent oral or written communication with the enemy without the use of an interpreter’ (bk. 2, c. 5). This is obviously the legislation of a decayed society.

measure of intelligence. With time, however, and overabundant wealth, luxury and pleasure, the nation fell into extreme corruption. At that point intelligence, which had already been rendered extremely active and thoughtful, felt itself threatened with destruction by love of pleasure. We have to reflect that the feeling aroused in human beings through consciousness of great power over one's own intelligence and through intense, habitual use of intelligence is more powerful and self-centred than any other human feeling.

438. This *power* over one's own intelligence is increased to its greatest extent when the people aspire to grandeur and glory. Later, when the proximate end to which the masses direct their social will consists solely in the voluptuousness and idleness springing from over-abundant pleasure, this power is bereft of matter on which to exercise itself. Because of this, the intellectual nature of human beings must undergo some discomfort and consequent indignation. This is shown, and becomes operative, in more noted individuals who emerge from the masses almost like rocks from the surface of the sea. At the stage of final corruption of a nation, intelligence itself, already aroused, finds in itself this kind of stimulus or instinct to movement and seeks to defend itself.¹⁸³

439. Less corrupt individuals, therefore, with more active intelligence are aware of the decline in public ways of living and use all their ingenuity to shore up society with new laws or by writing moral works of a high quality. Which of the two ways to be taken will depend in great part on the circumstances in which these individuals find themselves. People influential in public affairs endeavour to arm and defend the city-state with

¹⁸³ Note once more that physical sufferings never provide an impulse for the intelligence. Of themselves, they can do nothing for intellectual development. Hence, experience shows that the most foresighted people and the most intelligent seekers of renewal are not those subject to physical suffering. Quite the contrary (Cf. *Esame delle opinioni di Melchiorre Gioia in favore della moda*, observ. 4 and 5). Intelligence is moved only by *intelligent instinct* generated by an intellectual feeling, as in our present case. Here, the intelligence of a nation is in active movement. It does not want to stop because stopping would cause an uncomfortable feeling. As a result, the instinct of intelligence, when deprived of its preceding matter, looks for something to maintain itself in movement.

suitable laws; others who cannot do this naturally turn to the private study of philosophy.¹⁸⁴ It is incredible how much confidence *politicians* and *philosophers* place in their laws and schools respectively from the very beginning. Yet how inefficacious these means prove in corrupt societies! What value have words or writings if the human spirit will not accept them? Censory and especially sumptuary laws,¹⁸⁵ which correspond in character to police laws in modern times, show at most that the human heart is corrupted before the mind.

440. But has any rational dictate expressed in public laws ever healed a corrupt mind? — When a nation has arrived at the stage of making such laws, the objects of common passion take on the characteristics of the love which, according to Aristophanes, the people of Athens bore to Alcibiades: ‘They hate him, but they cannot live without him’. Evils are seen and deplored, but they are not and cannot be abandoned. Moreover, those who make the laws in the republic are the very people who in some way share in the ferment that has acidified the whole mass. Even if the lawmakers were totally incorrupt, laws made by a few would have no force against the will of all. The reforming laws of any State subject to universal corruption begin as dead letters

¹⁸⁴ We have discussed the duty of private and public individuals relative to the help they can give in public affairs in *SC, Preface to the Political Works*.

¹⁸⁵ Government has recourse to laws whenever corruption is seen in society. An increase in laws originates, therefore, in times when 1. corruption caused by *excessive love of power* has occurred (in this case, there is an increase in the laws forming internal or external, political *public right*); 2. corruption caused by *excessive greed for wealth* has occurred (in this case, *civil laws* increase); 3. corruption dependent on luxury and pleasure has occurred (in this case *sumptuary* laws flourish). We must note, however, that the whole of antiquity declared without exception that final corruption resulting from excessive softness was fatal for a nation. The Egyptians provide the first example. Plutarch narrates (*De Isid. e Osir.*) that in a temple at Thebes they had erected a column on which were written curses against the king who had first introduced prestigious spending and luxury into Egypt. We could go on to point to those in charge of State affairs who lived amidst the corruption of Rome and unanimously foresaw the fall that would result from the excess of luxury and pleasure which Rome had procured for herself. Everyone agrees that the irremediable destruction of ancient societies depended upon the excess of voluptuous idleness into which all societies fell sooner or later — I shall speak later about Christian nations.

and soon come to be forgotten or abolished or finally repudiated as stupid and harmful.¹⁸⁶ More foresighted people can then exclaim: 'When vices become the norm, all reasonable hope of salvation is lost'.¹⁸⁷ At this point, it is clear that virtue, once it has been banished from the heart, cannot find security or refuge in external enactments of politics.

441. But what of philosophers? The trust they show in their own speculations is even greater than that of politicians in their laws. At the time when philosophers hold sway, philosophy — from which everything is expected — promises everything; philosophy alone claims to guarantee human virtue; indeed, virtue itself consists in philosophy!

442. Opinion about the *guarantee of human virtue* changes with the times. As long as some natural goodness is preserved by a way of life, and passions have not perverted and falsified the human instinct for judging the usefulness or harm of objects presented to us under attractive or abhorrent aspects, it is natural to posit the guarantee and salvation of virtue in the uprightness of this instinct.

Such an opinion is, however, as short-lived as the incorruption of this instinct. In this case, it is one of those brief, intellectual pauses of which we have spoken. When the germ of human corruption has flowered sufficiently to suffocate natural instinct, it becomes clear that there is no security for virtue in the apparent integrity of nature. At this point, people conclude that this instinct, this direct, simple judgment about good and evil which mankind made in primitive times, is not the firm basis of virtue. This foundation has now to be sought in a higher mental

¹⁸⁶ Macrobius, speaking of the Antian law promulgated by Antius Restio to limit the waste resulting from magistrates' banquets, says that after the law had been made, Restio always dined at home to avoid being a witness of its non-observance (*Satur.*, bk. 2, c. 13). Tacitus, speaking of the sumptuary law of Caius Publicius Bibulus, writes: 'Caius Bibulus spoke first, and the rest of the aediles after him. They said that sumptuary law was spurned, that forbidden prices of utensils rose daily, and that lesser remedies were of no avail.' Hence Montesquieu's very apt comment on Roman corruption: 'The corruption present in the way of life destroyed the law established to destroy the corruption in the way of life. When corruption of this kind becomes universal, law is powerless' (*Spir. delle Legg.*, bk. 23, c. 25).

¹⁸⁷ Senec., *Ep.* 39.

reflection free from instinctive movements. In other words, it has to be sought in philosophical speculation. A claim is made for the discovery of a great truth: 'Human beings cannot remain constant in virtue unless their intelligent spirit is separated from their feeling body and constituted legislator and judge of the body's activity.' Philosophy arises from vice as good laws arise from bad ways of life.

443. A still greater change now appears in people's opinion about the nature of virtue. Philosophers, puffed up by moral speculations, come to consider their observations not as a path, help or guarantee of human virtue, but as virtue itself. They reduce virtue, which consists in practice, to speculation. This alone is sufficient to render their philosophy useless for human betterment. In disguising virtue, they posit it where it is not; they exclude it from the world by the very act with which they claim to introduce and preserve it there.

444. This leads to another reason why philosophy was incapable of opposing the evils of the ancient world. Once virtue had been confused with speculation, only a few individuals could possess such speculation-virtue. The masses could not devote themselves to learning of any kind. Hence philosophers' habitual contempt for the populace, and their own desire to be considered exceptional. 'The things which please the populace bring trivial, superficial pleasure in their wake. — But virtue gives rise to inestimable good, to firmly rooted peace of mind, to sublimity. With fears expelled, a great, unshaken joy, together with affability and breadth of spirit, proceeds from the knowledge of truth' — 'The spirit of the wise person is similar to the surface of the moon: "forever serene, unsullied by cloud."' ¹⁸⁸ There is nothing more true or more noble than this description of the sage, but why is the populace, or the whole of mankind, unable to share in the virtue of the sage?

This is an absurd question in the eyes of ancient philosophy. The populace, mankind as a body (the few philosophers are simply an exception), was necessarily excluded from the sanctuary of virtue conceived by philosophers. How could philosophy raise the masses from corruption? Philosophy itself judged this impossible, and never considered it; it went so far as to

¹⁸⁸ Sen., *De Vita Beata*, c. 5; *Epist.* 39.

boast happily about its separation and division from the multitude.

445. The spirit and opinion of philosophers despaired inconsolably of ever leading the great majority to the practice of virtue.¹⁸⁹ This despair and consciousness of their own impotence held them back even from communicating truth which they kept secret, veiled with symbols and enveloped in mysteries.¹⁹⁰ No philosopher ever tried to turn the people from idolatry; despite its falsity, they maintained its suitability for the people. How could the people be regenerated by others who never gave a moment's thought to rousing them from a superstition which contained the essence of all vice, which fortified vice and was itself the greatest of vices? If there was such a philosopher who, in the midst of polytheism, spoke outside the narrow limits of the schools about the great truth of the unity of God, it was Socrates. But what could he do? Drink the hemlock, and all to no purpose.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ This despair about human goodness and virtue was especially prevalent at periods when corruption and vice overflowed. All Tacitus' words are redolent of irremediable despair. If we go further back, we can see it clearly enough in Thucydides himself (cf. bk. 3, §82, 83). — Machiavelli and Guicciardini for their part are a scandal to Christian literature. They belong to the pagan world where their spirit lived and appropriated its feelings and desolate affections.

¹⁹⁰ It is well known that the priests in Egypt made a great mystery of knowledge. In Egyptian temples the statue of Harpocrates could be seen with a finger on the mouth indicating silence. The Sphinx, found at the entrance of all Egyptian temples, was also an emblem of this obligatory secret. The Eleusian mysteries practised by the Greeks were themselves nothing more than teachings kept secret by the initiated. — Finally, all philosophers had a double knowledge, a part reserved for their disciples and a part open to all. The second kind flattered the errors of the populace; it was a school open to the public, but recognised for its deceit. — Compare the school of the philosophers with that of the One who said: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!' (Matt 28: [19]).

¹⁹¹ We know from Xenophon (*Hell.* 7) that those who killed Euphron, tyrant of Sicily, accused him of the crime of freeing slaves, and even raising them to the rank of citizens. — Freeing slaves was an act of tyranny, just as proclaiming a single God was an act of impiety. Both merited death. We have to ask ourselves what human power or wisdom is sufficient to ensure that humanity practises the two precepts of the love of God and love of neighbour. Yet they are practised.

446. But even the virtue taught by philosophers was deficient, imperfect and mingled with atrocious errors. Philosophers were indeed incapable of becoming teachers of true religion, which is the only possible starting point for the healing of human infirmities. This, however, was not all. Every other part of philosophy was equally lacking a great part of truth; philosophers wandered aimlessly. In the eyes of the populace, they had no authority and offered no certainty; they looked ridiculous, like blind people coming furiously to blows. Ordinary people could never be motivated efficaciously by such words and cries. Which philosopher could be believed if not even two of them agreed?

447. The first need in the reform of humanity was truth, whole and entire. Philosophy held out no more than grains of truth, never the totality of truth. Take, for instance, the part of truth dealing with the political sciences. Philosophers knew only the last of the three kinds of corruption to which, as we said, the nations of antiquity were subject. It is true that their teachings include many fine arguments against the harm done in public affairs by wealth and pleasure; they did indeed protest indignantly against trade as a corrupting factor of behaviour, and consequently as opposed to virtue, to the well-being of the city-state and to the *contentment* of the citizens, which is the end of society.¹⁹² All this was well said, but do we ever find that

¹⁹² Plato wanted the capital city of his republic to be at least ten miles from the sea (*De Legibus*, bk. 4). He maintained that in a well-governed republic the citizens should abstain from trade, and that the State should not want to be a powerful force at sea. According to him, trade ruins behaviour, and seafaring, which renders human beings deceitful, extinguishes every spark of generosity, a potent factor in weakening military discipline. It is worthwhile noting that the great philosopher was of this mind in the century after Themistocles' interpretation of the oracle which had ordered the Athenians, threatened by Xerxes, to take refuge in houses of wood. According to Themistocles, this meant that they should entrust themselves and their possessions to a fleet. He advised his country to become a maritime power, and it was indeed this counsel which enabled the Athenians to prevail over the whole of Greece. Despite this obvious fact, Plato judges that dedication to navigation, and the extension of sea-power, is harmful for a State. Themistocles' advice had produced an immediate, very splendid effect, that is, Athenian dominion, but Plato saw further a century later. In the midst of greatness, he perceived certain signals of age and decline at Athens; he saw that luxury and ways of life had reached final corruption. — Aristotle seems

ancient philosophy thought of repressing the citizens' eagerness for glory, the only ambition of philosophers themselves? It was impossible for philosophers to put a brake on public evils; they were unaware of its original sources. An end greater than human glory had to be shown to mankind, an end which philosophers were unable to indicate to others or propose for themselves. Philosophy, therefore, was unable to hold back the overflowing torrent of public vices which, after corrupting the heart, would go on to overwhelm the mind.

448. At this point, philosophy, despairing of achieving any good, turned back on its course. Having proclaimed virtue, at least in the privacy of the schools by opposing the more material vices, it tired of raising its voice and conspired with vice itself to humanity's detriment. Dignified, austere teaching is abandoned for the sake of squalid, feckless doctrine which flaunts its shame before the public. Ancient precepts become uncultured, hard, inflexible, false; salutary truths are only the fruit of ignorance and prejudice in undeveloped ages; every solemn norm is old-fashioned, out of place and a source of amusement in those who profess it. Everyone knows the harm done to the already ruined ways of life during the last days of Rome by the philosophy of Epicurus, which was not restricted to the schools but spread everywhere. The books of this philosopher were the first that came to light when digging began under the ashes of Pompeii.

Philosophy, therefore, could do nothing to save the nations; it

hesitant about the question, 'Does seafaring benefit a nation?' (*De Rep.*, bk. 7, c. 6). Nevertheless, he blames the government of Carthage for blocking senior posts to all except the rich. In such circumstances in his opinion, virtue is of no worth; money is everything. Cicero holds Plato's opinion, and refers to the example of the Carthaginians, corrupted by their trade: 'Carthaginians are fraudulent and liars. They are led by lust for money to turn to deception, and they use the multiple, varied words of merchants and strangers to this effect' (*Orat.* 2 in *Rull*, n. 94). — The Romans, with the Flaminian or Claudian law, forbade trade to their patricians. Cicero explained this by saying that he did not want 'the same people to be rulers and porters'. Augustus condemned the senator Ovinus for sending certain manufactured goods to Egypt on his own account (P. Orosius). All this shows how antiquity agreed about the damage that could be caused by luxury and pleasure, the most terrible enemies a nation could have. Nevertheless, we never see any sign that it feared and suspected glory and overbearing power.

could not conquer, but was conquered by universal corruption. What remained to sustain the ancient world and prevent its decline into savagery after its feverish horrors? How could civil societies continue to exist?

CHAPTER 14

The various ways in which societies perish

449. Every human society is invisible and visible, as we have said. Human beings, who make up the elements of society, are themselves composed of an invisible spirit and a seen body.¹⁹³

Society is bound by invisible bonds; human societies are unions of spirits, not agglomerations of bodies. External society is only the material part of society; the union of spirits is its form, its soul, its essence. The former is the completion and, as it were, the outward clothing or expression of the latter.

External society perishes through violence, as for example in conquests. *Internal society*, however, always perishes much earlier. Violence would have no power over external society if internal society had not been annihilated much sooner. As Cicero so wisely said about his own times: 'We have retained what looks like the republic, but lost the reality long ago.'

450. Invisible society has perished as soon as it no longer tends to its final, essential end. This can happen either 1. through a defect in social law if the government proposes vicious laws which lead the governed away from rather than towards their own contentment; or 2. through the will of the members themselves when they are so perverted that they have entirely lost sight of human good, that is, contentment (the *final end*) in their desires, or are ignorant of the means leading to contentment while adhering to things which distant them from it. In such cases, society no longer has any standing, although externally things seem to go on as before.

In the same way, 3. invisible society has perished in the wills of the members who are no longer really intent on the *proximate end*, which is the immediate object for the society's constitution, and no longer make any effort to attain it. No explicit declaration to this effect is necessary; when selfishness has taken the place of the proximate end of society, each member is intent on manipulating the society for his own particular benefit, as though there were a competition to despoil it. There is no

¹⁹³ Bk. 1, c. 13.

longer any interest in the common good or in the existence of the society itself. All its members refuse the burdens of the society; all want its advantages, which are not divided, but misappropriated.

The ancient world that came to an end with the power of Rome saw its societies vanish in these three ways long before the barbarians overthrew the dead colossus of the empire. But when society collapsed internally, what hope was there that humanity could rebuild itself and reform itself into truly social bodies?¹⁹⁴ — None.

¹⁹⁴ The nations existing outside the Roman empire gave no cause for hope to humanity. The nations of southern Asia were themselves stagnant and corrupt. The Scythians had never found a way of associating in true republics or States, nor did they show any signs of progress. Rather, they continued to decline towards savagery, which was only impeded by the beneficent influence reverberating from Roman civilisation. Once the Romans themselves had fallen into savagery through their own vices, there was no longer any hope for civilisation in the world.

CHAPTER 15

How Christianity brought back to life irremediably lost civil societies

451. In such circumstances, while the civil institutions of antiquity were in their death throes, Christianity appeared on earth. This new cause modified everything human. Humanity, which had previously begun to experience convulsions almost as a result of the powerful remedies to which it had subjected itself, immediately set out on a new course.

The Christian institution, fully conscious of what it was doing, presented itself to disconsolate humanity under the title of Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον), that is, *good news*. It promised nothing less than total renewal: 'Behold, all things are made new.'¹⁹⁵ And by maintaining its great promises it fully justified the title it had given itself. After two thousand years, we are its judges; we can see its work in a world renewed; we behold these Christian societies not only reborn but characterised by a kind of immortality; they stand firm against every kind of adversity and progress along the path to unending civilisation. Christianity, a giant now, continues to draw everything to itself, leading in its triumphal march and uniting to itself the last portions of mankind, however far they may have wandered.

This is the fact. We must now analyse it and explain, as far as we can, the way in which Christianity came to the aid of humanity on the brink of destruction, and raised its civil assemblies from the dead. We shall endeavour to do this by insisting on the general principles we have already established.

452. The civil societies of antiquity perished because the collective will of the masses determined the proximate end of society, which it posited successively in different kinds of good. Finally, it set this proximate end in physical pleasure which of its nature has no intellectual element and exists as something essentially individual, not social.

When the will of the masses came to have no other object of

¹⁹⁵ St Paul applies this passage to the effects of the gospel preaching (2 Cor 5: 17 [Douai]).

desire than voluptuousness, the movement of the human mind had to slow down until finally it stopped altogether.¹⁹⁶ Intelligence died because the will no longer presented it with an object that required its exercise. The will died with the intelligence because in its turn it was concentrating on the most limited of all objects, an object which properly speaking did not require the use of the will, an intellective power — the instinct peculiar to animal nature was enough for physical desires. Civil communities, which cannot exist without a certain use of intelligence amongst its members, necessarily ceased.

Any remedy for such an immense, disastrous fall had to consist, therefore, in finding some means of conserving intellectual and volitive movement. This could be done only by drawing and attracting these powers with some totally new good, suitable for re-establishing their activity.

453. This new good did not exist, however, in nature or in society. Mankind had already experienced all kinds of natural and social good, and seen whether any of them could bring lasting contentment. Long experience had simply convinced human beings that nothing existed which possessed in itself the power they sought.

First, human beings had been bound together in society and content to preserve their social existence. When this had been assured, their hearts looked for something more.

A gigantic dream of power and glory shone before their eyes. Their heart rejoiced, and they were certain that happiness would come once glory and power had been attained. Next, the society to which they belonged became powerful and dominant. At this point, citizens of illustrious nations heard another, totally reasonable voice which assured them, from within, that power, even the greatest power, was useless without wealth. They then sought to enhance satisfaction with riches. When the State and individuals grew extremely rich, it was even easier to see that wealth is an imaginary good if it does not bring real enjoyment to those who possess it. Surely nothing could be more reasonable and obvious than this? So, humanity finished by persuading itself that ultimately the only possible real good

¹⁹⁶ The tiny intellective oscillation which remained during this period was insufficient for the existence of society.

was *pleasure*. Power, glory and wealth became infantile illusions in the eyes of mankind; and once seen as the terrible illusions they actually were, they could no longer deceive human beings who, in any case, had already succumbed to voluptuousness.

Take any people which has reached a point where it sees no reality in glory, power and wealth, a people which sees reality only in material pleasure. Try to arouse generous sentiments in them or try to stimulate them to magnanimous undertakings, even for the public good. They will mock your simplicity, and imagine that their ideas are much more advanced than yours. 'These are all beautiful things', you will be told by such consummate philosophers, 'all beautiful things, but we have heard them too often. The exaggerated austerity of the virtue you propose is nothing more than a beautiful dream. But the time for images has passed. Today we want things that can be touched and seen.'

454. Humanity, therefore, ruined by its disillusionment with deceitful phantasy and empty hope, and convinced that there is no real good beyond that which strikes the chords of the senses, can no longer desire to abandon what is *real* in order to return to what it has already acknowledged as *illusory*. It is not true that pleasure makes humanity happy; on the contrary, it torments it and tears it apart. Nevertheless, pleasure is real, and as such undeniably different from other goods already experienced by humanity. Moreover, pleasure inebriates, stupefies and attracts instincts and habits which then change into insuperable necessities. A ruined people might want at this stage to cast off its bondage, but cannot. It is bound with chains stronger than any power it may possess. Casting off the forces of intelligence, it continually loses the very power which it should use to break its bonds. Subject to such a necessary law of miserable progress towards evil, the people is ever more fixed and confirmed in its desperately unhappy state.

If Christianity, therefore, is to be capable of saving civil society, it must do nothing less than *preserve the intelligence* which was perishing as mankind lost the *proximate power* to use it.

455. We must see how Christianity began this work. We must see how the Gospel preserved the use of intelligence which was rapidly diminishing amongst the peoples; how it proposed to

the human will the new, non-illusory good of which we spoke — a good as real as physical pleasure and which, besides possessing a *reality* capable of attracting human beings already stupefied by illusion, would also be suitable for setting their understanding in great, perpetual motion.

456. In effect, Christianity announced a new fact, indicated in the word *Gospel*. This was the good at which humanity was to aim as the unique scope of all its activity. This good, announced to all by Christianity, would not originate in this world. It was indicated as something far beyond this life, something perfect, the reward of perfect virtue. Christianity spoke of this good as totally real, complete, infinite, everlasting; it spoke of temporal life and its benefits as vain, as illusions of the imagination, just as the world thought them — and if indeed they were real, as physical pleasure is, still vain because instantaneous, uncertain, mingled with suffering and incapable of satisfying intelligent beings, whose hearts long for something absolute and infinite.

457. Even the proclamation of such sublime teachings, so opposed in part to ordinary feelings and certainly to ordinary tendencies, was already a great step ahead. The world had never heard such language. Nevertheless, it was not enough to change minds and hearts. If this new school was to bring about real effects in societies, in humanity, it had to do something more: it had to convince people to *believe* truly in such sublime and extraordinary statements, and believe with a persuasion stronger than every other prior persuasion and conviction, stronger than every developed passion and inveterate habit. In other words, Christianity's declarations put a stop to all that human beings thought and did about good and evil; it condemned their most tenacious affections and dearest customs which by now were second nature to them.

Getting the world to believe speculatively in such severe, absolute and decisive teachings was itself an enormous and apparently hopeless task, but this was nothing compared to requirements in the practice of everyday life, a field in which humanity's constant endeavour had never exceeded *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* [The better things I see and approve, but I follow the worse]. It is true that no one, however evil, totally loses synderesis. Nevertheless, the principles inscribed in this internal codex of the heart remain inoperative;

they are too much for our weakness, and unhappy irritants to our malice. Even if the new school had succeeded through some prodigious effort in rooting its inexorable declarations in the mind and faith of human beings, people would still have been free to practise or mock these affirmations. The most difficult part was still to be achieved: Christianity had to provide those truths, which concerned matters beyond visible nature, with a practical force that would truly draw people to follow them. This, however, was impossible unless individuals renewed themselves from top to bottom and, as it were, annihilated their previous life and themselves by taking on a new life, a new being. It is a source of even greater wonder that the new school, although cognisant of all these difficulties, neither hesitated nor drew back. It even claimed, and said clearly, that human beings would be born anew;¹⁹⁷ they would have to be remade not only in their minds, but in their inmost hearts. They would have to be recreated.¹⁹⁸

458. This sublime, inner certainty, this language full of power,¹⁹⁹ distinguished Christianity from all the schools of the philosophers who despaired of achieving anything with the masses. The distinction was as great as that between the divine and the human.

Another characteristic separating the Gospel from philosophies is that the Gospel did not require one or other virtue from human beings while closing its eyes to other virtues. It required virtue whole and entire, free from every vice without exception or dispensation. It reduced to practice the great principle that 'good admits no defect in itself; good with a single defect is no longer good, but evil in human beings.'²⁰⁰ This was the condition underlying the promise of imperishable bliss.

The third distinct element of the school of the Gospel is that it does not appeal solely to the intellect. While it *commands*

¹⁹⁷ 'Truly, truly, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (Jn 3: [5]).

¹⁹⁸ 'Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of his mouth that we should be a kind of FIRST FRUITS of his CREATURES (James 1: [18]).

¹⁹⁹ 'For he was teaching them as one having POWER: and not as the scribes and Pharisees' (Matt 7: [29] Douai).

²⁰⁰ 'For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of it all' (James 2: [10]).

human assent to the great mysteries which it teaches in the name of God,²⁰¹ it also declares that human beings should conform all the actions of their life to its teachings. In such a situation, the intellect appears to take second rather than first place in this new school. It is no longer reasoning, but faith, affection and action that is required from us.

Finally, the fourth characteristic of the Christian way of life is to reach out to all. It is not content with calling the few who are able to dedicate themselves to scientific speculation; it wants to save all without distinction of profession, natural talents, age, sex, education, race, language or degree of culture.

459. History and everyday life witness that persons marked by all these differences heard the word of the new teachers, responded to the call, believed the sublime thoughts, and did so with force sufficient to renew their own opinions, ways of life and activity in accordance with these notions. Believers were able to die courageously for the sake of these ideals with a heroism greater than that of the Romans at their finest moments and in their greatest battles. Whatever way we wish to explain the matter, it is an obvious, undeniable fact that the Church of JESUS Christ was acclaimed extensively as mistress of the nations, and that debilitated peoples stretched out their arms to her as a child to its mother's breast. Isaiah had seen this Church eight centuries previously and had addressed her with these words:

Sing, O barren one, who did not bear;
break forth into singing and cry aloud,
you who have not been in travail!
For the children of the desolate one will be more
than the children of her that is married, says the Lord.
Enlarge the place of your tent,
and let the curtains be stretched out;
Hold not back, lengthen your cords
and strengthen your stakes,
For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left,
and your descendants will possess the nations
and will people the desolate cities.²⁰²

²⁰¹ 'He who does not believe will be condemned' (Mark 16: [16]).

²⁰² Is 54: [1–3].

These last words depict in vivid colours the salvation of collapsing societies. Nevertheless, what we have said still does not explain this marvel. We noted that Christianity, in order to come to the aid of dying society, had 'to preserve in peoples the use of their moribund intelligence.' How did Christianity achieve such an effect?

460. I confess, and every reasonable person will have to admit with me, that in all this there is something inexplicable, something superior to nature. It is absolutely outside the powers and reasoning of human beings to explain 'how people could have suddenly come to believe, and believe with unconquerable faith, in the most mysterious dogmas and the strictest norms contained in the Gospel.' I neither wish, nor am able to explain, nor do I believe, that others can explain this except by appealing to the hidden power which the author of the Gospel has over the very souls of human beings. But leaving this aside, and granted living faith in the proclaimed teachers — as we see before our eyes — it is not difficult to explain all the beneficial consequences arising for humanity and society from the Gospel. In particular, we have an explanation for the wonderful preservation and resurrection of the use of intelligence in nations. Intelligence, flickering and dying, was rekindled as a sacred, everlasting fire in the midst of the nations, a fire from which the intellect of individuals and peoples could be reactivated and rekindled.

461. No object on which the intellectual power can exercise itself, if it wishes to do so, is sufficient to maintain this power in movement. In fact, human intelligence can never lack matter; any natural object is capable of exercising our thought limitlessly. Every idea of the mind, even the least fertile, can serve as a *starting point* for indefinite reasoning provided that intellectual activity is sufficient to deduce it and the human heart wants to do this. But the intellect, if it is to *stay in motion*, must be activated by some stimulus. In a word, it is necessary for the *will* to really move the understanding. But the will cannot want to do this unless it finds the movement of the intellect necessary to obtain the good in which it believes and to which it tends. What would have happened, therefore, if mankind, instead of *believing* firmly in the bliss promised by Christianity to the practice of perfect virtue, had replied: 'I still do not see this bliss. How am I to know that it also is not an illusion?', and had

surrendered to doubt? In this case, it would have been impossible for the Gospel to have preserved the intelligence in the requisite perpetual activity. The Gospel would never have interested the will which, remaining inert, would not have provided the human understanding with the necessary impetus.

462. The opposite was true when the will, persuaded of the word preached to it, found that the bliss proposed had necessarily become its most important object, which it had to contemplate uninterruptedly with the eyes of its intellect. I mention the 'contemplating eyes of the intellect' because, I repeat, Christianity did not begin by commanding *reasoning*, a tiring, restless activity. It invited all to *contemplation*, the natural effect of faith, an activity full of sweetness, light and peace. So the new good, the new intellectual object, was launched once and for all into the world of spirits; it was of such a kind that it contained in itself and required the most fruitful and lasting act of the intellect. We can be convinced of this if we apply the rules which, according to what we have said, enable us to note the intellectual fecundity of any object proposed to the will.²⁰³ We shall find that no natural good to which the associated masses of peoples tend at the different stages of society's development has as much power for good as that newly put forward by Christianity; none of them is such a powerful cause of intellectual development.

463. First, we indicated that greater *spirituality* in the object of the intellect demands greater use of the intelligence. The reason for this is clear: only the intelligence can conceive spiritual objects that do not fall under the senses. The bliss proposed by Christianity is principally spiritual, and its object is invisible to the eyes of the body. To turn towards this object with affection, human beings had necessarily to make great use of pure intelligence.

Moreover, the object of that bliss is the conjunction of human creatures with God. This is done essentially through the intellect which is totally filled with the infinite Being who becomes its light and its form. The mode of such bliss, as taught by Christianity, is supremely intellectual.

I added that the object of Christian bliss is light and vital form to the intellect (such is the way in which Christian doctrine

²⁰³ Chap. 14.

describes God) and that the intellect is able to absorb more and more of this infinite object without ever, of itself, grasping it all. The understanding finds in that object a totally inexhaustible pasture of its own, and from its ever-living and reborn desire to possess it better and more fully (because even in this life it can be possessed) is continually spurred to broaden and distend itself in order to be more suitable for sharing in God. Hence the Supreme good is proposed to humanity by the Gospel as an unending spring of intellectual life. Believers have here an infinite stimulus to make ever greater use of their intellective powers by drawing on new truths, and discovering new fields of light in the contemplation of the infinite essence. These truths, far from satisfying the intellect, sharpen its sublime and most pure desire of knowledge.

464. Let us also apply to the object of the will of the Christian masses the four characteristics which mark out the good whose acquisition and fruition requires greater use of intelligence. As we saw, these are *number*, *space*, *time* and *abstraction*. Greater use of intelligence is needed where, in order to enjoy the desired good, it is necessary for the mind to pass through a greater number of things, through greater space and time, and rise to more elaborate abstractions. But the good proposed to human beings by Christianity necessarily involves the greatest number, the greatest space, the greatest time and the greatest abstraction. Let us see how.

465. First, this good is the Being who is author of the world, the principle of every number, time, space and abstraction. He is greater than all these things and contains them in himself eminently.

466. Second, relative to *number*, human beings, while living on earth, cannot know the Almighty except by differentiating his perfections and qualities which, as a result, are multiplied indefinitely in the human mind. Equally, there is no limit of any sort to the multiple acts with which God is seen to rule the universe nor to the profound reasons, some clear, some hidden, of his Providence. Under this aspect, the history of all the things composing the universe is the history of divine dispensations;²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ The greatest number named in all antiquity is found in the Bible where the Almighty is described as surrounded by a thousand million rejoicing spirits, *decies millies centena millia*. As far as I know, this was the greatest

the facts of nature — its quantity, origin, work and decline — all enter into the contemplation of the Supreme author and creator.

The same is true about the means by which, according to Catholic teaching, such an end is attained: these means are infinite in number. Because God, the object of bliss, is holy, he loves all good and hates all evil. Humanity, therefore, in giving its attention to these means, is spontaneously preoccupied with perfecting morality; all the virtues, the vices and every sin, even the smallest, and all means of merit become an extremely broad field of investigation for human understanding. Moreover, it is not a question simply of investigating what is lawful for Christian people, but of taking into consideration what is counselled, what is perfect. In other words, there is a tendency to the most sublime heroism.

Another field of careful investigation, which extends further than an enquiry into what pleases the Holy of Holies in everything just and perfect, is the endeavour to know God's adored will in his positive oracles, in the holy books. This, too, is a perennial source of intelligence for human beings. Who can describe the quality and quantity of intellective light that has been drawn and is being drawn by humanity from the divine books? These books had an immense influence upon ways of life, upon laws and even upon the formation of the languages of modern societies. In a word, God the Almighty, the highest good, who is also the possession itself of all means of acquiring good, was and is the principle of studies which can be multiplied *ad infinitum*; he was and is the subject-matter of many, many sciences which the world did not have previously. And these branches of knowledge are as sublime in the arguments they treat as they are profound and unlimited in their multiplicity.

467. Third, relative to *space*, Christianity embraces everything in its fundamental thought, and conquers the immensity of extension. God, present everywhere, makes every place a home for the believer, who finds everywhere the good to which he tends. Christianity fills the universe with its new love. It

number mentioned before the coming of Christ. This shows how the idea of God broadened the intelligence of the ancient world far more than any capacity for use of natural things.

witnesses to the common origin of all human beings, wherever their homeland, and goes on to call them all to the same inheritance and to the possession of one and the same good. It admits everyone to the same banquet as that enjoyed by the heavenly intelligences, the banquet prepared for his creatures by the One who has drawn them from nothing. Material distances and separation of every kind vanish before Christian charity and wisdom as it searches endlessly for savages in the most inhospitable land and the densest forest. It aims to save them, and bring them to drink of that true good which is not diminished for any individual when enjoyed by many, and which alone is capable of satiating all desire.

468. Fourth, relative to *time*, it is enough to say that the good proffered by Christianity is not fully possessed until time ends and eternity begins. Again, the series of means with which human beings must attain their end is as long as life itself; not a single link of this chain of good actions can be lacking. Again, just as the individual cannot obtain his end except through a long series of noble acts and after long, generous waiting, so Christianity as a society has a life longer than any empire. As history continues to show, empires pass before Christianity as the generations of humanity pass before the earth, sun and stars in their unalterable course.

469. Finally, there can be no other good of any kind which requires such intellectual abstraction as that proposed to humanity by the Gospel. The Christian rises above nature and purifies his thought of God entirely by the work and effort entailed in abstraction; in virtue of abstraction alone he so characterises the divine Being in his mind that it cannot be confused with any other feelable thing; in virtue of abstraction, the Christian's worship remains free from every anthropomorphic and idolatrous element as he adores in spirit and in truth. And it is through abstraction again that he distinguishes the reward awaiting him from every other good, the reward which 'no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of mortal man conceived.' This reward, despite its mystery, is altogether certain and clear to the believing soul, which enjoys a foretaste of its sweetness and delights in knowing that the reward is nothing finite, but separate and set apart from all finite things. Moreover, abstraction is in constant use amongst Christian peoples as a result of

the interior and totally intellectual life they are called to lead on earth by living here as though they were not here. The believer rises on wings of most pure, regenerated thought, and finally comes to rest in the eternal city, his nest, where subsistent truth and justice shine forth in splendour.

470. We are now able to compare the nature of this extraordinary good put before humanity by the Gospel with every other good that humanity had previously enjoyed: power, wealth and sensual delight. From what we have said, it is clear, that the good possessed by Christians undoubtedly requires greater use of the understanding than the good comprehended by non-Christian peoples. The good to which these peoples aspire calls for only a limited use of intelligence. Moreover, as one human desire after another gives rise to disillusionment, intellective and affective activity amongst the nations continues to be restricted until the use of intelligence is abandoned altogether as peoples finally surrender to physical pleasure. The opposite happens in the case of the new good put forward by the new master. Attainment of this good through merit provokes an unlimited use of intelligence; it is a good which never wears out, grows old or satiates its finder.

Christianity, therefore, preserved the use of intelligence in the nations by infusing them with *faith* in the good it presented. Once the use of the intelligence has been saved, it is easy to explain how human beings used their own resources in the work of renewal, and even refashioned civil societies in a better way.

471. This explanation is applicable to the collapse and gradual disappearance of nations. The American Indians, for example, see themselves diminishing in number every day, but do not see the means needed to impede their immanent, on-going destruction. They lack the necessary intelligence in act to find means which every European discovers easily, and to persuade themselves to undertake these means. In fact, even the strong persuasion itself impelling human activity depends in great part on the intensity and liveliness of the understanding.

The same reason explains why poverty and servitude are maintained amongst certain races. The misery of endemic poverty amongst peoples is felt severely, but immobile, flaccid intelligence is insufficient to enable them either to find or to

want to use the means of rising from that base condition. Hence the great difficulty experienced in curing societies of the plague of slothful beggardliness. Decadent Romans, for example, rotted at their leisure in the most blatant idleness. The pressures of the evils of extreme indigence²⁰⁵ and vice had no effect upon them. No one could have taught those languid intellects how to rise again. Education of this kind met with such weak intelligence that it could leave no profound, effective impression.

472. The opposite was true in the case of the new ray of divine light which activated the greatest weight of intelligence ever brought to bear in history. It was entirely natural that minds strengthened and actuated by this light should immediately become capable not only of reflecting on their evils, but of seeking remedies and applying them to their own wounds. For centuries, the barbarian hordes swept over the final ruins of Roman society, but in vain: the new, powerful, supernatural intelligence of the conquered triumphed over the conquerors.

The Church stopped those ferocious people in their tracks, made them meek at the height of their destructive victories, and invited them as children into a peaceful, human, holy, immense association. Suddenly conquerors and conquered agreed to set aside their hatred, prejudice and exclusive affections; they chose to reconstruct the world rather than engage in mutual destruction; they founded the modern nations which arose strong and healthy, we may say, from the waters of baptism.

The impulse of motion given by Christianity to the intelligence of peoples can never be halted. Society, therefore, can no longer perish; social progress is assured. Why can this impulse not be halted? — Because the One who first persuaded corrupt mankind of the word of the Gospel said to the redeemed: ‘Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.’

²⁰⁵ Montesquieu rightly says of the Romans during their final days: ‘Those who were first corrupted by wealth were then corrupted by poverty’ (*Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains*, etc., c. 10).

CHAPTER 16

Morality restored to the world together with intelligence

473. Non-Christian humanity, which tends to the acquisition of temporal good, could not make a social object of systematic knowledge considered in itself. It was able to esteem cognitions only to the extent that they could serve the attainment of the proximate end of its societies. Christianity, however, raised systematic knowledge to another plane by making it an object sought and desired *per se* by human beings²⁰⁶ and by giving humanity as its end an object which is essential light for our minds, 'enlightening every man that comes into the world.'²⁰⁷ Granted that Christianity has persuaded mankind that cognition contains something divine and absolute in itself, we cannot wonder if Christianity also renews and brings to light from its fruitful womb every branch of knowledge.

However, Christianity did more than place systematic knowledge above all temporal good; it also introduced virtue into the world. In the societies of antiquity, virtue had entered in a thoroughly limited and imperfect way.

474. Virtue presupposes the knowledge of true good²⁰⁸ because it consists in great part in desiring and obtaining the good of our fellows as far as we can. The morals prevalent in antiquity only succeeded in positing the principle of virtue in sociality, as Cicero did.²⁰⁹ This principle, however, had different

²⁰⁶ Even today there are some who maintain that knowledge has no value of itself, but only in relationship to the temporal benefits it produces. These people arbitrarily divide cognition into two parts, the first of which, according to them, contains useful knowledge, the second useless knowledge. Romagnosi was no stranger to such a debased prejudice. Such writers are truly anti-Christian and, without realising it, mortal enemies of modern civilisation.

²⁰⁷ Jn 1: [9 Douai].

²⁰⁸ Cf. *Storia comparativa e critica de' sistemi morali*, c. 8, §7. In describing the disputes between the Stoics and other philosophers, I showed that there can be no absolute virtue without an absolute good to which virtue tends.

²⁰⁹ From Grotius onwards, it has been common to attribute to Cicero the system that places the supreme principle of morality in sociality. We should

meanings for different social stages. As we said, love of country changed its object as the mind changed the notion of good which it thought desirable for the country. Nevertheless, as long as an individual desired power, glory and wealth for society, that is, for his country, some sort of good, however insufficient, was indeed desired.

But when human beings saw good only in voluptuousness, nothing remained to be desired for one's country, a moral body which vanished before the eyes of voluptuous people who sought not a body formed by abstraction, but a physical body. Virtue, therefore, was extinguished along with society — I mean the limited, imperfect virtue which matched the imperfect good that was its object and scarcely merited the holy name of virtue.²¹⁰ Stoic teaching, in showing the vanity of every external good and reducing virtue to a sterile effort because it lacked an object, contributed to the destruction of morality amongst the nations (a destruction which had already originated in mankind's loss of faith in good which could be desired for others). The Epicureans, supremely selfish, remained the sole victors in the field.

475. The Gospel arrived. It was able to indicate to mankind a good which could be trusted, and an absolute good at that. From then on, *human affection*, which had died through lack of nourishment,²¹¹ revived in all hearts. Human beings knew from

reflect, however, that properly speaking the great orator did not reach the level required to propose the problem of the *supreme principle* of morality. It is true that places can be found in which he seems to refer all human virtue to the love of country and of human sociality. He had too much good sense, however, to abandon himself systematically to the consequences of such an imperfect principle. As a result, he abandons it in some places, and especially where he notices that there are intrinsically evil things which cannot be done even to save one's country. He says expressly: 'There are certain things which are so disgusting, and in part so flagrant, that a wise man will avoid them even if they could save his country' (Cf. the entire passage in *De Off.* 1: 55).

²¹⁰ This explains why St. Augustine denied the existence of true virtue where there is no knowledge of the true God in which it must terminate. He says: 'Amongst all truly pious people, there can be no one without true piety, that is, without true worship of God, who is capable of true virtue. It is not true virtue when its purpose is human glory' (*De C D*, 1: 19).

²¹¹ St. Paul characterises the Gentiles as people 'without affection'.

that moment what to desire for themselves, and what to desire for others. They knew that beneficence was possible. Virtue, therefore, could now take its proper place because, as I said, it is reduced to a desire for others' good. This also explains why the new virtue introduced into the world by Christianity took the name of *charity* with total propriety. From now on, virtue took root and was complete. Virtue, absolute goodness, existed in the world because there was an absolute good to desire. Before, there had only been what we may call a shadow of virtue, which passed and vanished like the opinion of the empty, illusory good that formed its object.

This explains why virtue could not enter the societies of paganism as an element of their end, but only as a social means. In humanity redeemed by Christ, true, complete virtue takes the place it merits. It would be a sacrilegious profanation if Christians were to consider virtue other than as an end desirable in itself. Sublime and noble as it is, Christian virtue rejects every lower place. Society as a whole must bow before it, obey it, and draw its own nobility and duration from this obedience.

CHAPTER 17

How Christianity saved human societies by directing itself to individuals, not to the masses

476. There is, I think, another worthwhile reflection to be made on the great work done by Christianity in saving civil societies from irreparable ruin. We see, in fact, that the author of the Gospel and those whom he sent did not concern themselves immediately with societies, but directed their words to individuals amongst the human race. It can rightly be said, therefore, that Christianity saved societies by means of the reason in individuals, not through the reason of the masses. The explanation for this procedure is easily found in the essentially moral and religious nature of Christianity which, in positing virtue and intimate union with the divinity as the end of all human beings, provided the human race with an essentially individual, personal end. Goodness, merit and the fruition of the divine essence are all entirely personal things.

477. Important consequences result from this principle.

The first is an increase in human dignity, and the consciousness of this dignity in each individual. If, as the author of the Gospel taught,²¹² there is only one true, absolute good, and this good can be obtained by each individual equally, it is clear that all are equally valuable, because all are ordered to this sublime end. No one therefore can be considered as a simple means for the will and happiness of others, whether others are taken singly or as united and forming a majority. Hence, once a common *destination* has been established *equally* for all human beings, everyone is assured of a certain portion of *freedom* which cannot be touched or violated by others, nor by any society whatsoever. Careful consideration will easily show that such Christian *equality* and *freedom* is both the firm foundation on which modern societies rest, and that which gives them legitimacy and sanctity.

²¹² 'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and then suffer the loss of his own soul?, or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?' These astounding words of Christ come to this: the supreme evil for every human individual is purely personal evil; it is not shared with anyone else.

478. Second, we have to reflect that the wisdom which undertook to reform or rather to remake civil societies would never have succeeded in its work by turning directly to societies themselves. It was totally necessary that individuals should be won over by projecting intelligence and virtue into *them*. The societies of antiquity, which rested on totally erroneous and immoral foundations, could only destroy, not correct themselves, and attempt to rebuild on their own ruins.

479. It is a very serious error, therefore, that many authors, who have eyes only for the type of civil societies which have perished forever in antiquity, should want modern societies to be modelled on the form of Greek and Roman societies. These authors simply do not know the nature of ancient and modern societies. Dreaming of the false glory of ancient societies seen through the immense lens of time separating us from them, they are unjust towards modern societies.

480. There is yet another obvious reason why Christianity could not reform civil societies except by directing itself to individuals. The radical defect of civil societies consisted in their lack of an ultimate, principal end, which is itself something essentially individual. This end of the individual had to be established immovably, or rather be given to human beings who lacked it. Only then would rehabilitated individuals be able to heal societies.

481. Nor would the restoration of civil associations have been more successful if Christianity had turned directly to family society, as the Mosaic law did to a great extent. First, the root of the evil was present in individuals, as we have said, because they lacked an individual end; second, civil society does not unite strongly unless domestic society is limited and restricted in many ways. As we noted, the strongest, most splendid societies were not formed by amassing families, but by adventurous individuals whose interests lay more in the new cities they founded than in their own as yet non-existent families. This explains why their families, which came into being after the cities, were modelled on the cities and governed by them.²¹³

²¹³ Livy is a witness that the Roman family was modelled on the type offered by the Roman republic.

482. Christianity, therefore, began its reform with individuals, that is, with the very elements of political, communal living. It put the power for reformation in their hands in such a way that at first only twelve were destined to draw in their wake the whole world. After the twelve, others, but few in number, remained on earth to exercise governance with such effect that endless new nations marched in to surrender to these few disciples. By doing all this, Christianity laid the foundations of a universal government of humanity which was totally independent of human caprice and instability in its durability and norms. In ancient societies the tyranny of the masses, or of the majority, was inevitable. Christianity, in introducing ecclesiastical governance into the world, suppressed and condemned every kind of tyranny and despotism.²¹⁴ Indeed, the individuals whom Christianity destines as the teachers of mankind cannot teach as they please. They have a fixed doctrine which can never come into collision with truth or with natural justice precisely because

²¹⁴ It is odd to see how Tocqueville, who spoke with such truth about the *tyranny of the majority*, allows himself to be taken in by common errors while combating them in others with all the finesse proper to his genius. One of the errors which seems to have escaped his vigilance is concerned with the true basis of human freedom, that is, with *justice*, which of its nature is as independent of the whole human race as *truth* is. Justice is eternal; it is not formed, even by God himself, who reveals it from the depth of his being. Who would have believed that Tocqueville would have described justice as something dependent on a human majority and thus reduce it to something human? He first writes memorably: 'I regard as impious and detestable the maxim which states that in matters of government the majority of a people has a right to do whatever it pleases.' But then almost inconceivably he continues: 'Nevertheless, I posit the origin of all powers in the will of the majority.' He tries to reconcile the two obviously contradictory propositions in this way: 'There is a general law that has been made, or at least accepted, not by the majority of a given people but by the majority of mankind as a whole. This is the law of justice. Justice, therefore, forms the limit of the right of every people' (T. 2, c. 7). But I repeat with respect that justice is not made by the majority of mankind. Even if this majority were to have rejected justice, justice would nevertheless be the only source of legitimate powers. The majority is not the source of just powers; the majority, like the minority, can only submit to and obey justice. Acting contrary to this, the majority usurps powers which are not its own, and merits condemnation. Saying otherwise can only lead to inevitable caprice and tyranny.

Christian doctrine necessarily includes the obligation of following all truth and justice. Everything that is proved contrary to what is true and just would by that very fact be anti-Christian.

The masses did indeed need a guide, and Christianity placed individuals over them. These individuals are however prevented from becoming teachers of error or ministers of raw power through the condemnation they incur from the doctrine they teach whenever they undertake to inculcate what is less than true or less than just, or seek for something other than the simple betterment and true good of human souls. This is the great criterion given to the masses and applicable to every individual responsible for teaching the nations.

Other, more positive guarantees were given to the faithful so that the individuals who guided them in the name of Christ might not abuse their power. Jesus, who was able to found a Church which embraces the whole world, could also promise truthfully that his Church would be infallible, never defective, in its teaching. Consequently, every individual has a criterion of truth with which to confront the teaching of particular masters, each one of whom teaches true doctrine only when his own teaching accords with what all teach, that is, with the teaching and belief of the entire Church.

483. The transfusion of doctrine from a single master to a few disciples, and then always in the same way from the few to the many, conforms to the nature of mankind. It traces good, ordered government in its descent from God, the most simple of principles, to the point where it embraces the entire multitude of the human race.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Pure democracy, which by means of the vote calls each individual to equal influence in public deliberations, is in part founded on the pseudo-principle that 'all intelligences are equal.' This is obviously a false supposition, belied by the universal nature of things. A government founded on such an error of fact is itself radically vitiated. It is impossible for human beings to oppose nature with their own artifices or tell themselves that nature is different from what it actually is. Consequently, pure democratic government, which appears to be government by all, is always government by a party, that is, the party elected by the less intelligent because it is certain that in any nation whatsoever the less intelligent form the majority.— All this is true, without taking account of another difficulty inherent in democracy, that is, the way in which the majority of the less intelligent governing class is

484. If now we want to discover, for the sake of our present subject, what the Bible teaches about the plan of divine Providence in the government of mankind, we shall easily see that the Gospel is shown as saving nations by saving individuals, the perfect and most considerate way of fulfilling its aim. We read in the Bible that mankind first fell into the corruption provoked by material voluptuousness. Once people had reached this state, they could not escape from it. Then the Lord said: 'My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, because he has become flesh'²¹⁶ The first nations, who would have been irreparably lost in savagery, were drowned; one family alone was preserved, from whose roots other nations, better than the primitive peoples, would spring.

485. The new nations did indeed come forth from the Noachian root, but the decline of nations abandoned to themselves was inevitable and fatal. Passing more or less swiftly through the four social stages, they finally came to perdition in the abyss of ultimate corruption. In the Bible we find that God, leaving other nations to run the course that human nature prescribed, according to their different circumstances, reserved his supernatural guidance for a single family, and for the people who sprang from it.

We see from this experience that all other nations gradually wasted away without leaving behind a graft or germ from which they could flower again; one nation alone, divinely supported, would never perish entirely. On the contrary, from it would issue unexpected salvation to all the others. This sacred counsel was described in writing many centuries before it occurred. The Scriptures show how all the peoples were eaten up by corruption, all rendered useless and valueless in the eyes of the Almighty:

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
and are accounted as the dust on the scales;
behold, he takes up the isles like fine dust. —

easily manipulated by a few more intelligent and far-sighted demagogues for their own advantage.

²¹⁶ Gen 6: [3; 'has become': Rosmini's translation]. There is no shorter or more forceful way of expressing the corruption produced in the world by abandonment to sensual delight than that used by Scripture when it says: 'Man has become flesh'. This phrase shows vividly the extinction of human intelligence, which renders the evil irreparable.

All the nations are as nothing before him,
they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. —
Behold, they are all a delusion;
their works are nothing;
their molten images are empty wind.²¹⁷

All mankind will be humiliated, the Lord alone exalted.²¹⁸ The chosen nation stands in the midst of the nations, and receives these magnificent promises:

But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
fear not, for I am with you,
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.
Behold, all who are incensed against you
shall be put to shame and confounded;
those who strive against you
shall be as nothing and shall perish. —
I will help you, says the Lord;
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.²¹⁹

The ancient promises are addressed to this Redeemer, 'called the Holy One of Israel'; the glory and the durability of this miraculous nation are summed up in him. He is called 'the expectation of the nations',²²⁰ that is, the object whom the people sought for their contentment, but in vain. He is also called the 'head of the nations'.²²¹ The nations will be inherited by him like something deprived of its possessor through death, without anyone to dispose of them.²²² He will rule over them because

²¹⁷ Is 40: [15, 17]; 41: [29].

²¹⁸ 'The haughty looks of man shall be brought low
and the pride of men shall be humbled;
and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day' (Is 2: 11).

²¹⁹ Is 41: [8, 10–11, 14].

²²⁰ Gen 49: [10].

²²¹ Ps 18: 43.

²²² 'Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession' (Ps 2: [8]).

dominion will be his; all the ends of the earth will remember him and turn to him; all the families of the peoples will adore in his presence.²²³ He will preserve and restore intelligence to the world because he will be the light given to the peoples to open the eyes of the blind;²²⁴

the peoples shall come to your light
and kings to the brightness of your rising.²²⁵

He will 'lead the blind in a way that they know not',²²⁶ and with a glance sweep away the old nations.²²⁷ All those who do not serve him will perish;²²⁸ but he will bring together and restore the dispersed and lost.²²⁹ In a word, the durability of civil associations will be founded in the durability of the Church of Christ, to which they will submit themselves.

486. Such is the biblical teaching about humanity. Those who do not believe in the Bible should compare it with history and explain how such sublime events could have been written so many years before they happened. Anyone who considers impartially the state of dissolution in which the nations were found at the coming of Christ, and their renewal through the work of Christianity will have to admit that it is God the

²²³ 'All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
For dominion belongs to the Lord
and he rules over the nations' (Ps 22: [27–28]).

²²⁴ 'I have given you as — a light to the nations
to open the eyes of the blind' (Is 42: 6; 49: 6).

²²⁵ Is 60: [3].

²²⁶ Is 42: [16]).

²²⁷ 'He looked and shook the nations' (Hab 3: 6). — 'Because the day of the Lord is over all the peoples' (Obad 15). —

'But fear not, O Jacob, my servant,' says the Lord,
for I am with you.

I will make an end of all the nations to which I have driven you,
but of you I will not make an end, etc.' (Jer 46: [28]).

²²⁸ 'For the nation and kingdom
that will not serve you shall perish;
those nations shall be utterly laid waste' (Is 60: 12).

²²⁹ Job 12.

Almighty who ‘multiplies nations, and destroys them, and restores them after they were overthrown’.²³⁰

²³⁰ Job 12: [23 Douai].

CHAPTER 18

How Christianity assisted humanity's temporal interests by detaching humanity from them

487. The influence exercised by Christianity on human societies is a subject requiring the most profound meditation by the philosopher. This is why I should now like to add some further reflections on this historical event, so profound and mysterious in its nature. Montesquieu, for example, exclaims in wonder that Christianity, which seems intent only on obtaining happiness for human beings in the other life, makes them happy in the present life as well.

We have already explained this fact. More surprising than the explanation itself, however, is that Christianity (whose sole aim is to form future happiness for humanity) not only forms our happiness in the present life, but does so precisely because it is intent solely on obtaining mankind's eternal happiness.

488. This is so true that Christianity would never have succeeded in its aim in any way if it had set out directly to gain temporal benefits for human creatures. Humanity had already set its mind of its own accord on the acquisition of temporal good. As we saw, this resulted in disillusionment about such good; people came to rest only in what seemed their one real good, that is, in the enjoyment of sensual voluptuousness, in which they lost the use of their intelligence. Human good ceased to be a spring maintaining the intellect in motion; its final effect was to extinguish intellectual movement. If Christianity, therefore, had set out to obtain temporal good directly, it would never have been able to raise mankind from the state of temporal misery in which the human race lay prostrate. On the other hand, by the very fact of prompting and stimulating human beings to acquire an absolute, spiritual good, containing infinite nourishment for the intelligence, Christianity rehabilitated both human will and reason. It made moral virtue possible, and provided mankind with a dignity that savoured of the divine. Certainly, in doing this it detached human beings from temporal good. Such detachment was

necessary, however, if people were to become capable of making proper use of such good.

Temporal good, when it forms the end of human beings, serves only to brutalise them and, as it were, annihilate the human race. Individuals who act as though temporal advantage were their end, do not truly enjoy it but use it to their own pain and destruction. The detachment from temporal good imposed upon human beings by

Christianity consists in making people see that such good cannot be considered as an *end*, but only as a simple *means* to their end. This enables Christianity to put right order into people's affections and actions. As long as individuals claim to find their end in earthly good, they cannot find in it what they seek because it is not there to be found. The sole result of their vain, despairing effort is exhaustion and depression.

On the other hand, when people simply see in temporal good *means* given them by a sublime Providence for the sake of an absolute, eternal end, they are immediately capable of enjoying temporal good without finding in it bitter poison to torment and destroy them. In this sense the use and enjoyment of temporal good is similar to the act by which we see: if an object is too near the eye, the eye cannot perceive it. In teaching the world that earthly good is not an end but a means, Christianity places human beings at the proper distance from this good; they are able to make reasonable, moderate use of it only with benefit to themselves.

489. We should not be surprised if in Christian nations, where people have been strengthened in virtue and furnished with upright ideas about the value of temporal things, these things have ceased to be dangerous and harmful. This explains why fewer precautions are taken by Christians in the care of their women than by non-Christian nations. Christianity freed woman from prison and slavery by making of her a being full of dignity, in no way inferior to the stronger sex; Christianity took her from the Oriental seraglio and harem and made her the beloved centre of the Christian family, the kind and sometimes holy adornment of decent conversation, even the teacher, example and stimulus of all the virtues.

490. Such considerations show the overwhelming stupidity of the teaching proffered by unbelief and recently brought to light

from the depths of many hearts by the formulations of the Sansimonians who accused Christianity of seeking temporal benefits only indirectly. They proclaimed a new school and new religion which, because it aimed directly at human temporal benefits, seemed much better than Christianity. We need not spend too much time confuting such outrageous falsity!

491. First, the formulations presuppose that Christianity is not divine, although both Christianity and its effects have no other basis and reason than the faith that people have in its divinity. Saint-Simonism, starting not from faith but from unbelief, undertakes to destroy all Christian good at its root. It is impossible to suppose, however, that Saint-Simonism is so insane as to think itself divine, or hope that human beings will believe in the divinity or inspiration of people who are so laughably incredulous in everything they say when they have no other aim than the direct procurement of temporal benefits for others. These are prophets who cannot exit the sphere of earthly things in which they encase themselves. They cannot go to God; still less can they come from God.

492. Second, they are not doing anything new; they continue what others have done and do in the absence of Christianity. In other words, they take temporal good as an *end* rather than means. The experience has been repeated too many times: temporal good taken as an end brings nations to self-destruction, and mankind to bestiality. That is the one, sure conclusion of Saint-Simonian civilisation.

The reason why Saint-Simonism has not yet succeeded in bringing human beings to the opposite term from that to which it has promised and intends to lead them — in other words, it has not reduced them to total savagery — is that its teachings have neither penetrated the masses, nor possess the power to make themselves acceptable to mankind. It is certain however that this school, which claims to know only temporal happiness, is the most suitable of all, thanks to the extraordinary but nonetheless true opposition between appearance and reality, to drag mankind down to ultimate temporal misery.

493. This error has unfortunately spread to many minds, and exercises great influence in society! It is sad that many, even though engaged in public affairs or in writing books on political theory, do not penetrate the profound nature of Christianity or

its secret way of achieving present benefit for mankind! It is an error, as common as it is fatal, to consider religion either solely or principally as a political means for assisting the material advantage of human society. If we think of the Christian faith from this point of view, it ceases to be divine and becomes human. From that moment, its beneficent action has fled the hands of legislators and government, although they claim to use it for the well-being of those they govern. Christian religion can enhance human temporal circumstances only on condition it is professed sincerely, as an altogether supernatural institution which is not concerned with the instantaneous, limited things of this world, but aims at what is eternal and infinite. Its divine Founder preached and taught this from the beginning: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice and all these things will be added unto to you.'²³¹ Temporal things, therefore, are adjuncts to the promise, which depends upon a prior search for the kingdom of God and his justice.

²³¹ Mt 6: [33 Douai].

CHAPTER 19

The political criterion drawn from the final end of civil societies concords with the teaching of Christianity

494. It is worthwhile noticing here how the political criterion drawn from the final end of society (the criterion we have explained above)²³² harmonises so well with the sublime teaching of Christianity whose sole aim, lacking in ancient societies, was to provide mankind with this truly final end as the necessary compass in all its difficult navigation. Ancient societies suffered shipwreck because they journeyed aimlessly through an immensely dangerous ocean without knowing where to make landfall. They had no certain, secure port.

This port, discovered and revealed to mankind by the Christian religion, is most real, absolute, holy and infinite good. Here lies the full contentment to which everyone tends by nature. Other things, according to Christian truth, are only means to the great end.

If we apply this teaching to civil society, we see that it is only the selfsame political criterion which we used to establish that ‘the proximate end of society be ordered to its remote, final end, that is, to true human contentment, and that consequently the proximate end be valued and promoted to the extent that it serves the final end, which alone of its nature is desirable for human beings.’

²³² Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 20

The relationship between the two political criteria which depend on the end of society

495. We can now at last look back and see the relationship between the two political criteria drawn from the end of society. We have spoken about the first criterion in a work we have often quoted,²³³ and about the second in the present volume. In *The Summary Cause for the Stability or Downfall of Human Societies*, we considered society as moving towards its *lowest limit*, that is, towards its dissolution; in the present work, we have considered society as moving towards its upper limit, that is, towards the supreme end to which it is destined.²³⁴

When we considered society in its movement away from its end and towards dissolution, we established this criterion: 'Rulers must always keep in view the preservation of those things on which the existence of the society rests, even at the cost of sacrificing other things.'

When we considered society in the movement drawing it ever closer to its end and leading it to perfection, we discovered two necessary ends, the proximate end and the remote but principal end. We then established this criterion: 'All those who influence society must endeavour to attain the proximate end in such a way that it is subordinated to the remote, principal end.'

496. In examining the first of the two criteria, we found that 'the things on which the existence of society rests change at the different social stages.' We also saw that this change of direction in the force sustaining society would, if unending, finally lead to the destruction of society. In fact, if what is first sufficient to sustain society becomes insufficient, we have a sign that the sufficiency of the prior support is accidental and, therefore, present only under certain favourable circumstances. If society has constantly to change one of its perpetually fragile, temporary supports for another, a time comes in which such a series of doubtful supports ends, and unsustained society finally perishes.

²³³ SC. [*passim*].

²³⁴ Cf. the *Introduction* to the present work.

We then tried to see if civil societies could anywhere find something stronger than themselves, and independent of circumstances, on which to rely. In other words, could something be found to guarantee the lasting existence of these societies? We did indeed find an immobile basis for these societies which however does not consist in physical force, or any other material good or means, but in something totally spiritual and as immortal as the human soul. The true foundation is justice whose sun, risen upon the world, is Christ,²³⁵ and which in the Bible is called the 'foundation of kingdoms'.

497. In examining the second of the two criteria (that societies must tend to their final end), we examined the nature of this final end and found that it could only be some good proper to human beings, that is, moral contentment of spirit. We also investigated the means suitable for attaining true contentment of spirit, and found that these varied at the different social stages; we found that the means which change society at one moment no longer produce the same effect at other times. We concluded that these means had no power, therefore, to content human beings fully, but produced their effect *per accidens*, granted certain external circumstances and especially certain momentary dispositions of the human spirit. It was not difficult to deduce the following important consequence: if such precarious, momentary means are all that can be found, human beings inevitably plunge into ultimate unrest and unhappiness. When the series of transitory good comes to an end, the human spirit still continues, but in vain, to seek better means designed to satisfy its ever-growing, hungry desires.

We then asked if there is any good which through its own intrinsic, lasting power can content the human spirit. We did indeed find that such a precious good exists, but not amongst anything that pertains to the feelable world. This good is spiritual, eternal. It is that same perfect, Christian justice which spread its warm rays over the dark, frozen world, and to which is joined the possession of the real, infinite good spoken of by the Bible when it says that it 'took root in an honoured people.'²³⁶

²³⁵ SC, c. 16.

²³⁶ *Et radicavi in populo honorificato* (Sir 24: [12]).

From all this we can see that our analysis of the two political criteria we deduced from the *end* of civil societies — we examined this end in its relationship to the two contrary limits in which societies constantly move — shows how the criteria finally meet and provide the same result.

Book Four

PSYCHOLOGICAL LAWS ACCORDING TO WHICH CIVIL SOCIETIES MOVE TOWARDS OR AWAY FROM THEIR END

Do you think that the possession of all other things, but not good itself, is of any value? Or knowledge of all other things except what is beautiful and good?

Not at all.

Further, do we not see that many are willing to do or to have what is just and beautiful even if it only appears such, but no one is satisfied with the appearance of good; we seek the reality because we all despise what appears good?

Very true.

The thing that all human beings seek, the cause of everything they do, the thing on which they reflect without discovering it and consequently without being able to know whether other things are useful or not, is surely of so great a concern that even our best statesmen should not be blind to it?

Definitely!

Plato, *De Rep.*, 6

[INTRODUCTION]

498. The explanation of every social event is found in the human being, the element of society. Everything that happens in nations on a greater scale and in other proportions pre-exists in germ in the minds of the individuals composing the nations.

Political science itself, therefore, which teaches governments how to influence societies in order to obtain their end more easily, cannot be brought to perfection, to its ultimate principles, without recourse to psychology.²³⁷

This truth has been enunciated by others,²³⁸ but psychology, or more generally speaking, philosophical teaching about the human being, has been too imperfect until now to provide a sufficiently solid, broad foundation to scientific knowledge of society.

499. My intention is to render the task less difficult and to place the foundations of civil philosophy on the firm ground of scientific knowledge of the human being. And if I am not entirely mistaken, the psychological and anthropological teachings I have already published should be of some help in the matter.

500. In the foregoing books I established that the principal, or rather the unique end of every society, in particular civil society, is contentment of spirit in its members.²³⁹ This great principle is simply an incontrovertible dictate of knowledge of the human being.

501. I also showed that any government which does not direct its measures to this noble end betrays its responsibility and

²³⁷ Cf. Preface to my political works.

²³⁸ 'Destutt-Tracy presented Hobbes as the founder of civil philosophy because Hobbes proposed founding social practice on the systematic knowledge of the human being. Vico wanted to impose laws on history and to reconstruct the first periods of progress in civilisation through the analysis of thought. Romagnosi insisted on the need to unite psychology with history and therefore with scientific knowledge of society' (G. Ferrari, *La Mente di G. D. Romagnosi*).

²³⁹ Bks. 2 and 3.

renders the existence of the society useless. On the other hand, if the collective will of the members is not directed to this end, society itself perishes, leaving behind only a lifeless body; the soul, that is, internal, formal society, has departed, leaving behind only external matter.²⁴⁰ We also saw that this great end constitutes the sole, inalienable and inviolable right of the individuals composing society, that everything opposed to it is illegitimate, and that the principle of natural human *freedom* is contained in this sublime *right of the human being*.²⁴¹

502. Furthermore, I analysed *contentment* of spirit and investigated the means to obtain it. Using the light of history as guide, I concluded that Christianity alone, which offers reliable, stable and sufficient means, is the only true guarantee for human societies and their members; it alone offers and provides complete *true human good*, the unique, immovable object of human contentment.²⁴²

503. Finally, I deduced from all this the following political criterion: "Those means of government are good which do not distract society from its final end but help guide it to that end, subordinating the proximate to the final end."²⁴³ I compared this criterion with my earlier criterion: "Those means of government are good which help to maintain the existence of society, subordinating to this task every concern about embellishments."²⁴⁴ I found that both these criteria, in their development and practical execution, gave the same final results. Indeed, if a society diverges from its final end, it ceases to exist formally and even loses its right to exist. Furthermore, even the external, material existence itself of the society owes its stable continuity to the *contentment* of its members, while the power that supports the society does not change its position except when the contentment of the members changes its object.

504. Moreover, it is clear that as long as the spirit of each citizen is satisfied and content, society necessarily remains at peace;

²⁴⁰ Bk. 1, c. 13.

²⁴¹ Bk. 2, c. 11.

²⁴² Bk. 3.

²⁴³ Bk. 2, c. 7.

²⁴⁴ Bk. 3.

if the members are happy, no thought of change can possibly enter their minds. The illusion of a greater good may perhaps excite them for a moment, but only a generally and constantly painful condition which thoroughly stirs up the masses gives them the power or fury to effect civil revolution.²⁴⁵

505. Despite this, nearly all modern writers form an abstract concept of political theory. For them, it is not a discipline directed to the improvement of the *human being* but one confined to the well-being of the *citizen*. According to them, a citizen is not a human being but an abstraction, that is, a human being considered solely in his external, material part. Thus, to apply political theory to anything other than material goods is, in their view, to take it beyond its limits.

All this clearly demonstrates confusion between the means and the end of political science. The means of government are certainly limited and external, but it is a grave, fatal error to consider the end itself as limited and external, as these authors do. Political theory must deal not only with external goods but everything that contributes to the peace or unrest of the human spirit.

506. We are told that public happiness is the purpose of political science and that such happiness consists in an abundance of external goods. Are there two happinesses, one internal to human beings, the other external? I see only one, dwelling within human beings themselves. I myself would greatly prefer the way common sense sees the matter to these subtle distinctions. Every common-sense person attributes a very simple meaning to 'happiness'; we may not be able to define the meaning but we understand it. Moreover, 'happiness' is not definable — what is felt is not capable of definition. Anyone who did not know what it was 'to feel well' could never be taught the meaning of the expression. 'To feel well', 'to be happy,' is something so simple that we can only reply 'Yes' or 'No' when asked, 'Do you feel well; are you happy?' Those who distinguish by

²⁴⁵ Frederick showed that he knew this when he ascribed the rebellion of the Dutch against the Spanish, and the many changes in the kingdom of Naples and Sicily under Spain and under the Emperor, to this cause: 'A satisfied people will never think of rebelling. A happy people is more afraid of losing their Prince, who is also their benefactor, than the sovereign himself fears for the diminution of his power' (*Antimach.* c. 2).

answering: 'I am happy politically, but unhappy as an individual' are talking nonsense.

Politicians, therefore must study the real happiness of human beings, in external and internal things. Any politician who said: 'I must make the political happiness of peoples, not their private or individual happiness my sole study,' would be talking nonsense. His efforts could never achieve the happiness of peoples; all his work would be vain words and empty abstractions. The only result of his partial success in accomplishing in the State what he calls public happiness among discontented souls distorted by passion would be the formation of citizens tending to anger, unrest and a desire to avenge his madness. The sole feelings in civil society are those of human nature; without them, no society remains. Civil togetherness is only an acknowledgement and protection of natural bonds, a perfection of the order of nature. Everything civil in society is an accident added to what is natural in the human being. If we take a rough, dirty, uneducated individual and turn him into a cultured, civilised, well-dressed gentleman, we have an image of natural society become civil. We have not destroyed the individual, who remains what he was, but added accidental good manners. In the same way, society never ceases to be natural; citizens never cease to be human beings. Governments rule real human beings, not abstract beings, and must apply their minds to procuring for the governed the contentment proper to human beings, which alone gives value to civil association. This contentment is unique, even though it seems multiplied endlessly in innumerable abstractions and words.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ It should be noted that these observations of mine are not intended to destroy or confuse the limits of the various sciences. I want them to be on good terms so that they do not harm but help each other. When all sciences agree, they become a faithful SINGLE GUIDE for humanity. The methodical distinction of the sciences resembles the distinction between various social offices. The division of labour is always very helpful, but when the different tasks allotted to different people are ordered to form a single whole, each task and each worker must be guided by thought for the whole; one part must be elaborated in proportion to the others so that all are realised together and the whole harmoniously accomplished. Hence, we do not confuse the office of politician with that of writer or of moralist, priest, etc. We affirm that the politician must harmonise with all other social offices and not think himself the sole author of the public good. While he works at a particular part of

507. I do not want to conclude from this that the painful state caused by people ready to create unrest, which adds great power to the words of dissidents, is always the direct result of oppressive acts of government. On the contrary, it is sometimes the fatal effect of a change of thought and will in the masses, as we said in the previous book. Laying all the evils of society at the door of government is a grave injustice. A government is no more the author of all social evil than the author of all social good. Nevertheless, it must study and foresee these evils and wisely use whatever is in its power to oppose them. I think governments have collapsed more by failure to forestall public evils than by causing them.

508. Let us retrace our steps. What I have said should indicate sufficiently the intention and purpose of this book, that is, 1. to discover, in the spirit of the individual human being, the laws according to which civil societies move towards or away from their end; 2. to base the theory of social perfection and deterioration on these psychological laws, and 3. to state as corollaries of the theory some practical rules by which governments can evaluate the wisdom or inopportuneness of the enactments within their power. This is the purpose of all that has been said. Let us now delve deeper into these investigations, whose difficult but important nature enables us to appeal to the reader's kindness and wise discernment.

human happiness, he must not disturb those who are working at other parts. Rather, he must labour at his part so that he contributes to the share of work done with him by all private citizens whose unique end is simple human happiness.

CHAPTER 1

The three states of the human spirit: pleasant, content, happy

509. Contentment, happiness and a pleasant state are three different things. A *pleasant state* can be found in an ens endowed only with feeling. *Contentment* and *happiness* require intelligence.

510. A feeling ens which experiences no pain and has its natural needs satisfied is in a naturally pleasant state. But because it lacks intelligence, it neither knows nor thinks about its state, which remains closed within the insuperable limits of its narrow sphere of feeling.

511. If we add intelligence to the ens and suppose that it can think about itself, perceive itself and be conscious of itself, we immediately have an ens that not only experiences pleasure or suffers but makes a judgment about its pleasure and suffering. It can say to itself: 'I feel well; I am satisfied and content.' This is the origin of the state of contentment, which is not formed by mere feeling but arises in virtue of our judgment about what we pleasantly feel and have.

512. But we still have not arrived at a state of happiness. This is not simple contentment but perfect contentment springing from a conscious experience of our possession of a supreme, complete good. Contentment consists in awareness of a satisfying state; happiness consists in awareness of perfect satisfaction, the endless calming of all our desires.

513. To understand better the difference between happiness and contentment, we must note that human desires do not develop all at once but successively, in obedience to certain laws which for the most part correspond to norms governing the development of the intellective faculties. If desires, whenever they arise in the spirit, are satisfied in the right way, we clearly pass successively through different states: desire first, and then contentment. In other words, we are contented in different ways according to a certain order.

These states of contentment in human beings differ in kind

and degree; the same cannot be said about the state of happiness. This state, although simple and one, can vary in extent and degree, but not in nature and in object, which is always absolute good. Things that are relatively good are innumerable, and cause innumerable desires, but absolute good is unique and complete, and generates one desire only. Moreover, the desire for absolute good absorbs all other desires, because its object contains all the good of every relative good. Anyone who has come to know absolute good and desires its possession, finds that every relative good ceases to be good for him. Thus, as long as desires for relative good arise in our heart and are appeased, we are content, and for a moment our heart's longing is satisfied. But this is still not happiness. Only when our actual desire for absolute good has been manifested and satisfied, do we enter into a state of happiness. Not only is our actual desire fully satisfied, but the very power of desire can neither go further nor seek a greater good; a good greater than absolute good does not exist.

514. We can conclude therefore:

1. A *pleasant state* can be present in human beings even before the development of our intellectual faculties.

2. A *state of contentment* is present provided that some degree of intellectual development has taken place, and that different ways and degrees of contentment continue to be maintained as our intellectual powers develop.

3. Finally, a *state of happiness* presupposes an ultimate degree of intellectual development through which we rise to the knowledge and desire of absolute good, the highest object of all the possible desires of intelligent beings.²⁴⁷

515. At this point I should discuss the law of correspondence between intellectual development, nascent desires and the state of contentment. But before commenting on this triple parallel progress and development of the *understanding*, of *desire* and of *contentment* of spirit, it will be useful to examine closely the

²⁴⁷ The *happiness* possible in the other life must be called 'beatitude', a word long-used in this sense. All the different satisfying states of the human spirit could therefore be indicated by four words which seem to me very suitable for distinguishing the four possible kinds of satisfaction: 1. *pleasant state*, 2. *contentment*, 3. *happiness*, 4. *beatitude*.

nature of the *judgment* with which we say we are content and, in doing so, make ourselves content.

CHAPTER 2

The personal element in contentment

516. A pleasant state pertains to *nature*; contentment properly speaking concerns *person*. Person, when it has attained awareness of itself, could not be satisfied by any pleasant feelings it may enjoy without making an internal judgment on its own well-being and affirming its contentment.

517. This fact, which is difficult to note, has a profound cause. The human person, when judging internally that he is content, is different from the proximate principle of simple feeling. If the proximate principle of feeling is in a pleasant state, it does not follow that the other, higher principle, which understands, judges and, properly speaking, constitutes human personship and 'myself' (this word usually expresses a person aware of himself) is content and happy. The feeling principle will be in a pleasant state thanks to a pleasant sensation; the state of the intelligent principle will be pleasant only as a result of the knowledge of good, that is, by means of the judgment with which it declares itself content. I, as intelligent, can be content only by *judging myself* content; it is my personal activity which creates, or at least informs the contentment.

518. If personal activity were not yet posited in action but entirely dormant, as in the first moments of human existence, feeling could be pleasant without our experiencing any need to pass judgment on the pleasure. In those first moments when feeling alone is active, contentment neither exists nor is required to exist. The pleasant state of our feeling-nature is not disturbed by any need of contentment in our intellectual nature. This need has not yet appeared because our intelligence has not attained a level of action sufficient to produce it. On the other hand, if our intelligence has become active and produced consciousness in us, that is, if we are already reflecting on ourselves, then the need to make some judgment on our state originates in us: we judge ourselves, and with this judgment we either make ourselves more miserable (if we judged ourselves miserable) or are content (if we judged ourselves content).

The development of the understanding reaches a point when pleasant feelings are no longer sufficient; we need to judge them. The necessity of this judgment is a psychological fact whose cause, as I said, is mysterious, deep and ultimately found in the law of personal action. I expressed this law in the formula: 'In any particular acts whatsoever, person always uses the noblest activity it can dispose of at the time.'²⁴⁸ Granted this law, and granted that the human being has attained such intellectual development, he cannot, as person and thanks to this law, be content with mere *feeling*. Because the faculty of judgment is more noble than that of sense, he is forced to *judge* himself and his own well-being. If he did not exercise the noblest, highest faculty at his disposition, his very person would remain inactive and thus enjoy nothing. Pleasure would not exceed the sphere of sense and, because sense in this case is not the human being, he would have no contentment. We must always bear in mind that the developed human being in pursuing any good whatsoever, even a purely sensual delight, always does so by means of a judgment.

519. In the human being, even dedication to sensuality is the same as judging that some good resides in material delights. Human beings, as intelligent beings, cannot not judge, once they have attained a level of development where their action is a matter of choice. A moment's thought will show that human beings, granted the intelligence and choice with which they are endowed, never pursue sensual pleasure as a good *per se* but as a *means* by which they believe they can content and satisfy themselves. They need to judge themselves content in order to be content. Whether they use material or spiritual means to make themselves content, they are fully satisfied only when they have made an interior judgment. We must conclude therefore, as we have said, that 'contentment is always *intellective* whatever we use, even something crass and material, to acquire it'.

520. This extraordinary proposition is a solid psychological truth. At first sight paradoxical, it is in fact is very true. The apparent paradox disappears once we consider the subordination of the animal *feeling*-part of the human being to the spiritual, *intellective* part. This dependence is founded in what

²⁴⁸ Cf. *AMS*, 859–863.

is proper to the *intellective* part, that is, to know as its proper objects the nature and all the affections of its *feeling*-part which itself, (because it does not possess cognition), can never perceive or know any of the objects proper to the intellect.

Sense or experience therefore cannot in any way operate in human beings unless the intellective part is a witness and spectator of what they do or experience. On the other hand, the understanding has a set of proper objects (ideas) which cannot be perceived at all by corporeal sense, necessarily enclosed as it is in its own proper particular and material affections. Consequently, feeling which neither perceives nor knows the operations of the understanding cannot make a judgment about them. The understanding however can naturally make a judgment on the actions of feeling, which it knows and perceives.

521. Moreover, the difference between the faculty of sense and the faculty of understanding is the same as that between the faculty of sense appetite, which comes from feeling, and the faculty of intellective appetite, which proceeds from understanding. Just as all that happens in feeling pertains to the intellective part, in addition to many other more noble entities proper only to the intellect (feeling can never make these objects its own), so human beings can tend with their intellective appetite to all those things which, whether feelable or not, can be related to them as good and evil. On the other hand, with their sensitive appetite human beings can incline only to particular, corporeal, feelable things.

522. There is therefore in the intellective part of the human being a higher, dominant principle relative to *knowing* and to *desiring* and wishing. Relative to knowing, a principle exists which judges everything that happens in the human being — judges it, that is, as good or bad. Relative to desiring and wishing, there is a principle which desires everything judged good and abhors everything judged evil.

523. The animal feeling-part of the human being is naturally judged by the intellective part. What is good to sense is, when submitted to this judgment, sometimes declared evil; what is bad for sense is sometimes judged good. Similarly, the higher appetite resulting from the judgment often contradicts the lower appetite arising in feeling. In this case it either turns to things which molest feeling or withdraws from things pleasing to feeling.

524. This natural dependence of the animal part on the intellectual part clearly shows that human contentment cannot be found in anything desired by the feeling-part but solely in what the intellective part judges good. Feeling is simply a first tribunal whose decision is always questioned because it can settle nothing relative to human happiness or contentment. The supreme, personal principle, that is, our very self, must finally resolve the case and decide what is good and what is bad if we, as a whole, not just in part, are to call ourselves content or happy.

CHAPTER 3

The judgment which produces contentment constitutes EUDAIMONOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS in human beings

525. Not every judgment we make about our state produces contentment. We can err when judging our well-being just as we can err about anything else. The external manifestations of our contentment can be even more false and deceptive. We sometimes make every effort to deceive ourselves and others in this matter, and succeed, although we are no happier for that. For example, we sometimes see in people on the verge of despair an increase in their attempts to convince themselves of their happiness; a sick person close to death sometimes deceives himself and wishes to be deceived about the great event that lies before him.

Sometimes, in the midst of all the disasters around us, our pride will not let us believe we lack the power to make ourselves happy, and forces us to do extraordinary things to increase this futile illusion. Exaggerations of extreme happiness are sometimes proper to the insane, only to be followed by abysmal sadness. Repeated, affected assertions of unhappy people about their state of perfect peace and contentment are frequently warning symptoms of deep despair.²⁴⁹ Hence the judgment we make about ourselves is certainly not enough to make us happy. It must be supported by some real object; in a word, the judgment has to be *true* if it is really to complete our state of contentment.

526. I must make another observation which at first sight will seem strange: if the judgment is to put the seal on our feelable contentment and satisfy us, it must of its nature be infallible. Let me explain.

In *New Essay* I showed that *direct knowledge* is immune from error.²⁵⁰ But the judgment which produces contentment is

²⁴⁹ As we know, Rousseau, in his last writings about himself, continually exaggerated the supreme happiness he enjoyed in his solitude. A little later, the unhappy man seems to have attempted suicide and killed himself!

²⁵⁰ Cf. *NE*, 3: 1258–1263.

a direct, immediate judgment about our state of satisfaction. Every other judgment made by reflection can be erroneous. The first, however, which we make about the satisfaction of all our desires and constitutes our *eudaimonological consciousness*,²⁵¹ cannot be erroneous because it is generated naturally, not freely.

At the same time, our state, when judged by our understanding, is too close to permit any mistake in our perception of it.²⁵²

When the object is distant or multiple and we cannot repeat our judgment about it at will, it is easy to understand how we can err and even maintain the error. But when the object is present, much more evident, supremely important and united to us, in fact our very self, how can our judgment, repeated, as it were, at every moment of our existence, be subject to error? Even if it were a reflective judgment, no human being can delude himself for an instant that he does not see the truth whose light shines brightly within him, resplendent to his gaze.

527. But, as I said, our judgment is not reflective. We are dealing with a primitive, not a secondary act of understanding. Secondary, reflective acts enable us to represent to ourselves all or part of our state as different from us, and thus err. But with our first, direct act our understanding can judge our state not as something different from us but as *our very own feeling*. The act itself which makes us aware that our desires are or are not satisfied is of this kind; the ancients called it 'judgment by the human spirit'.²⁵³ Clearly, we cannot err in this act because we cannot be *aware* of contentment when we are not content, nor be unaware of our contentment when our heart speaks only of contentment. This act of judgment with which we form our contentment is intimately joined to our feeling; it encompasses all we feel within, that is, our very selves. When this judgment is

²⁵¹ *Eudaimonological consciousness* is a direct, natural judgment we make about the satisfaction of our desires: *direct*, because the satisfaction of our desires (its object) is judged directly; *natural*, because direct. Its directness makes impossible all difference between the thing judged and the opinion passed upon it; every difference presupposes a third thing in between, and this would destroy the supposition that the judgment is direct.

²⁵² Cf. *NE*, 3: 1194–1202.

²⁵³ 'Your spirit, not human opinion, must judge that you are rich' (Cic., *Parad.*, 6).

made, the person making it is in total intimacy with what is judged. In order to know with certainty the state of our spirit, we must therefore have recourse to this *eudaimonological consciousness* as the most upright judge of the satisfaction the human heart may or may not have achieved.

CHAPTER 4

The judgment which makes us content is an habitual, not merely actual judgment, producing a STATE of the human spirit

528. We must also bear in mind that in speaking of *consciousness* or awareness we mean something stable in the human being, not a passing act.

A judgment is indeed an act, but there are acts which can be repeated as often as we wish; some are in fact repeated and frequently reproduced. Furthermore, the *decision pronounced* as a result of these actual judgments takes place in the memory where it remains like all other cognitions, opinions and persuasions.

These need no longer be formed in order to be made present again to conscious thought; it is sufficient for the memory to recall them. Finally, the opinions and persuasions preserved in the habit of memory, if they assure us of our well-being, not only cause frequent internal pleasure but bring into effect a continuous feeling of joy and good humour which accompanies us everywhere and remains in us without our actually adverting to its cause. This is the nature and efficacy of *eudaimonological consciousness*, which assures us internally that our desire is totally satisfied.

529. Hence the following characteristics of *eudaimonological consciousness*:

1. It is a *judgment* we can reproduce whenever we wish and do in fact reproduce with frequent, spontaneous movement.

2. It takes the form of a *decision* pronounced on the satisfaction of our desires. This decision remains constant in the habit of memory as an opinion and persuasion that we are well.

3. It spreads deep within our spirit as an effect of the *decision* assuring us of our good state (a state which of itself remains isolated within us), that is, of a certain pleasing feeling that makes us constantly joyful and content.

530. Consideration of the first characteristic reveals other important elements. It states that 'the judgment about our

interior contentment can be repeated as often as we like.' This presupposes that our act of judgment never lacks its matter, which must therefore reside permanently, not transitorily in us; otherwise the decision of the judgment could not be continuously renewed. The matter of the judgement with which we say we are interiorly content is the sum of our satisfied desires.

531. Let us investigate first the nature of desire and then the nature of satisfied desire.

Desire is something intellective. We can say that a brute is stimulated by *appetite*, but not properly speaking that it has a *desire*. Appetite means any tendency whatsoever, whether animal or intellectual; desire is a *rational appetite*. We can therefore define desire as 'the rational appetite which arises in intelligent beings when they judge that the possession or enjoyment of something they neither have nor enjoy is good for them, and they see its possession or enjoyment as possible.' From this judgment, there arises in the intelligent being who has made it the will to have the good thing he has not but thinks he could have.

The thing sought by desire can itself be either a pleasant sensation or a material object (the cause of pleasant sensations) or a moral or intellectual good; in short, anything whatsoever, stable or passing, that the human being can apprehend under the species of good. It is obvious that if the desired object is transitory, satisfaction of the desire must also be transitory and cannot constitute a *state* satisfying human nature; if the object desired is something fixed and enduring, the satisfaction of the desire, the enjoyment and possession of the thing desired, is permanent. In this last case, we can be conscious of our well-being and renew as often as we please the judgment forming our eudaimonological consciousness. We see from this that the matter of *contentment* is not an *act* but a pleasant *state*.

532. On the other hand, it is easy to note that in this life none of our powers can be in continuous act. I am not referring to first acts but to what we call *second acts* (simply to be, to live, to have the primitive, fundamental feeling is a continuous act). I am speaking about individual acts as commonly understood, and as causes which produce more lively pleasure and pain by activating the mind with a thought or stimulating the sensiferous fibres. While we are on earth, such acts cannot be

permanent. When our nerves are overstimulated, they tire and relax; the nature of animal pleasure, originating with such a movement of parts, passes.

The attention of the mind also ceases because of the effort caused to the body from which the forces necessary for the preservation of life are withdrawn. In short, everything shows, as Rousseau says, that 'the happiness our heart desires is not made up of fugitive moments but is a simple, permanent state without intensity as such, whose duration however increases enchantment to the point where we finally discover supreme happiness.'²⁵⁴ Instantaneous pleasure, although more intense relative to pleasure of a continuous duration, is like an infinitesimal quantity in relationship to a finite quantity; an infinite distance lies between them.

533. We can therefore say: "The principal good in this life does not consist in particular, momentary acts but in the continuous feeling which accompanies the perfection of human powers and

²⁵⁴ *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Promen, 5. — In reality, *supreme happiness* can only consist in a very intense pleasure produced by a continuous act, and cannot be found on earth. Rousseau says, 'Even in the most intense enjoyment there is scarcely a moment when the heart can truly say, "I would like this moment to last forever." How can we possibly call happiness a fugitive state which leaves our heart restless and empty, unhappy with the past and longing for the future?' We want a *STATE*; we incline to stability, to *STABILISE* everything around us. We cannot, in this life, obtain a state consisting of an intense continuous act, because our destination on earth is to be a *power* which develops through a series of acts. Human happiness on earth is *HABITUAL*, not *ACTUAL*. Rousseau continues, 'If there is a state where the soul can find a base sufficiently solid to rest on totally, and on which to concentrate all its being without having to recall the past or move into the future; where time does not exist for it; where the present endures but is never noticed; where there is no succession, no feeling of privation or enjoyment, of pleasure or pain, of desire or fear, except that of our own existence, which alone can fill the soul totally — then, as long as this state lasts, those enjoying it can call themselves happy. Their happiness is not imperfect, poor and relative (as would be the case of someone living amidst the delights of life) but sufficient, perfect and full; it would leave in the spirit no void needing to be filled.' — No one draws greater delight from his own existence than the person whose existence is greater. We see this verified in people even on earth whose nature has been made greater through their intimate and hidden union with God; he is truly the only thing that unites itself in perfect unity with the human being.

habits.’ Furthermore, anyone who has to choose between a pleasant act and a higher degree of perfection in his powers and habits acts excellently by placing the latter before the former. The degree of perfection obtained allows him to enjoy a greater feeling of his own existence and, by adding perfection to all his future acts, is equivalent in value to all his future acts taken together. Hence, we must therefore pay careful attention to the relationship between our actions and the improvement of our habits and faculties. Philosophers who neglected this, who restricted their considerations to ephemeral acts of pleasure without linking these to the effect they leave in our *habits* and *faculties*, who above all posited human happiness in acts alone, were led into innumerable, disastrous errors about virtue and the eudaimonological good of humankind.

CHAPTER 5

The actions carried out by the human spirit in establishing its own contentment

534. I will now summarise the wonderful process by which the human spirit works to establish its own contentment of spirit.

535. 1. Contentment is posited in its final act by a *willed judgment* with which interiorly we tell ourselves we are satisfied and content. This act is supreme, judges all other acts and makes the final decision about all the good and bad that happens in us.

536. 2. Directly under this intellectual act lies the *satisfaction* of our desires, which is the object or immediate matter of the supreme judgment.

Here we must carefully note how *contentment* would never be achieved without the higher act which judges that our desires have been satisfied. Indeed, without it, properly speaking, we would never know what the satisfaction of our desires really is. Such satisfaction would be a concept involving contradiction; it would be totally isolated and without consciousness of itself.

537. As we have said, *desire* is an act, pertaining to the intellectual order and formed by means of a judgment which affirms that possession of some particular thing would be good for us. It is clear that our understanding, if it judges that possession of some particular thing is good for us and consequently moves us to want and desire it, must then tell us whether we have obtained it or not.

In fact if, unknown to our understanding, we obtained possession of something, our understanding would continue to irk us and maintain our intense desire for the thing. Hence, desire born of a judgment can satisfy us only on condition that another judgment intervenes to tell us that the desire is satisfied: understanding imposes desire on us, understanding must satisfy it. Thus, a full satisfaction of the desires of the soul can only be conceived when a eudaimonological consciousness is formed in us telling us we have obtained the things we desired. This shows that eudaimonological consciousness is a

higher judgment than all other judgments producing our desires.

538. 3. The judgments which produce desires in our soul have their own objects or materials subject to them. These objects or materials form a third element inferior to human contentment.

539. What is the nature of the objects of our desires? Are they our own action, formed and elaborated by us by means of another action of our spirit? Do they belong to the order of feelable things or to that of understanding?

First, are the objects of our desires themselves our own action? I reply that we cannot exclude from the activity of the human spirit a notable action on the objects of its desires, on the increase and reduction of the objects, and, on their destruction and creation.

Undoubtedly, our spirit, making special use of the help offered by the imagination, creates every day countless entia which do not exist in nature, and counterfeits those that do exist. It embellishes and increases its creatures as it pleases; no term can be placed on it. We cannot deny that these chimerical, false creations become not only the object of affections and desires but often do so to a greater extent than if they were real and true. Using our understanding and imagination, our spirit can clearly elaborate and compose some objects of its desires, and consequently stimulate in itself desires which properly speaking tend to emptiness and nothingness. In this case we see three successive kinds of intellectual actions in the human spirit: with the first we compose the objects; with the second we judge them good and possible, and desire them; with the third we form our eudaimonological consciousness, that is, we judge our own state, telling ourselves we are or are not satisfied with what our desires seek and have or have not yet procured.

540. There is an immense difference, we should note carefully, between the power to produce certain meaningless objects of desire (and consequently, certain desires) and the power to satisfy the desires we have aroused in ourselves. When we use our imagination and create some good together with the desire, we are undoubtedly fully persuaded we have the power to satisfy the desire. But we are mistaken about the power we think we have to satisfy the chimerical desire, just as we are mistaken when we accept the imaginary object as real and true.

The fact is that a desire stimulated in us by a false opinion of good can never procure true satisfaction, either because the object can never be found or, when found, proves deceptive. In the latter case, we discover that the object is not really what we thought; the blindfold falls from our eyes, our illusion is unmasked, and immediately a sad disenchantment enters our soul, accompanied, according to circumstances, by various feelings.

541. Profound meditation on these illusory objects, the products of our practical reason, would be sufficient to enable us to find and classify the different errors into which we fall as moral, social beings. I intend to return to this argument later; here we must continue to list the materials of human contentment.

542. If the only objects of our desires were those we fabricate for ourselves, we would inevitably be unhappy, because our happiness can never come from illusion and deception.

Fortunately, in addition to the objects produced by our willed activity, there are others which are really good, and harmonise with human nature. Their reality is independent of the action of the human will. Nature provides them and, just as we have no power to form them, we have no power to destroy them. Their relationship with human nature, that is, their aptitude for satisfying it, is immutable and independent of us. Our will can only refuse or embrace them. But whether it refuses or accepts them, their aptitude for contenting human nature is the same. If the will accepts them, they produce their effect for our good; if it does not accept, they remain unproductive and are totally lost to us.

543. These observations have a consequence which alone would be sufficient to humble our pride, namely: 'Human beings have the power to make themselves unhappy, but not the power to make themselves happy.'

544. Contentment of spirit is not therefore the task of human beings alone. They certainly contribute to it with acts of their understanding and will, which make them conscious of their well-being. They first contribute by determining their practical reason to direct their desires to real rather than imaginary good, and finally by their efforts to actually possess the real good. Nevertheless, they have to seek this real good from the nature of things as from a generous benefactor, and are obliged to

accept them as they are from the hands of this provident mother. We must submit to the ontological laws which bind real good to the constitution of the human being, and which must be faithfully obeyed on pain of tearing ourselves apart and becoming desperately unhappy.

In this chapter I have summarised the actions with which the human spirit contributes to its own contentment. In the next, we must discuss the part played by nature in this task of contentment. I will list the kinds of real good given us by the nature of things as objects of our legitimate desires.

CHAPTER 6

The objects which, because of their nature as real good, can contribute to the production of human contentment

545. The first real good is *existence*. Those without it cannot desire it, but those who have it can desire its preservation. Desire for existence seems to be the greatest of all desires, because nothing is so much abhorred by a being as its own annihilation. However, it would be an error to deduce from this that pure, simple existence is the greatest human good.

A human being who moves towards the state closest to non-existence is approaching the greatest of subjective evils. This fact does not prove that pure existence is the greatest good; on the contrary, it merely shows that existence is the least, most elementary and last remaining good. A beggar, for example, who has been refused alms is reduced to the greatest degree of poverty. Nevertheless the alms is on the one hand far from being the greatest wealth; on the other it is the smallest amount of money needed to keep the beggar one degree from extreme poverty.

546. What is the value of pure existence? Normally we say there is an infinite distance between being and non-being. But this is an error. Precisely because nothingness is nothing, human beings are unable to conceive it; they think of it as something infinitely small, and of existence as a finite quantity. Mathematicians normally posit an infinite distance between a finite quantity and the infinitely small, but this practice, carefully considered, means that in a finite quantity we can conceive an indefinite number of smaller quantities without the sum of these indefinitely multiplied quantities ever being equal to the given finite quantity within which they are conceived to exist.

To say that an indefinitely large number of small quantities can be assigned between a finite quantity and an infinitesimal amount differs greatly from saying that the difference between these two quantities is infinite. Granted that the difference contains even an infinite number of parts, these infinite parts will never amount to an infinite quantity, precisely because they are

considered infinitesimally small. Hence, if we measure the difference between any two finite quantities, the unit of measure determines the difference expressed as a greater or smaller number of units. If the unit is very small, the difference gives us as high a number of units as we wish.

We see therefore that a difference in discrete quantity is not the same as one in continuous quantity. In the case of discrete quantity, the finite difference, no matter how small, can be divided into as many parts as we like, but the resulting indefinitely large number of parts never means that the difference is infinite. In the case of continuous quantity, the difference is not divided into parts: if the difference is finite, it is finite; if infinite, infinite. Hence, we must not say that the difference between something and nothing is infinite; we must say it is something. The good of this existence, therefore, is not infinite, but as limited as the existence itself.

547. Consequently, if we want to indicate correctly how good *existence* is for the ens possessing it (for a non-existent ens, existence is neither good nor evil) we must not consider pure, simple existence but existence together with all its acts.

Properly speaking, 'existence' indicates a mental abstraction and therefore nothing real. It is common to all entia without being any one of them; what is common cannot constitute a proper, particular ens. If we seek the value of real entities, we must not consider abstract, common existence, but weigh the entia themselves, as it were, according to the different degrees of entity they have. As I have shown elsewhere, good is simply being;²⁵⁵ to know the amount of good in an ens, we must know how much being it has. *Existence* is common to all but the quantity of *being* varies in each. Thus the value of any particular ens is as great as its degree of being.

548. We should not be surprised if there are certain kinds of entia which enjoy an infinitely greater, more noble degree of being and, therefore, in comparison with other kinds manifest a relatively infinite value. It would be a slur on human nature to claim that the difference in value between a human being and a beast is only a finite quantity, no matter how great the quantity. No quantity of horses or mules, however large, can equal the

²⁵⁵ Cf. *PE*, 21–42.

value of a single human being. The nobility and excellence of the human being excludes as unworthy all comparison with irrational natures. The difference is one of kind and constitutes a truly infinite distance between one ens and another.

549. My present intention however is not to indicate the degree of good that different entia possess considered in themselves, but the good they have relative to their *contentment*, which applies only to rational beings. We must reconsider the good that human beings can possess and see how much this good contributes by its nature to their contentment.

The human being, even in a state of zero development, as in the first moments of his existence, is constituted by a naturally pleasant substantial feeling. Although the feeling of existence is naturally pleasant, it is not matter of contentment. This occurs only after the development of the intellective faculties of the will and of desires. I must therefore say something about the principal levels of development and show that as our faculties gradually develop, different *appetitive objects* appear in us. These are enfolded within the sphere of our *desire* (which grows continually and embraces what surrounds it), and finally, like ingredients, become mixed and fused in human *contentment*.

550. The stages of development of the human faculties are ascertained by observation of their successive acts. The principal diversity presented by these acts allows us to classify them into two great categories, namely, acts pertaining to a subjective way of acting, and acts pertaining to an objective way. This great diversity leads us to simplify the classification of human activities by reducing them all to two most general *active principles*, that of *subjective* and that of *objective action*.²⁵⁶ We have to accept that the feeling of these two activities is included in the primitive feeling. Because the primitive feeling certainly has as its term the mode of our existence, it is the feeling of all we can possibly do and the first principle of our activity (although awareness of all this is absent from the feeling). Because the whole human being is feeling, his development is the development of a feeling, or at least, a development perpetually accompanied by a feeling.

²⁵⁶ Cf. *AMS*, 839–846.

551. *What moves the feeling is desire and instinct*, so that every human being develops through desires and instincts. *Desire* and *instinct* have *good* as their term. Hence, just as the active principles proper to human nature are two, so there must be two classes of good to which these principles tend. They can be called *subjective* and *objective good*.

Subjective good is that which enters the human subject as his very own, as an element or appurtenance of his nature. *Objective* good, on the other hand, is that which does not enter and become part of the subject; it is presented to and judged by the subject's understanding for what it is in itself, according to the degree of being it has.

Subjective good constitutes the order of *eudaimonological good*; *objective* good constitutes the two orders of *intellectual* and *moral good*.²⁵⁷ *Moral good* has an intimate relationship with *eudaimonological good*, and leaves eudaimonological consequences, that is, produces subjective good in us, which is never complete without moral good.²⁵⁸

552. Subjective good can be classified as follows:

1. The *two innate active principles* are the initial subjective good. As long as they remain undeveloped in the first feeling without being moved, they constitute the least, most elementary human good, pure human existence. But natural, appropriate activity of the subject subsequently increases this subjective good. We can say therefore that 'the amount of subjective good is the same as the subject's natural, appropriate activity', and that the greatest quantity of subjective good is to be found in the human being when, all things being equal, his natural, appropriate activity is greatest.

If we wish to discover the various kinds of subjective good which become present in the human being and to know their degree, we need only follow the development of the two principles we have mentioned; all the good of the human subject is contained in them as in a seed.

553. 2. As soon as the two principles become active through natural, appropriate activity, human beings have a pleasant feeling of *their own activity*. This lively pleasure, which strongly

²⁵⁷ Cf. *PE*, 69–113.

²⁵⁸ Cf. 179–203 of this work.

attracts their attention, lasts only a short time because the activity itself is short-lived. This is explained by the human limitation we have already mentioned: no human second act can be continuous in our present state. In the present life we are a power that attains its full activity by an almost unnatural effort only to return immediately to our first state of potency.

554. These momentary enjoyments experienced with transient acts must be considered a second type of subjective good, divisible into three kinds:

1. Pleasant *animal sensations*.

2. Pleasing *intellectual feelings*, that is, the pleasure experienced in the actual conception and contemplation of things and in the effects derived from this.

3. *Moral feelings*, which draw their immense attraction from the practice of virtue.

The first kind contains *subjective good* with a *subjective origin*; the second and third, *subjective good* with an *objective origin*, that is, the effect in the subject is produced by the possession of *objective good*.

555. 3. Although the *act* that explains human potential activity is transient, it leaves some traces and some good or bad *stable effects*. After every act therefore we are different from what we were previously; we are in a better or worse state.

556. A careful investigation of all the *effects* left in us by the different acts we perform would call for a profound work of most delicate philosophy; the thinker's mind would be swamped by the most demanding investigations. These effects and modifications touch particularly upon eudaimonological and moral teaching and especially on all that concerns our final destiny, the Creator's great designs for us and the vast corpus of ontology. However, the immediate subject of this book does not permit such extensive investigations, which pertain to a knowledge still hidden from the world. We will limit ourselves to a classification of the permanent effects left in us by our acts. The only method suitable for our present purpose is to consider them as classes of *subjective good*, as follows:

557. a) The first *effects* produced in the state of the subject by his own initial acts are the *powers* he manifests. Previously, these powers had lain indistinct and quiescent in the depth of

the two original *principles of action* which can never be confused and unified; afterwards, the powers become distinct.²⁵⁹

558. *b)* The powers are exercised according to a certain fixed order explained by their own nature, by the nature of the entia outside of and related to them, and by accidental circumstances.

The products and effects of this exercise of our human powers are, in addition to the *momentary feelings* we have discussed:

1. *habitual feelings*,
2. *cognitions* preserved in the treasury of the memory,
3. *persuasions* and *opinions*.²⁶⁰ Habitual feelings, permanent cognitions, and opinions and persuasions greatly modify our spirit for good or evil. The actual result depends upon the pleasantness or unpleasantness of our feelings, the truth or falsity of our cognitions, and the virtue or malice of our persuasions.

559. *c)* But the series of effects does not finish here. Nothing is static in the human being; everything evolves. Every effect produces other effects.

Every feeling produces a corresponding *instinct*; in other words, every *passivity* gives rise to an *activity*. Thus, for every *new feeling* we have, a *new instinct* manifests itself in us.

Similarly, every *cognition* can generate an *affection*, and the different groups of cognitions we form, especially those associated with feelings, produce a huge variety of affections.

The same can be said about opinions and persuasions, which are more effective in producing human affections than individual, bare cognitions.²⁶¹

Affections, which can be considered as feelings, also generate corresponding *instincts*, that is, they give leverage to the spontaneity of the will. This power of the will called *spontaneity*

²⁵⁹ In my opinion, only the two *principles of action* I have discussed are innate. In *AMS*, I showed how the *principles of action* differ from the *powers*, and that the latter are not innate but arise from the depth of the developing human soul. Cf. 839–846.

²⁶⁰ It is most important to distinguish simple *cognition* from *persuasion*, and the *faculty of knowledge* from the *faculty of persuasion* and opinion. I discussed these necessary distinctions in *NE*, 2: 402–405; 3: 1044–1047, 1335–1362, to which I refer the reader.

²⁶¹ Cf. *AMS*, 630–635.

increases in energy and undergoes, as it were, new developments according to the variety of the affections generated in us.²⁶²

Cognitions, besides being the cause of new *affections* associated with opinions and feelings, produce and leave in the human spirit a noble effect; they add to the will a freedom of action as extensive as the sphere of the cognitions themselves.²⁶³

None of these effects, whether direct or indirect, lacks its own feeling which greatly enlarges or restricts, that is, modifies in various ways the state of the human spirit.

560. *d*) In the developments I have indicated we see an increase in the amount of human activity. But we must bear in mind what I said earlier, namely, that in the first moments of human existence everything is in potency, nothing in action. The human being would remain for ever inactive, resting peacefully in existence, like a baby in its mother's womb, unless external causes provoked its universal potentiality to particular acts. By means of particular acts, our potentiality rises as it were from a deep abyss into which it falls back when the acts cease, but not as deeply as before.

When provoked to action a second time, it does not have to come from such a depth; it is nearer to and more alert as for action. Finally it rises and remains ready to respond without delay or effort to the least invitation, which it even seems to anticipate. When human activity has become as agile and alert as this relative to a vast number of important actions, human strength is immensely amplified. We and our powers remain the same, but an incalculable difference exists between our unmoved powers and those in vibrant movement directed to great activity. Our human strength must no longer be measured by our *powers* but by the *amount of activity* they have acquired for our use, just as a State's wealth must be measured not by treasure hidden underground but by capital in circulation. We have to distinguish potential actuation from mere potency. An individual's and a society's total activity are proportionate to the former, not the latter.

²⁶² My teaching about the *spontaneity of the will* is found in *AMS*, 419–425, 612–635.

²⁶³ *AMS*, 546–548.

561. e) The activity we are discussing, which we feel and greatly enjoy, must also be distinguished from *habits of action*, another effect remaining in us after our transient actions.

It is true that 'habit' is given different meanings, including that of inclination or tendency to act; we say, for example, that anyone in the habit of doing something has difficulty not doing it. In this sense, habit is simply a species of the activity we have just mentioned, distinguished by restlessness and impatience to act, so that finally it must come to action. But this readiness for action is an effect that often follows habit; it is not habit itself. In my opinion, habit consists in a 'proximate power to act'; its two characteristics are the knowledge or *ability*, and the *facility* to act. A person could have the facility without having the will to act. For example, an artist does not always feel inclined to paint. He has the habit of painting but lacks the activity we are discussing. Habits, therefore, as I define them, are different from activity, which is alert and tending always to act.

562. Undoubtedly this activity and a habit normally arise together as consequences and effects of repeated acts. This explains why they are confused. Repeated acts generate in us the *habit* to act, that is, the knowledge and facility for action. At the same time they leave in us the inclination to act. Then, confusing them, we make the two into one and call it 'habit'. Nevertheless clarity of ideas requires that the two be distinguished.

563. Activity is not exclusively restricted to a particular class of acts; it simply gives the measure of the *quantity of action* present in an individual or society. Habit, on the other hand, is always restricted to a class or group of particular acts which excludes other acts. It indicates the *quality* not the *quantity* of action, the *mode* not the *amount* of action of an individual or society.

Properly speaking, every habit can be described as an *art* of performing particular actions. Antiquity fittingly defined 'arts' 'as habits of action drawn from experience'.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ The only difference I can see between *habit* and *art* is that art presupposes that the person exercising it possesses reason; habit can also be proper to animals. A canary that has been taught music can sing, by instinctive habit, what a human being sings by both instinctive and reasoning habit. The action performed by the canary also comes from reason — not the bird's but the creator's.

All human powers, by means of their controlled exercise, clothe themselves as it were in their own habits which modify the state of the human spirit where they are retained as different arts.

564. If we prefer to reduce human powers to the three classes of animal, intellectual and moral powers, we can classify all arts into three categories: 1. *mechanical*, 2. *intellectual* (such as logic, etc.), and 3. *moral*.

Fine arts are mixed, that is, intellectual-mechanical.

Moral arts are good or bad habits called *virtues* or *vices*.

No one should be surprised when I say that vices themselves are arts because arts of doing evil can and certainly do exist. Human malice does not reveal itself solely in individual acts; it abuses intelligence and cunningly reduces itself to knowledge and art, a truly devilish work.

Moral habits of *virtues* differ from *mechanical* and *intellectual* habits. In particular moral habits differ by necessarily including a certain degree of the *activity* which I have previously distinguished from habits, and which really remains completely separate in the other kinds of habits (*mechanical*, *intellectual* and *mixed*). Virtue would not be virtue if it were not active, and human beings would not be virtuous if they did not do what they have to do.

565. There is another notable difference between *moral habits* and all other habits, when the former are connected with merit.²⁶⁵

Moral habits become meritorious acts by a free decree of the human being. All other habits can become act only when moved by the spontaneity of the will;²⁶⁶ true, absolute freedom does not appear in human beings except contemporaneously with moral merit. Properly speaking, we can say that we pass from the sphere of spontaneous to free action only when we are free from the restrictions of what is subjective and reach a point where we must choose between subjective and objective good.

566. 4. The entire development described in nos. 1, 2 and 3 can

²⁶⁵ I have already shown that *moral good* can exist without actual *merit*. All moral good is present in heaven, but those in heaven do not merit because they lack the freedom of indifference (cf. *AMS*, 865–889).

²⁶⁶ Cf. *AMS*, 560–566.

be considered the work of the instincts and of the spontaneity of the will up to the last stage where the human being enters the moral sphere, and his action becomes fully free.

From what has been said we see that the developments of human potentiality, considered solely within the sphere of spontaneity, are vast. They all leave their firm, quasi-indelible imprint in the human being, together with a particular feeling which modifies and disposes the human spirit in various ways, and all sow the seed of increased human power and nature. All effects cause other effects, which become more intricate, act on each other and indefinitely reproduce themselves.

567. Nevertheless, the most sublime and extensive action of all, the action pertaining to the human *person*, is that which comes from human freedom and is essentially moral.

I have shown that in every free human act there is a *quantity of action* greater than in all possible spontaneous acts.²⁶⁷ The free act takes the human being outside his own circle as subject, making him arbiter between all that is subjective and the rest of being in all its extension; in other words, he becomes arbiter between the finite and the infinite, between himself and God. We should not be surprised therefore that this sublime, most powerful principle of action, called freedom, is physically master and ruler of all other human spontaneous principles of action.²⁶⁸ Indeed, we can say that this one principle of action, freedom, informs all human power and activity, because in it alone is the true activity of person.²⁶⁹

568. This truth provides the very important consequence that the greatest subjective good or, more accurately, the only subjective good of the human person, lies in the use of human freedom, that is, in the domain of morality.

We have in fact said that 'the quantity of subjective good is always that of the natural, appropriate activity of the subject; consequently the greatest natural, appropriate activity in the subject is the subject's greatest good.'²⁷⁰ But the greatest activity of nature, and the sole activity of person, consists in the use of

²⁶⁷ Cf. *AMS*, *ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Cf. *AMS*, 644–649.

²⁶⁹ Cf. *AMS*, 854–864.

²⁷⁰ Cf. chap. 4.

freedom. The natural, appropriate use of freedom is, therefore, the greatest subjective human good and the sole good of the human person. But moral virtue consists in the natural, appropriate use of freedom. Therefore the maximum good of human nature, and of the human person, is moral virtue.

569. If we understand this, we should not be surprised that virtue fills the human spirit with the sweetest habitual feelings, with heavenly joy and with new, intimate and mysterious pleasure. Although the effects and modifications imparted to our spirit by constant virtue may be hidden and deep, they are sufficiently evident to assure us that we possess internally something more noble and excellent than the material universe, something more precious than limited things, more permanent than what is transient, and more powerful than anything that is not God himself. A fine intellect wrote very truly that 'uprightness of heart and habitual purity of intention have influence and results that extend much further than we commonly think.'

Having arrived at this sublime good of the subject, we are at the point where *subjective* and *objective* good touch and unite without ever becoming confused.

570. Generally speaking, *objective good* is every ens conceived by our understanding in so far as the being is. The sublime objective good we are discussing, which unites with the greatest subjective good, is *being* in the fullest and proper sense of the word.

Being, as light to the mind, is *truth*; as willed without limit or arbitrary exclusions, it is the object of *virtue*. Finally, in so far as being communicates itself fully to humans, it becomes the form of their *beatitude*.

571. The understanding attains truth and participates in light in varying degrees. Similarly the will adheres to unlimited being and acquires merit and virtue in varying degrees. In spite of these limitations and provided the intellect is not adverse to truth in any way, nor the will adverse to entity, the human being is upright in mind and heart, possesses truth and good, and enjoys the naturally eternal, immutable happiness, matchless in value, which *truth* and *good* ineffably impart to the human spirit.

572. It is certain, therefore, that in human nature there exists a natural, intimate will whose object, or at least whose purpose, is

this absolute good. *Free will* can oppose but not destroy this *will of human nature*. The will is a power tending to good, and every objective and subjective good is ultimately absorbed in absolute good.

573. Kant based morality on the natural will for absolute good. By giving legislative authority to this human will, which receives but does not make law,²⁷¹ he abused a great truth. Plato, who had seen and stated the truth, risked falling into a serious error caused by his difficulty in explaining how human beings, whose nature *wills* moral good, could then will to choose evil.²⁷² No philosophical school understood better than the Stoics this *natural will* that human beings have for virtue; no school spoke so nobly of it. We can say that in antiquity only the Stoics saw that virtue consisted 'in making the *will of the human person* fully agree with the *will of human nature*,' although they did not arrive at making this philosophical formula their moral teaching.

A passage from Arrian's critique of Epictetus' teaching is sufficient proof of what I am saying. Arrian shows that only virtuous human beings can be called free because only they, like freemen, do what they want, granted that the natural human will wants virtue not vice:

Only that person is free who lives as he wants, who cannot be forced, restrained or violated, whose inclinations are not impeded, desires frustrated or aversions rendered ineffective. No one wants to be delinquent or be deceived, temerarious, unjust, petulant, quarrelsome, vile or abject.

²⁷¹ Cf. the examination of Kant's system in *Storia comparativa de' sistemi morali*, c. 5, art. 11–12.

²⁷² Aristotle in fact attributes to Plato the error 'of denying that human beings can willingly be evil.' Here, as in many other places, Aristotle, I think, unjustly censors his master. When Plato says human beings cannot willingly be bad, he is only affirming what the Stoics held, that is, human beings, in acting badly, act against the natural will and therefore act like slaves. — However, this does not mean that human beings are unable to make themselves slaves or free people, to obey or disobey their natural will. Such a teaching by no means destroys *free will*; on the contrary, it helped the Stoics to exaggerate its power. Finally I must note that the *natural will* to which Plato and the Stoics refer is a *virtual* rather than an *habitual* or *actual* will, just as the idea of virtue is virtually included in the idea of good.

A wicked person does not live as he wishes; he is not free. Nobody wants to be afflicted, fearful and envious, have unfulfilled desires or fall into the very troubles he has fled. Wicked people are not without misery and fear: they become entrapped in the things they seek to escape; their plans do not succeed. It is obvious that evil people are not free.²⁷³

This excellent argument is based entirely on the principle that human beings have a natural will directing them to be virtuous, although passions may indeed pervert them, prevent them from satisfying their superior will, and almost force them to do what they do not want.

²⁷³ *Epicteti Dissertationum ab Arriano digestarum*, bk. 4.

CHAPTER 7

Corresponding evils

574. After the classification of subjective and objective real good, which are the matter of contentment of spirit, I will say a few words about corresponding evils.

Human nature, its active principles and its powers do not all develop equally in every period of our existence — this is clear from what I have said. Just after receiving existence, we take only a few, uncertain steps. Only later, as a result of great experience do we acquire some ability to move; gradually our *abilities* grow until we are able to deal with the most sublime objects. I called these abilities *habits of our powers*. It is clear that relative to our contentment certain habits have a value infinitely greater than our mere existence or the merely active principles contained in our existence or the powers in their original potentiality.

575. On the other hand, nature, principles, powers, habits and even acts considered as elements of nature give us only a limited, pleasant feeling; they allow us to enjoy the limited being that we are, that is, as subject. Contrariwise, when we strive for *objects* different from ourselves, they can be immeasurably large as well as multiple and various.

576. Just as understanding can either direct itself towards infinite being and rest in it (because this being is infinite), or continue to seek vain, self-fabricated objects uninterruptedly (because possible, chimerical, imaginary objects are indefinite in number), so the will loves all that the understanding knows, whether real or imaginary, multiple or single, finite or infinite. Moreover, the power of the will can limitlessly increase our love or hatred for these objects, to the extent that it fixes our gaze on them and makes us see them as good or evil. Delight is now added to love, pain to hatred; both the spiritual delight and spiritual pain are as great as the nobility and greatness of the object they have as their aim. Thus, by virtue of the sublime powers of our understanding and will, we can either increase our pleasure unlimitedly or torture ourselves by increasing our pain.

577. I attributed the origin and amount of subjective good to the degree of our natural, appropriate activity. Similarly, I attribute the origin of our evils to the same source. If our natural, appropriate activity is low, our enjoyment is low; if it is great, our enjoyment or subjective good is also great.²⁷⁴ Up to this point, there is no evil, only a limitation of good.

Evil therefore consists in an activity, but an activity contrary to that in which good consists. Just as the activity which accompanies a pleasant feeling is our natural, appropriate activity, so the activity in which subjective evil consists and which is accompanied by an unpleasant feeling is contrary to our nature and its laws.²⁷⁵

578. The greatest subjective good consists in the greatest, supreme human activity (free activity), used appropriately. Similarly, the greatest subjective evil consists in our greatest, supreme activity used inappropriately. The greatest subjective good is necessarily joined to the greatest objective good, of which it is an effect, and the greatest subjective evil is attached and joined to the greatest objective evil.

If our freedom is joined to unlimited being, the greatest subjective and objective good exist together. If however our freedom excludes from its affections a part of being and is thus in opposition to unlimited being, the greatest subjective evil is present in us because of the enmity and strife between us and infinite being.

When we consider how disadvantaged we are in this battle — we are limited and nothing, while the adversary we challenge is infinite and the All — we see very clearly that this evil contains something infinite.

579. These principles allow us to speak about the greatest evil of which human beings are capable in the same way that we spoke about good. The question, ‘Is annihilation the greatest

²⁷⁴ The degree of activity is measured by 1. the *extension* of the entity occupying our rational activity; 2. the *intension* of will with which we adhere to the entity. — The first of these two measures is the principal.

²⁷⁵ This does not contradict what I said elsewhere about the nature of evil, that is, that evil consists in a privation of good (cf. *Theodicy: Essays on Divine Providence*, pp. 128–131). *Privation*, in which evil consists, is inherent in every activity contrary to nature, precisely because it consists in the *lack of agreement* between the activity and the laws of the nature in act.

evil for a human being?' can now be solved and must be answered as follows.

An ens that lacks intellect and will and is therefore incapable of the greatest objective good and evil, can never tend to or desire its own annihilation. To procure this, the ens must pass through all evils up to the last; it must destroy every activity except the final, basic activity of existence. This explains why animals cannot commit suicide, and why suicide is not found among savages, who can neither perceive an evil greater than death with their understanding nor be persuaded about it. On the other hand, when human beings who are developed, civilised, perverted and insane accept some evil as greater than death, then, as Rousseau says, 'we see around us persons who complain about their own existence. As far as possible, many deprive themselves of existence, and the union of divine and human laws hardly suffices to check this disorder. I ask,' (Rousseau despises the false civilisation in which he lived) 'has a savage in the state of freedom ever been heard to dream of regretting life and committing suicide?'²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine etc.*, p. 1. — He admits however that cases of suicide are rare and that the sum of good prevails over that of evil. Rousseau wrote to Voltaire (18th August 1766): 'No matter how clever we are at fostering our miseries through fine institutions, we have not been able to perfect ourselves to the point of generally making life burdensome and preferring nothingness to existence. If this were the case, discouragement and despair would have soon taken hold of the majority, and the human race could not have survived long. If however existence is better for us than non-existence, this would be sufficient to justify Providence, even if there were no compensation for any evil we have to suffer, and the evil were as great as you depict it. But in this matter it is difficult to find good faith in human beings, and sound reasoning in philosophers who, when comparing good with evil, always forget the sweet feeling of existence isolated from every other sensation. Others, vainly despising death, calumniate life, just as some women prefer a tattered to a dirty dress.'

The feeling of existence in isolation from every other sensation is certainly a great gift given us by nature, but Rousseau is a long way from forming an accurate concept of this bare feeling isolated from every other sensation. Properly speaking, what he calls the 'feeling of existence' is simply *consciousness* of the feeling, and consciousness at the level found in someone like Rousseau himself.

In justification of Providence, we must add that human depravation and the evils caused by it result from our own actions, not from Providence. As we have said, it is not physical evil, but moral evil, that depends on us, which

580. In the order of purely subjective evil, therefore, the greatest evil is the privation of existence. But this is not the case with objective evil.

The infinite has greater value than the finite. Hence the feeling of ourselves, of our own existence, must have less value than the feeling of infinite being, in which we can nevertheless share. An infinite distance must exist between the possession of ourselves and the possession of an infinite entity. Similarly, we have to acknowledge that there must be an intrinsic absolute evil, containing something infinite, in our contradiction of, struggle against and hatred for an infinite ens. Such observations recall the force of Christ's words about Judas that 'it would have been better for that man if he had never been born.'²⁷⁷

makes existence burdensome. On the other hand, the person determined to take his own life is to a great extent deceived by his imagination, which makes him see death or non-existence as a state of peace rather than a non-state. Nevertheless, human beings can easily acknowledge with their understanding that total moral wickedness includes an evil far worse than their own destruction.

²⁷⁷ It has been suggested that Jesus did not say that non-existence would have been better for Judas, but 'not having been born'. The same figure of speech is used in Job: 'Would that I had died before any eye had seen me, and were as though I had not been, carried from the womb to the grave' (Job 10: [18–19]). It seems to me, however, that the Saviour's words can be truthfully understood in the sense of both interpretations.

CHAPTER 8

Whether evil can be balanced and compensated by good

581. If evil could not be balanced and compensated by good, contentment of spirit would be impossible. Some evil is never lacking in the present life, and the smallest, uncompensated amount would be enough to make us miserable. On the other hand, after careful thought we see that it is hard to understand how balance and compensation between good and evil can be effected. Good does not destroy co-existent evil, and vice versa; both reside in us side by side, it would seem, without any compensation. Nevertheless, experience itself confirms the fact that evil is balanced and compensated by good.

582. For example, daily experience tells us that:

1. human beings willingly submit to suffering and evil in expectation of later pleasure and good;²⁷⁸

2. we in fact deprive ourselves of the pleasure and good we have or could have in order to avoid pain and evil.²⁷⁹

The first case is verified every time the desire to procure pleasure and good is greater than the fear of evil and pain. The second, when the fear of evil and pain prevails over our desire for good and the pleasure that accompanies good.

In both cases we mentally compare the good and the evil, the pleasure and the pain; we balance them and evaluate their extent. If we find them of equal value and measure, we consider as zero the evil balanced by the good, and vice versa. This is an undeniable fact, a real compensation accomplished first in our judgment and then in our affections. But a difficulty remains: how is the fact possible? If evil is the opposite of good, how can

²⁷⁸ Mithridates, in his desire to know something about medicine, procured people who allowed their flesh to be cut or cauterised or poultices applied. Those who suffered these discomforts judged them of less value than the recompense they expected. Proof of this happens every day. People who willingly bury themselves in mines or wade through rice fields for money are never in short supply.

²⁷⁹ Cf. M. Gioia's *Dell' ingiuria, dei danni, del soddisfacimento*, etc., pt. 2, bk. 1. for more facts which confirm everything I have said and are in any case commonplace.

good and evil have a common value? And without a common value, how can they be compared, totalled and neutralised by each other?

583. The difficulty is overcome by the distinction I have made between *contentment* of spirit and *evil* and *good*. *Contentment* is the third element and common measure which makes possible the balance and compensation of the good and evil in us.

Just as a thermometer indicates the degrees of both heat and cold, so contentment of spirit indicates the amount of evil and good contemporaneously present in us. Good and evil are not contentment, but the causes of contentment. Contentment is a simple state of our spirit from which evil separates us and to which good draws us. The contemporaneous action of evil and good produces a state more or less close to that of contentment and happiness.

584. Common sense therefore quite rightly accepts that evil can be compensated by good. Legislators of all nations justifiably consider it an incontrovertible truth, and determine compensation and restitution for those who suffer injury, violence or other evils caused by wickedness. Finally, philosophers are fully justified in carefully examining the bases of natural equity on which positive laws must determine compensation and restitution.

585. It is true that if we wished to examine the question more deeply, we would have to show how the simplicity of contentment is explained by the unity and simplicity of the subject and the subject's consciousness. We would then have to ascertain the nature of this subjective unity and simplicity. This in turn would lead us to the *identity* preserved by the subject in the midst of many different feelings and of many changes of place and time. We could not do this without examining the hidden depths of ontology. At present, we do not need to make such a deeply philosophical investigation; but we had to indicate the path to be followed.

CHAPTER 9

Common errors about the total good existing in a given society

586. If it were true that human existence pure and simple had an infinite value, it would be sufficient to total the individuals composing a society to know the total good of that society. The *population* itself would be the definitive measure of public prosperity.

A population census would also indicate accurately the total human good present in a social body if 1. only equal good could be accumulated in individuals and 2. the *real existence* of each individual had equal value.

But both methods of calculation are wrong. In the calculation of human good, 1. only a minimum value can be given to pure existence, and 2. real existence can vary indefinitely in value from one individual to another.

This last truth gives us the extraordinary consequence that ‘a single individual can possess a moral and eudaimonological good greater than the good in many individuals, even in the whole human race.’

A great error therefore is made by those who calculate the total good in a society solely on the datum of population. A similar error is made by those who indicate the amount of good in a society by restricting themselves to enumerating well-off people or those who live at a certain level of prosperity. Some observations about both these mistaken calculations will be helpful.

587. The first calculation is clearly seen as mistaken today because it has lost even the appearance of truth. But not the second; it has a seductive ring, especially now that the simplistic teachings of Bentham and other radical doctrines have become almost generally accepted, in the way the populace understands them.

588. However, a few words about the first mistake will not be out of place. Note that human beings can be considered from two points of view: in themselves or relative to society.

Considered in themselves, the real good they possess and enjoy as individuals is included in the calculation; considered relative to society, we are dealing with their value as a useful means or instrument for the preservation and increase of the mass of good of every citizen.

589. Political theorists who make population the measure of public prosperity usually begin from two erroneous principles, of which the consequences themselves can only be erroneous. The principles are: 1. the calculation must be made not according to the value of human beings in themselves but according to their value relative to society, that is, as mere instruments for the preservation and increase of the mass of good of every citizen; 2. the most helpful thing for the preservation and the mass of social good is the greatest possible population without limit.

590. The first of these erroneous principles contains a sophism of great harm to human dignity: it evaluates the *means* but denies any value to the *end*. If human beings are valued solely for their utility to the State, they are debased to the condition of *things* and stripped of the characteristic of *persons* — considered like this, they could have less value than a flock of sheep. This kind of calculation can be made only where slavery flourishes. It is extraordinary, therefore, to see that supporters of this error are sometimes those who declare themselves very much in favour of liberal institutions. But we entirely reject such a pernicious, ignoble doctrine! Human beings are not only citizens; before being citizens, they are human beings, an imprescriptible title of nobility and font of freedom. This natural human dignity makes them greater than all the material things that compose the universe.

591. If however we compare human beings among themselves, I repeat that a single human being can have an intrinsic, moral and eudaimonological value exceeding that of hundreds of other human beings. Hence we must not calculate them according to their number but according to their importance, taking account of their moral excellence, the level of their virtue and consequently the level of their happiness.

592. Furthermore, we have seen how immorality and its consequent unhappiness have caused such great evil in humans that no other evil can be compared with it. Existence would not be beneficial to a great number of human beings if they were so

degenerate that all of them together were not worth a single person who might exist in their place; life would not be beneficial to a great number of wicked and unhappy people, or to many who, because of their shameful, unhappy state, would prefer not to exist. We all know that multitudes of destitute people often lack the most necessary objects of life, suffering deficiencies and deformation in their physical and moral development. This part of the human race either dies early, or grows up in abject hopelessness, disease, squalor, degradation and, worse, in degrading, brutalising vice. Not every population therefore must be given equal value; the same number of people can present a very different sum of good and evil.

593. The same conclusion obtains if we consider the population from the point of view of usefulness to the State. For example, an increase in infant mortality means a comparable decline in the number of educated people available to the State. But we know that destitution greatly increases the number of deaths under twenty years of age.²⁸⁰ The State therefore cannot expect support from the poor equal to that of the same number of well-off people. It follows that the State's concern should be the quality, not the size of the population. The same observation was made even by Necker:

No one need be anxious about the state of the population if the number of births exceeds the number of deaths. But we must always bear in mind that the composition of the population influences the prosperity and strength of the State. In a country where the majority of inhabitants scarcely enjoy what is necessary, but are perhaps drawn by the pleasure of the senses, the same number of babies are born as in a prosperous society. People make an effort to

²⁸⁰ The statistics for the population movement of Paris from 1817 to 1821, compiled for the Academy of Sciences by Villot, head of the office of statistics for the department of Seine, show that destitution is the most influential cause in mortality, which is consistently larger in poor rather than wealthy environments, despite the fact that the number of marriages and births is smaller in the former. Consequently, although the difficulty of maintaining children restrains marriage to some degree, it is not sufficient to reduce marriages and lower infant mortality. Remedying this great evil becomes far more difficult as people become accustomed to suffering and lose the energy of will to avoid it.

rear them, but because poverty prevents adequate nutrition and health care, most of the children die before their fourth birthday. In a country of this kind the number of babies will be constantly disproportionate to the number of adults or mature individuals. Hence a million individuals would not have the same strength or capacity for work as the same number in a kingdom where the people were less poor.

In France, figures showed that those over twenty years of age were nine-twentieths of births; in England, according to an English writer, only seven-twentieths lived beyond twenty years of age. Thus, out of ten million births in France there were a million people above twenty years old — more than in England. Certainly, neither humanity nor society can have the same appreciation for babies who die without any chance of development (they are, after all, only a burden to society) as they have for children who grow up to acquire virtue (much more important than mere growth) and enjoy its rewards.

It is clear therefore that a State's prosperity does not increase simply in proportion to the population but depends rather upon quantity and quality in a population proportioned to the means of subsistence and education, and endowed with moral and eudaimonological good.

CHAPTER 10

Continuation

594. Let us examine the second way of calculating the total good present in a society.

We know that in the 18th century political theorists mistakenly measured the prosperity and well-being of a country solely and indistinctly by its population. Later this error was corrected, or so it was thought, by the assertion that 'the total good contained in civil society must be determined by the number of prosperous people', not by the population in general.

But this, in my opinion, is still insufficient. Certainly, the number of prosperous people must be taken into account when calculating the total good possessed by the members of a society, but it cannot be either the sole or principal element in the calculation.

595. To determine the quantity of good possessed by all it is not enough to know that there is a certain number of prosperous inhabitants in a given country. We must also know the quantity of good enjoyed by each if we are to unite the particular quantities and determine the total quantity.

Furthermore, the calculation must take account of all the kinds of real good I have distinguished above as influencing on our human contentment. Certainly we must not limit ourselves to calculating only material good, or overvalue it in circumstances related with contentment. If we are to call material things good, they have to produce contentment in us.

Clearly, if different kinds of real good can accumulate indefinitely in an individual, and if we neglect to calculate all the good possessed by each individual, our total can be grossly erroneous.

596. What we have said about good must also be applied to evil. To determine the quantity of good in the individuals composing a given society, we must total all the evil and subtract its sum from the sum of all the good we have already calculated; what remains will be the quantity of net good found in the society in question. We have seen that, because of the unity of the

human spirit and its contentment, evil can in reality be truly balanced and compensated by good.²⁸¹

In order to determine accurately the sum of evil existing in the members of a given society therefore, it is not sufficient to know how many individuals suffer; we must know the quantity of evil in each. Evils, too, accumulate indefinitely, and a single individual can suffer more than all others, or suffer an evil which is not compensated even by the good enjoyed by all others.

597. These reflections show the falsity of judging the comparative happiness of different peoples by comparing the proportional number of contented individuals and subtracting this from the proportional number of suffering individuals.

598. This kind of calculation of public happiness is supported particularly by Bentham and is common today among radicals of all nations. It has an air of benevolence and humanity about it because it seems to show concern for the well-being of the majority. But if we carefully and coherently examine the consequences of its principles, we find (and it should come as no surprise) that this way of calculating public prosperity leads to inhumanity and tyranny; individuals and minorities are sacrificed to the well-being of majorities. I demonstrate this as follows.

599. If the principles I have posited concerning the accumulation of good and evil in different individuals are undeniable, and if it is certain and clear that an individual of the human species can differ infinitely from another individual of the same species in respect of the quantity of good and evil he possesses, then it is equally certain that the consequences of the theory I oppose must often be barbarous and tyrannical.

600. Let us grant that certain forms and modes of governing a country could be more effective than others in obtaining a majority of prosperous, contented citizens, while the remaining citizens are plunged into the deepest misery and unhappiness. On the other hand, we may find that with other forms and ways of administering the country the number of prosperous, contented citizens would be smaller, but none of the other citizens is oppressed by the horrible squalor of misery imposed on them

²⁸¹ Chap. 9.

by the first kind of government. If the theory I am challenging is to be coherent with itself, it must choose the first kind of administration.

This theory favours only a majority of contented citizens and a minority of unhappy citizens. It must therefore justify this form of government in the face of all the inexpressible calamities to which it subjugates a certain number of individuals and by which it obtains the well-being of the greatest possible number of individuals. The few are sacrificed to the many, the comfortable life of some costs the tears and blood of others, and freedom is found in one part of society, while pitiless oppression and servitude reigns in the other. I believe, however, that each member of society is to be treated with respect; not a single member can be sacrificed to the good of all the others if his sufferings, balanced against the enjoyment of all, resulted in a quantity of either greater evil or lesser good than that obtainable by other governmental means.²⁸²

601. In a word, it is humanity itself that must be the concern of a wise, beneficent government, whether humanity is present in few or many individuals. If humanity suffers more in a single individual than it would in many, it is far better that the sufferings be shared by the many provided, as I said, that the total of shared suffering is not equal to that of the single individual. This is obviously true. For the same reason, a similar argument must be true in the case of good.

If the object of our benevolence is humanity (in which properly speaking philanthropy consists) and we wish to do as much as we can for its good, whether humanity subsists in many or few individuals, we may have to choose the enjoyment of the few, or even of a single person, rather than of the many. When good is present in this way, human nature would have more enjoyment, and share in a greater quantity of good than it would if the enjoyment and good, instead of being accumulated, were divided and shared among many.

²⁸² I always presuppose that a government will use means which are *in themselves licit* and result indirectly in the consequences under discussion. It is self-evident that, if we do not wish to destroy natural right, individuals and governments cannot *directly* inflict the slightest harm whatsoever on an innocent person.

602. This is the great principle which justifies Providence in the government of the world. Providence, in permitting certain evils and in accumulating good in determined individuals, follows the following principle: 'The permanently intended purpose of the Creator in the government of humanity is the maximum net good obtainable from evil.' This is the supreme idea, the archetype of all government.

603. Nevertheless, the ease with which we understand the truth of this teaching applied to evil is offset by the difficulty we have in convincing ourselves about the same teaching applied to good.

Accumulating good in a few people and leaving many others without seems to be contrary to both equity and humanity. But this way of reasoning concerns only one part of the theory, and is therefore incomplete and false. We must distinguish between that which relates to *justice* and that which relates to *humanity*. We will speak first about what is required of us by the virtue of humanity, and then discuss the same thing relative to justice and equity.

604. To know what is more in conformity with the virtue of *humanity*, we must carefully reflect that the arguments for establishing the quantity of evil are as valid as those for demonstrating the quantity of good.

Note that I am not excluding the number of persons whose evil is reduced or good increased. Undoubtedly, the greater the number of happy people we can form, the greater the total good, provided the degree of happiness is the same in each and the means used for producing the good does not increase the evil of others. I am simply saying that all effort must be directed to obtaining the maximum net good.

Moreover, if it is possible to succeed in distributing this maximum among many rather than a few individuals, such action does not contradict *humanity* and conforms to *equity*. Indeed, it would be highly desirable if this maximum quantity of net good could be divided in equal proportions among all human beings. Humanity, it is true, would gain nothing, but the distribution would be more equable. If, on the other hand, the distribution were not possible without diminishing the maximum quantity of net good enjoyed by humanity, supporting the distribution would mean that human nature had lost a part

of its good, and this would clearly be an offence against the virtue of humanity. Hence, we see that whatever applies to evil must also apply to good.

605. The two extreme cases which are presented by this theory and seem contradictory (if considered superficially) are:

1. Granted that the maximum net good in a social body can be obtained on the sole condition that it is accumulated in a single individual, so that only evil remains for the rest, such a state must be considered satisfying, according to the principles of the virtue of humanity.

2. If the maximum net good can be obtained on the sole condition that all the evil is accumulated in a single individual, while all the others enjoy the good in varying degree, this state must also be considered satisfying, according to the same principles of humanity.

Between these two extremes, in one of which a single individual is content and in the other a single individual suffers, there are countless intermediary cases, which form two series. The first series contains those cases where all possible minorities are happy and content; the second, the cases where the minorities are unhappy and discontent. According to the principle of humanity, all the cases constitute totally satisfying social states if it remains true in each that 'the maximum total of net good has been obtained.' By 'net good' I mean the good from which has been subtracted the sum total of evil in the individuals composing the society.

606. What prevents popular reason from seeing clearly the certitude of such principles is its inability to understand that the means suitable for producing public good and available to government are so limited in their efficacy that the maximum good cannot be procured without the harsh limitations mentioned above. The populace together with the authors of popular teachings believe that any quantity of good can be obtained with the means available to government in such a way that all without exception have more than enough.

On the other hand, those with experience, and anybody who has reflected deeply on the limits inherent in human good and in the means for producing it, are fully persuaded that no government or constitution exists, or can exist, capable of producing limitless good and of destroying all evil. They conclude that the

wisdom of any government whatsoever must solve, before it acts, the problem I proposed about the quantity of net public good free of all evil. The only way this can reasonably be done by government, according to the principles of humanity which must guide government, is the way I have posited. As a result, wise government 'must first of all formulate directives for producing the maximum net good, and secondly, for distributing this good among the greatest number possible of individuals.'

607. Let us now examine the theory relative to *equity*. Equity seems to reject it by requiring that all human beings not only have their portion of good but also share in their portion of inevitable evil.

This kind of reflection could prevent some people from accepting the teaching given above. An apparent difficulty however should never deter us so easily; we should examine the difficulty and weigh its solidity. In this case, it will simply disappear.

608. First of all, what we have said must be clearly understood. We supposed the presence of a constant quantity of good and of evil or, if we unite the evil and good, a constant quantity of net good which we could either distribute as we liked among many members of a society or accumulate in a few. We decided we would without doubt distribute the good equally to each member of the society.

The problem changes however if the quantity of net good is not *constant*, that is, if it completely or partly evades us when we want to distribute it equally. I affirm that in this particular case the greatest possible quantity of good is to be preserved by accumulating it, rather than by dividing it and thus losing a part which human nature could have enjoyed. In this unique case, I say, *equity* must give place to *humanity*.

609. Secondly, we need to discuss the so-called principle of equity which states that 'each person must have his equal portion of net good.'

If we consider this principle universally and abstractly, we immediately see how specious it is. In fact, it begins by considering *human nature* abstractly in individual human beings. Considered in this way, human nature is equal in everybody and is what I have called pure, simple existence. And if pure, simple existence is the only thing we consider in human beings,

there is no reason in the world why one should be preferred to another; giving one human being advantage over others seems arbitrary, prejudiced and contrary to reason. Ceaseless abstractions such as these led philosophers and political theorists into harmful errors. Anything abstract is only part of the real thing.

Reasoning about an abstract part is not, therefore, reasoning about the thing itself. Thus accurate reasonings about an abstract part are extremely erroneous relative to the thing itself. In our case we want to know what pertains to each human being. If we start by considering the pure, simple existence common to all individuals, not only a part but the most important part of the individual is neglected. This is clear from what we have demonstrated, namely, that the good acquired by our good habits can have a value infinitely greater than the good of existence we receive from nature.

Hence, if human beings are considered as they are in reality, rather than abstractly, the principle proposed above ('equity requires good to be divided into equal portions among all the individuals composing a given society') is seen to be entirely arbitrary and false. In fact, the contrary principle is clear: 'Equity and distributive justice prohibit the division of the net good into equal portions among all associated individuals; rather, it requires different degrees of accumulation in some definite individuals.'

610. When justice demands that the wicked be punished and the virtuous rewarded, it is simply prescribing that other evils (eudaimonological) accumulate in those in whom moral evils exist, and that more good (also eudaimonological) accumulate in those in whom moral good exists. Thus, according to justice, evil sometimes entails another evil, and good, another good. The gospel makes the same solemn judgment where we read: 'To him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.'²⁸³

611. Furthermore, eudaimonological good, which is sometimes simply a result of virtue or a reward of merit, produces of its nature other good, so that it multiplies of itself in the hands, so to speak, of individuals, provided government does not obstruct it.

²⁸³ Lk 8: [18].

A materially radical or egalitarian government which saw this kind of good accumulating in the hands of some individuals and thought it had the right or even the obligation to seize and distribute it to all the citizens in equal portions, would be like a crazy tyrant claiming that everybody must be of the same height. Applying his so-called law of equity, he shortens all those taller than the established height and stretches the limbs of those below it.

612. We must also note that, relative to equity, justice and right, all the ideas introduced by modern political authors who have been raised on sensist philosophy are completely false. These writers claim that human rights are rooted totally in the human tendency to pleasure. Beginning with this principle, they argue more or less as follows: 'All human beings have an equal tendency to pleasure. Therefore all have an equal right to good. But every time a human being possesses a greater amount of good than another, he has usurped what belongs to his equals. Therefore, a government must not allow good to be accumulated in any single individual but strive to distribute it evenly so that no one ever has more than another.' We see here the clear foundation of the radical and egalitarian teachings under discussion. No person of good sense can fail to recognise that they are a collection of absurdities.

613. On the other hand, if the hypothesis were true that the tendency to pleasure is the sole source of human rights, these teachings would have to be accepted as coherent and simple. But the tendency to pleasure is not the foundation of any right. If it were, even irrational beings would have rights: a lion, with its very strong tendency for the taste of human blood, would be exercising a true right when dismembering a human being. Right exists solely on condition that the duty to respect another's tendency to good exists. Moral duty, which imposes respect for another's tendency to good and converts it into right, cannot originate in the same tendency; on the contrary, it limits our tendency by obliging us to respect the tendency of others.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Cf. *Storia comparativa de' sistemi morali*, cc. 4–5 where I show at greater length that duty, and its consequent right, cannot be deduced from the tendency to pleasure.

614. But if the concept of right is founded on the *duty to respect the tendency of others to eudaimonological good* and to limit our own, it is clear that, before following our own tendency to this good, we must concern ourselves with duty, which controls the tendencies to good that we all have. Granted this (and it cannot be denied), we have introduced a rule superior to the supposed right of material equality — we have introduced morality, and with its introduction the whole egalitarian system collapses. From the moment that we admit the existence of any moral obligation whatsoever, we necessarily admit moral inequality in society.

This inevitably alters the whole superficial system of equality. We cannot rank the person who faithfully fulfils his obligations with the person who does not; we cannot class together the person who respects the tendencies to good of others and the person who does not. We must recognise that the latter, author of his own moral evil, submits of himself to the force used by others to check and limit his perverse intentions; others can, if necessary, take away his freedom in order to defend themselves, or frighten him with the threat of punishment. In a word, they can reduce him to a condition lower than that of all other human beings, stripping him of much eudaimonological good and inflicting injury.

Hence the right to share in an equal portion of eudaimonological good either does not exist or must not be understood materially — as it is understood by those who reduce every human right to it alone. They declare it inalienable, imprescriptible and unalterable, precisely because, according to them, it is not subordinate to or limited and regulated by any other right.

615. Another absurd consequence of the theory would be that nobody could renounce his portion of good if the tendency to pleasure constituted the sole title of rights. If the only existing right were that of satisfying one's own tendency to pleasure, clearly anyone who renounced this unique right would at the very least be mad.

616. If however it were claimed that the source of the tendency to pleasure was, together with the right, also the source of duty — and this is what is claimed — a person who either entirely or partly renounced this tendency would be

blameworthy relative to the first, universal duty. Such a superficial system destroys every generous act of beneficence by which we put others before ourselves; it destroys all impartial affection by which we sacrifice ourselves to the good of others. To extinguish generous feelings in the human heart and banish magnanimous works from the world is not only stupid but clearly harmful to human nature.

We should therefore discard the system of the sensists and hedonists and continue to allow virtuous souls to do good to others even at the cost of their own good. Virtue and love should be permitted to produce social inequalities of good and evil among us. Some would have us believe that all inequality is repugnant or unjust, but only those who are unjust and lack love would see it this way.

We can conclude therefore that the doctrine of the equality of good, understood in its material sense, is false and reprehensible. Equally false is the teaching that governmental wisdom must tend to this equality as to its end.

617. Finally, if any government were to direct its efforts to this end (as some claim a government should), it would have the duty of actually suppressing and suffocating every natural seed of good to prevent some from developing faster than others; the fastest would have to wait for the slowest. We need to be convinced that good is produced only through the development of seeds sown in us and in the world by the Author of things. In the world of plants, there are different seeds which develop and fructify at different times, in different ways and with varying strength: one shoot blossoms with the first rays of spring while another is hardly stirring under the May sun; one develops vigorously with great promise, another unfurls languidly and listlessly.

Similarly, the hidden seeds of good develop with varying virtue and efficacy in the powers and innate constitution of each human being, subject in different ways to circumstances. A farmer who tried to prevent the most beautiful plants from producing more fruit than the poorest plants would be considered mad. In the same way, we must consider crazy and mad, if not depraved, a ruler who has resolved to limit, penalise and suppress those fertile seeds of good which, in the minds, affections and life of some individuals, develop better than in others,

and takes this action so that the good produced more abundantly by the seeds in some does not accumulate in any one individual.

Although this insane enemy of all progress might have the power to ruin the best fruit and damage the most robust seeds, he would be powerless to invigorate and strengthen the weakest seeds. Moreover, because he could not foresee which seeds would be guilty of developing better than others, he would have to maintain an alert police force ready to cut away the foliage of the plants that dared to produce more luxuriant growth and prettier flowers. Thus, the liberal, radical theory we are combating reaches extremes contrary to nature and repugnant to both common sense and reason, extremes as cruel as they are destructive.

618. We have already noted that authors of the theory are content to consider everything abstractly. This prevents their seeing the monstrous, absurd consequences that render their doctrine more deserving of ridicule than serious confutation. In fact the doctrine once more ends up as meaningless, if we consider the nature of the means necessary to achieve public prosperity by a government that follows this teaching.

If it were true that an equal portion of good was due by *right* to everyone so that anyone having a larger portion would possess it unjustly, a government's supreme and only duty would be to take any excess good and continually bestow it where there were less. In doing this, the government would only be exercising justice, and all its governmental actions and means would be strictly just.

Furthermore, every kind of means whatsoever in the hands of a government would be upright and just, provided that the government could use the means to obtain such constant equality, and that equality were the only social right and duty. In this system the goodness of the end would sanctify the iniquity of the means. It is not difficult to see that a government which followed these principles would not only be acting in opposition to all the ideas the world has so far formed about what is just and upright, but would be far more intolerable than any government has ever been or can be.

The most culpable thing in the order of morality and most inhuman in the order of eudaimonology lies entirely in the maxim, so popular these days: 'The end sanctifies the means.'

619. But let us leave aside such a tragic, infamous consequence, the inevitable result of the political theory of the equality of every good. We must deal with the other consequence we have mentioned, that is, 'a government should use only actions and means that are strictly just, not merely beneficent and prudent.' Let us grant that some actions, called beneficent today, were to continue in existence but always bearing the characteristic of actions of strict justice.²⁸⁵ To confuse what pertains to beneficence with what pertains to justice, to impose on the obligation of beneficence the rigour and harshness of what is due, to equate the precept to do good with the precept forbidding theft: all this is to abolish the division between two virtues always considered distinct. Such action necessarily leads society to destruction unless it turns back at the sight of the terrible consequences.

To understand this, it is sufficient to consider that perfect *right* necessarily includes the use of force. Anyone who has perfect right can, whenever defence requires it, violently repel the person inflicting violence. Thus, if the right of each individual to the same portion of good is perfect and absolute, the result is obvious: every time a government fails to equalise all the good, all those with a smaller quantity of good can violently force the government to effect the equality. This can only occasion an

²⁸⁵ The spirit, if not the clear understanding of these teachings, has penetrated the peoples of modern times. They very often claim the impossible from governments, and when they cannot get it, think they have the right to use force. This explains the movements of nations towards anarchy, although those who encourage such movements are not seeking anarchy. — We could well ask whether, among imperfect rights made perfect, we can include the maxim accepted by English law: 'Every Englishman has a perfect right to all that is necessary for subsistence.' This maxim has produced the Poor Tax. — If the principle were not limited to the English but extended to all human beings, it would certainly be more self-coherent. We would have great difficulty in finding a good reason for an Englishman's right to subsistence if the reason for this right were not already possessed by humanity. The question discussed in natural right should perhaps deal with the causes of poverty. If these causes were entirely bad, we would probably have to keep firmly to the principle that 'vice alone cannot be the cause of any right.' Thus, according to natural right anyone responsible for his own poverty can apparently be the object of limitless charity but not of strict justice, at least as long as he acts badly.

open, ceaseless war between the majority of the associated members and the government because those who have less good are always the majority.

620. Another consequence is that anyone with less good to whom the government does not dispense this kind of justice can use force to despoil other members of the society, taking as much as is necessary to make the portions just. This explains the constant open warfare between individuals.

621. The third consequence. We have seen that anyone with a smaller portion of good would have a reason (the previous consequence) for forcefully obtaining what is his from both government and individual members. But anyone who in good faith *believed* that his portion of good was less than that of others would also have the same reason. If equality of good is the only right and only duty, then each person is necessarily judge in his cause. Because no one recognises any natural right in others, not even the right to judge, he cannot recognise others as judges. This also contributes to disastrous, universal war.

622. The fourth consequence. If these judgments were unjust, force would again be our only choice, and indeed judgments of this kind made by wicked people in their own cause would be unjust. Thus all good would be appropriated by the strongest among the wicked who also made the law. In this case, the only kingdom on earth would be one of brute force, a force resting almost inevitably in the hands of the most bold, determined wicked people, who would be the majority. If there happened to be someone who did not abuse the right he had, or honestly believed himself obliged to respect others, and wished to do so, he would see his own right attacked from all sides; the so-called foundation of equality would be overthrown by violent people. Thus, with all reciprocity removed, he would think that this false right and every true right had been annihilated, and everybody freed from their obligation of not violating the ownership of others.

Clearly, all these teachings are anarchical.

623. What we need to do is reform the principles leading to such disastrous consequences. We need to re-establish the distinction between perfect and imperfect rights, between the duty to help humanity and the duty of respect for each other's ownership. Moreover we must admit that the tendency to pleasure

and good is not sufficient to give human beings a right to the pleasure and good to which they tend. Consequently no equality understood in this material way pertains to human rights; equality of this kind would in fact be reduced to an interminable succession of injustices, violations and enormous inequalities.

624. After destroying the delusion of these chimerical theories, we must consider how to classify the actions and means used by government to obtain the maximum, total good in the civil society it is administering.

It is clear that government can injure the rights of the members as much as an individual can, and that the most elementary duty of government is respect for the ownership and perfect rights of the people. Indeed it must not only respect, but defend these rights. If it did not do so, it would not increase the amount of good, but be the author both of the moral evil it would commit and of the eudaimonological evil of those whose rights it would violate.

Government fulfils this first duty by means of a positive, entirely wise legislation which determines the rights of each citizen with strict justice and clarity, and guarantees those rights. This duty also requires tribunals to apply the law to particular cases without any hint of arbitrary judgment. The first class of governmental activity and means is that which concerns justice. It is with these means that government preserves to each his own.

This class of actions and means however is more concerned with government's duty to avoid or prevent evil rather than to do good. Our question, 'How must government exercise its influence in the production and increase of good as a whole?', presupposes government's faithful fulfilment of this first duty, and deals with later acts and means.

625. Granted therefore that the rights of all members are respected and safeguarded, we ask again: 'What more must government do to promote the good of its subjects?'

Governmental acts and means in pursuit of this aim form part of the *prudence* and *exercise of humanity* which government must practise towards the members. Thus, relative to this second class of prudent actions and means, we must ask: 'For government to be called *truly human* must its duty direct its enactments to the acquisition of the greatest possible amount of

net good in the society, or sacrifice a part of this good which humanity would enjoy so that the remaining good can be distributed among the members with greater equality?’

In my opinion, every government desirous of exercising to the highest degree its duty of humanity must first ensure that the smallest part of attainable good is not wasted, even if the good has to be accumulated in certain individuals to obtain this aim. Non-existent good is the property of no one. Government therefore does not injure anyone’s right if, with prudent means, it applies itself to the greatest possible increase of good.

Government that does this is not partial to certain individuals at the cost of others. On the contrary, this policy is the only way to treat everybody with perfect equality, and without greater affection for one individual than another.

If government arbitrarily preferred some individuals to others, it could be seen as sinning against distributive justice. But if it depends solely on external circumstances, on the nature of things, and often on the varying merit of individuals themselves, it cannot be said to act with injustice and favouritism simply because some individuals are so placed in society that they inevitably share more widely in the good which the government, without respect or favouritism for any individual, is promoting with all its force.

If government follows the rule of the greatest good, which we have indicated, and rejects the absurd principle that each person must have a perfect right to an equal portion of non-existent good (the discussion is about the most suitable means for making that good exist), it truly acknowledges in everyone an *equal right to compete* for the good. Certainly, the government does not admit any members’ right *in rem*, as it were, but it does admit an equal right *ad rem*, provided the circumstances are always the same.

626. When government acts in this way, equity and wisdom shine forth in every part of its conduct. Any government whose legislation favours the greatest production of net good becomes a government of real *progress*, the disciple of nature and minister of Providence. Such a government will strive to nurture every seed of good wherever it lies and germinates, without opposing it or suppressing it with a heavy hand as it would be obliged to do in the system of total equality. An enlightened

government of this kind will do all it can to make moral good (which it correctly values as the greatest good) the *rule* and *guide* of eudaimonological good, according to the highest principles of justice. Finally, granted the greatest quantity of net good that can be obtained from society, government will omit no effort to ensure that the greatest possible number of individuals share in this good. Enactments carried out for this end form the third class of governmental actions and means.

627. A summary glance at governmental actions and means shows them to be of three kinds, corresponding to the three aims of government, each subordinate to the other and to be achieved successively.

The first aim of government is to defend the perfect rights of the individual members of the society; the first kind of actions and means a wise government should use are those directed to this purpose.

The second aim is to ensure that the greatest possible quantity of net good, whose value must be wisely estimated, exists in the society; the second kind of actions and means are those taken to achieve this.

The third aim is to bring about the participation of the greatest possible number of individuals in the maximum quantity of good; the third kind of actions and means are those ordered by government to this effect.

Government can consider promoting the production of good only on condition that the rights of all individuals remain inviolate. Similarly, the division of this good among many individuals can be considered only on condition that the quantity of good is not diminished.

628. 1. Government professing these principles promotes the real *equality* of human beings. Under such government all individuals are equal before the law whether it aims at protecting the rights and good already possessed by individuals, or at promoting the greatest quantity of social good. Here the law acts with the impartiality of a tribunal that does not know the names of the litigants. It invites all equally to *compete*²⁸⁶ for

²⁸⁶ The word 'competition' has been much abused. *Free competition* for what is good is a human right, but *equal competition* can take place only when individuals are in the *same circumstances*.

social good; it is then the individuals' responsibility to prepare themselves to share in the good. Their favourable *stance* is partly the work of fortune, that is, of the complex of circumstances independent of human beings, and partly dependent on the action of the virtue and application of the individuals themselves; it is never the task of government. Because of its impartiality, government does not concern itself with individuals as such; it considers and invites them *in toto*, as one single thing, as humanity.

2. This kind of government is the most favourable to *real freedom*. It has no intention whatsoever of usurping and abusing nature for its own ends (which is what the ultra-radicals under discussion claim to do). In any case, this is impossible; on the contrary, such government seconds the good operation of nature and is content to remove the obstacles to the development of its seeds. It is a task of negative rather than positive action; good government does not impede but encourages as much as it can all good undertakings.

3. It is government better suited to *real progress*, for the same reason.

4. It is the most *human* government of all, because its object is the human species, not the individual.

5. It is the most *just* and *equitable* form of government, because it places defence of each individual's ownership before every beneficent act.

6. Finally, it is the most eminently *moral* government. Although competition for every good is open to all without distinction, virtuous people naturally have the greatest expectation and probability of acquiring eudaimonological good.

CHAPTER 11

Does real good necessarily produce contentment of spirit? — The distinction between absolute and relative good

629. I have dealt with the different kinds of real good and evil and the manner of their evaluation. I have also refuted the modern errors about this evaluation, indicated the absurd, disastrous consequences of these errors, and established the principles according to which a wise government must contribute to the production of the real good and evil. We must now consider the efficacy of each good we have mentioned in producing *contentment* of spirit, the necessary end of society.

630. Real good, as I have said, is suitable for producing human contentment. Hence the duty of a government to work for it. But does real good always and infallibly obtain its effect? And if not, why not? — Before answering these questions, we need to recall the distinction between *absolute* and *relative good*.

I said that absolute good is moral good, virtue and merit, and their eudaimonological appurtenances. Relative good is all other good whether physical, intellectual or simply thought of as good.

631. Absolute good can never fail to produce its favourable effect on the state of our spirit. True, complete virtue cannot fail to give us truthful, stable contentment as well as hidden joys. Furthermore, a virtuous soul enjoys good that brings in its wake admirable and excellent actions, noble thoughts and pure intentions. This effect, as I said, cannot fail, not only because the efficacy of absolute good itself is completely certain, but because the disposition of spirit necessary for allowing the effect of contentment is always present in upright people. Virtue itself disposes the spirit to be content and happy, and simultaneously bestows contentment and happiness.

632. This is not the case with relative good which can contribute to contentment only if it finds the human spirit well disposed and conditioned to receive its good effect of contentment. But it can do nothing about contentment if the spirit of the person who possesses the good lacks the necessary interior dispositions for it.

633. *Political philosophy* therefore should teach the political theorist to direct his meditation to the prior dispositions necessary to the human spirit if relative good is to contribute to the spirit's contentment. The obligation of government to make this good grow in societies rests totally on the supposition that such good does truly contribute to human contentment. Governmental wisdom has a responsibility for providing relative good for the societies it governs, but a much greater responsibility for procuring the appropriate dispositions of spirit for receiving the beneficial effect. I must therefore say a few words about these dispositions [*App.*, no. 11].

CHAPTER 12

The *capacity* of human desire

634. The dispositions of the spirit permitting or repudiating contentment depend on the level of the capacity of human desire. I must explain what I mean by 'capacity'.

Human powers, at first indistinct and at rest in the soul, are later actuated by means of the acts in which they issue. This actuation is directly proportionate to the level of development of our potency, and constitutes the quantity of efficacious *human activity*. These principles can be fittingly applied to the faculty of desire.

635. Desire in the human being is infinite. Initially however it is in a state of pure potency, and provides us with no vexatious stimulus. I certainly think that the human spirit, from its very first moments, is under some sort of tension, but a tension compressed, as it were, on all sides into immobility; lacking cognition of objects, the spirit has no way of expressing itself. Desire, under tension but compressed, constitutes the tranquillity of the first moments of life. This tension is a natural state of human activity, and no natural state causes disturbance. But desire encounters determined objects in both external stimuli and intellective perception. These objects constitute its sphere; they determine the quantity of its efficacious activity, which I call the 'capacity' of the human spirit.

636. The *capacity* of the human spirit therefore is the faculty of desire in so far as this faculty has passed from the state of pure potency to the state of efficacious activity. In this state, desire is not quiescent but continually provokes and prompts us to be satisfied; when we are not satisfied, it troubles us relentlessly. Only when the capacity of the human spirit produces these effects in the spirit does ordinary speech call it 'desire'.

637. We must also distinguish the *capacity of the spirit* from *pure sensuous instinct*. The first stage of human development comprises animal actions; at this stage only sensuous *instinct*, not desire, is active. There is pleasure and pain of body but not of spirit; inclination, irritation and needs are also present.

None of this however exceeds the sphere of animality. Sense-affections and modifications later become the objects and matter of human desire but themselves never constitute this desire. Desire is a willed activity, and will presupposes a certain development of intelligence; in a word, the human being must know in order to be able to desire and will.²⁸⁷

638. Not every act of the will is involved in the *capacity* we are discussing. Some acts are conditioned, others, absolute. If, in the case of the former, the condition is or is known to be impossible, the acts are suitably called 'wishful thinking'. If, however, the will is directed to a real, obtainable good, they are called 'volitions'. Hence not all the objects conceived by the intellect as good are willed in such a way that one of the habitual desires which constitute human capacity arises in us. The intellect can judge two objects as good but see them as incompatible, so that the acquisition of one excludes the acquisition of the other. The will naturally prefers the one it loves more and abandons the other. It forms an absolute act, a complete volition, relative to the object it loves more, but only a mere wish relative to the other. In this case, its act depends on an impossible condition, namely, the condition that it does not will what in practice the will judges to be the best thing.

Capacity therefore is formed by absolute volitions which tend to the objects made prevalent among incompatibles by our practical judgment.

639. If corporeal feeling prevails in us, we desire its objects and they become part of our *capacity*. If the stronger principle of intelligence dominates, the pleasure of the senses ceases to be part of our *capacity* whenever such pleasure contradicts a spiritual good, although our physical instinct longs for it as before. The pleasure, despite its being valued as good by the intelligence, is not desired because it has ceased to be the aim of the prevailing act of the will, the personal act: the person of the human being no longer wills it.²⁸⁸ Hence, we should not be surprised if the same object is seen to be worthy of human hatred and love, fear and hope. Death, so feared by the sybarite that the word itself provokes death, becomes an object of

²⁸⁷ Cf. c. 2.

²⁸⁸ Cf. c. 3.

triumph keenly sought by the Roman who sacrifices himself for the fatherland; extravagance, Lucullus' one desire, would have been intolerable in the eyes of a Curius or Cato.

CHAPTER 13

Satisfied and unsatisfied capacity

640. As *capacity* opens up more and more through the development of the powers, the human spirit becomes susceptible of pleasant or painful new states.

If *capacity* is not satisfied by the objects presented to it, the spirit becomes troubled, wretched, deprived. On the other hand, if *capacity* is satisfied through the acquisition and enjoyment of the objects it longs for, human desire is appeased, and we have the state of spirit I have called contentment.

CHAPTER 14

Errors of the sensists in rejecting the different degrees of capacity and contentment

641. Melchiorre Gioia, in his *Prospetto delle scienze economiche*,²⁸⁹ defends the benefit of luxury goods in making human beings happy. As proof he lays down the principle that ‘the need to feel can be regarded as a constant quantity.’ From this he deduces that the need to feel is calmed and satisfied in proportion to the pleasure indulged in.

This proposition clearly contradicts daily experience, which continually offers examples of people in whom the desire for pleasure is stimulated by pleasure; the more we abandon ourselves to the desire, the more it increases.

642. Even if our discussion were restricted solely to physical feeling, we could easily show how such feeling is subject to disorders caused by the abuse of pleasure, which often renders physical feeling voracious and insatiably greedy. Each of the senses of an animal, beginning with taste, may go wrong even to the point of causing the animal’s death, because of the deception caused by the vivacity and precipitation with which the instinct, produced by the sense, acts. The American Indians, who as a people drank themselves to death, are only one of the innumerable daily cases that demonstrate how contentment is impossible for any branch whatever of uncontrolled physical feeling.²⁹⁰

643. What the sensists cannot understand or accept is the distinction between *physical feeling* and *human capacity*. They systematically reduce all human powers to corporeal feeling and so cannot possibly form a correct concept of human desire, which does not stem from feeling but from understanding. Because they consider desire as part of the sensuous instinct

²⁸⁹ Cf. bk. 2, c. 1, *Sui Consumi*.

²⁹⁰ I have discussed the deviation of the physical instinct in *AMS*, 401–415, 669–682, 687–688. — The law for an animal in a healthy state is: ‘An animal is never driven by instinct to obtain an actual pleasure harmful to its nature.’ In a healthy animal this harm is felt beforehand and avoided by abstinence from what are otherwise pleasant actions and objects.

alone, they are incapable of grasping the tremendous extension attainable by human capacity. The sensuous instinct can indeed be excited and become ravenous to the point of rage but it does not extend even to the tiniest part of the extension of human capacity.

644. Human capacity, we said, extends to all the real or imaginary objects that the understanding can conceive as good. But this good is infinite. Human capacity therefore can increase *ad infinitum*, and its various extensions can be infinite in number. Sensists forget entirely to observe and evaluate these wonderful phenomena of the human spirit. Their immense poverty of thought leads them to a facile belief that 'the need to feel is a constant quantity.'

645. Philosophers as short-sighted as this, and equipped with such inexact observations, cannot form an accurate concept of *contentment*. For them, only the *need of physical sensations*, not the *capacity of human desire*, exists; they accept only actual physical pleasure which necessarily brings with it satisfaction of the need to feel. Consequently they are incapable of conceiving the state of contentment that arises when some capacity is satisfied. But even if the need of physical feeling were completely satisfied, we could still be very unhappy. Many people, endowed superabundantly with all the means necessary for satisfying every physical yearning, acknowledge their misery by taking their own lives.

646. We must conclude therefore:

1. The *extensions of human capacity are infinite*, because capacity can vary in extension according to the number of willed objects we crave and want, and according to the quality and nature of the objects which can at times have a finite or infinite value.

2. *A different contentment corresponds to each extension of capacity*. When all our capacity, small or great, is content, our contentment is complete. But the greater our capacity, the richer our contentment in internal delight. The number of our possible ways of contentment are therefore infinite and, although differing in the abundance of good they generate in the human spirit, are all states in which human desire has found peace.

3. When our capacity lacks complete satisfaction, it

constitutes a state of human unhappiness; *states of unhappiness are as many as the capacities themselves*, that is, they too are infinite.

4. Finally, *there are other states between the state of unhappiness and that of contentment*. In these the spirit has a capacity which is neither entirely satisfied nor entirely devoid of satisfaction. This state varies according to the proportion between the satisfied and unsatisfied parts of our capacity. It is a mixture of pleasure and pain because the human being rejoices at the point where his human capacity is full, but suffers where it is absent.

CHAPTER 15

The two political systems of RESISTANCE and MOVEMENT

647. A human spirit that has obtained contentment of its capacity is at rest. Hence, a peaceful state of rest in civil society must naturally result from the principle we have established that 'governmental wisdom must work to procure contentment of spirit for the governed'.

648. But we are faced immediately with a specious objection which, although not solid (as we shall soon see), merits very careful, detailed examination by political philosophers. This examination is necessary to justify and complete the doctrine of contentment as the purpose of governmental wisdom. The objection comes from decent people, who fervently support the *progress* of humanity and whose intentions I accept as truly human and beneficent.

649. They argue: 'Progress can be made only through movement. But in a political administration where all spirits are fully content, movement is no longer possible. Progress, therefore is impossible.' They conclude that the aim of a wise government's enactments is not to content the spirit of all the citizens but to sow disquiet, because disquiet is the mother of activity and consequently of advancement.

650. To many others, equally decent because of their benevolent disposition towards humanity, this argument seems totally absurd. They argue: 'Progress which keeps the human spirit constantly discontent and restless is not beneficial. If human desires go unfulfilled, the people are continually unhappy. This is clearly an abuse of the word "progress". Some people may be happy to restrict the word solely to good, but evil as well as good makes progress in human reality, where incessant corruption goes hand in hand with ceaseless generation, as in nature itself. While some nations move rapidly to corruption and dissolution, others emerge strong and rich from the ruins like a new green plant sprouting from detritus.

Dying and emerging nations are certainly in motion, because nothing is static in this world. And movement to ruin is as rapid

as that towards glory. History teaches that nations in their final stages do not simply move; they hurl themselves into the abyss, while new-born nations rise, even if slowly, to the heights of long-lasting glory. *Movement* therefore is one thing; *progress*, understood in a right sense, is another.'

They conclude: 'We are opposed to disordered movement; we want progress in good. This good, if we are not mistaken, is simply the promotion of contentment and repose of spirit; it consists in nothing else. However, this state of contentment of spirit is never fully achieved in society; consequently there is need for progress towards it.'

651. We see therefore that people who desire the good of humanity follow opposite paths and fight irreconcilably for two directly opposed political systems, *movement*, as it is called, on the one hand; *resistance* on the other. The reader will notice that I have disregarded minor points and kept to the fundamental theory of the two groups, and that I have presented their systems in the most favourable light.

Let us examine the systems and see how they relate to our theory.

CHAPTER 16

The most frequent errors of supporters of both systems

652. If we consider impartially the group who support the system of resistance, we can generally say that they do not always give progress in good the importance it deserves. The group increases if we add to it all those peaceful people who, ignorant of political theories, simply desire not to be disturbed in their chosen way of life and family customs. Very often, because of sad experience, evil effects them more than hope of good.

653. The class of political theorists supporting movement is composed of writers and thinkers whose errors are expressed with greater precision, and could be called scientific errors. The proximate origin of these errors is a ceaseless abuse of abstraction. In their calculations these theorists neglect much real, observable data and are content to formulate a doctrine composed of pure generalities.

As a result, they substitute *progress in general* (something purely abstract) for *progress in good* (something real). They further confuse the idea of *progress* with the idea of *movement* by adding one abstraction after another. Seeing that all progress implies movement, they conclude that all movement is progress, and use this sophism to fabricate their theory of social movement.

654. This theory reached a point at which the extremely general word 'movement' replaced the word 'progress'. People lost sight of the difference between going forward and not backward. In other words, they could no longer distinguish between progress and movement. This would have been sufficient to mark the theory as absurd if it had not been supported by another ingenious proposition, by another more elevated theory pertaining to the history of mankind, which claimed on behalf of the principle of social movement that 'humanity of its nature always goes forward, never backwards; every movement applied to the social body (movement which impels the body forwards, never backwards) must therefore be useful.' This theory does indeed flatter human vanity, but is it true? Let us see.

CHAPTER 17

Continuation: the law governing the progress of the human race

655. If we say that the human race always goes forwards and simply mean that the chain of causes and effects is never interrupted, we should also note that a new cause, human freedom, incessantly reveals itself in human affairs alongside the uninterrupted chain.

No matter how limited the action of this cause in human affairs,²⁹¹ each of its actions undoubtedly sets off a series of new causes and effects which, like all the other series, perpetuates itself uninterruptedly.

656. But leaving that aside, the chain of causes and effects does not in itself prove the necessity of progress in humanity. To do this we would have to show that the effects of the successive causes are always better than previous effects.

We are told that the continual movement of actions and effects presupposes constant *development* of nature and the human race. But even the idea of development, as I have said, does not of itself include a continual passage from a less good state to a better state. If we keep to the analogy provided by nature, the opposite would seem to take place: we would seem to have a law of perpetual succession of good and bad states. Although everything that has reached maturity becomes subject to corruption, and dies after passing through the stages of corruption, it is reborn from the seed preserved and fertilised during corruption. Thus, we can reasonably say that nature goes round in ceaselessly changing circles, whereas our philosophers maintain that humanity always progresses in a straight line.

657. Nor can necessary progress in good be proved *a priori* by recourse to the higher government of divine providence. First of all, we would have to show that such progress is the most conformable to the supreme wisdom and goodness with which Providence guides all events. Although we fully agree that the

²⁹¹ Cf. *AMS*, 650–763 for the limits of human freedom.

entire sum of events must be the realisation of a supremely wise and good plan,²⁹² it would be entirely gratuitous to say that the supposed continual progress in good is undeniably the best realisation of the sublime plan. Rather, this assertion indicates human short-sightedness, which takes account only of parts succeeding each other and not of the whole in its final completed state. Consequently, we cannot imagine anything better than the need to see the links in the chain of things which pass before our eyes made more attractive and perfect during the short time we see them. But the case is totally different for the supreme Being. Because his purpose is not any transitory state of things but a final optimum state, he acts and governs things in such a way that transitory states must finally result in an ultimate, imperishable state of perfect beauty and perfection. Hence his wisdom is not bound by the childish system of progress which reduces every good to increased perfection in the transitory states of things. The only value these states have in themselves is in relationship to the last state, which they serve as means. So-called necessary progress cannot therefore be proved *a priori*. Even if it could, it would not provide us with a rule for sound political theory because the action of both human beings and government would be useless in the case of fixed, inevitable progress.

²⁹² The plan of Providence, although formed from eternity, does not violate the truth of human freedom. It is certainly not easy to understand how the predestination of events can be reconciled with freedom. On the other hand, nothing is more obvious for someone who knows the nature of freedom and God's eternal plan. God sees and desires this plan in its final realisation, because all future things are present to him. But the final realisation of the plan involves a state in which human freedom has finished operating; freedom is no longer involved when events have happened — they are necessary. On the other hand, freedom operates before the event, because it consists in the choice of volitions (cf. *AMS*, 636–646). *Freedom* and the *plan of God* therefore are never in opposition or conflict. The *plan of God* is the end; *freedom*, the means with which the plan is executed. It may be objected, 'How does God know that a particular means will act to bring about a particular end, if the means is free?' The apparent insolubility of this question consists in the impropriety of the future tense, 'will bring about'. God knows not only the will that *will act* but the will that *acts*; his knowledge, unlike ours, is not conditioned: *omnia nuda et aperta sunt oculis eius* [all things are naked and open to his eyes].

658. These observations, however, are not intended to deny the *perfectibility* of human beings and of society. It is an important truth and a dogma of Christianity²⁹³ that human beings are continually perfectible. What we completely deny is that their *attainment of perfection* is necessary and fixed, as the supporters of movement ardently imagine.

Thinkers who tried to maintain that progress is rectilinear, rejecting the authority and clear opposition of history, were obliged to interpret events in the strangest way; worse still, they had to exclude (as Condorcet did) the most certain norms of morality, frequently calling 'good' the most unspeakable immoralities.²⁹⁴

659. But if humanity is continually moving and developing, what is the line which expresses this process?

First of all, we must distinguish the movement of humanity from the movement of individual societies.

Even if the movement of all humanity were shown to move forward consistently in a straight line, this would not allow us to form a rule for the good government of particular societies. A State government must carefully encourage its people to move forward in good. If it allowed good to be lost or diminished, the excuse that this was for the benefit of the human race would be useless; the government's administration would still be extremely defective.

660. How then do individual societies and how does the entire body of humanity, make progress?

I have said that particular societies continually fluctuate between the two limits of destruction and perfection.²⁹⁵ The art of good government would seem to consist entirely in avoiding the former and drawing closer to the latter.

The line generally followed by the movement of humanity is classified in three ways:

²⁹³ *'Perfectibility'* means 'able to be perfected'; *making perfect* is the real attainment of new degrees of perfection.

²⁹⁴ It is well known how Condorcet claimed to foresee (granted the progress he expected in moral ideas) that human beings would think it very praiseworthy not to deprive themselves of the pleasures of the senses while avoiding the troublesome burden of too many children!

²⁹⁵ Cf. Introduction of this work.

1. Condorcet makes it rectilinear — I have refuted this.

2. Vico claims that it moves in a circular fashion with periodic regression or going back on itself.²⁹⁶

3. Fichte, more subtle than the others and after them, thought that humanity, moving in a spiral, did not go back completely on itself but curved over spaces already covered; certain differences distinguished the former from the latter spaces.

I will say nothing about the first system because it is entirely arbitrary. Relative to the other two, we must first ask whether we are dealing with a movement of humanity within the sphere of moral and eudaimonological good or with merely intellectual movement.

In the case of moral and eudaimonological good, the problem is so abstruse and multiple that human beings could never be sure if their conjectures were even probable. We will limit ourselves therefore to the movement of humanity within the sphere of intellectual development, and to the corresponding external forms of society.

Vico's system is founded on too narrow an observation. He limits himself to the development of the ancient nations. Such an exclusive study of the Latin classics kept him unaware of the social omnipotence of Christianity.

Fichte's opinion is certainly clever. While he allows for the well-known dictum, *nil sub sole novum* [there is nothing new under the sun], he also acknowledges the equally famous principle: 'Things never reproduce themselves in exactly the same way.' Nevertheless the German philosopher's principle is too undetermined; we need to know what spiral he is talking about, and in which direction human society moves in it.

661. My own opinion is that human society, supported by Christianity, moves 'in a spiral whose curves become wider and wider; the movement begins near the centre and continues in ever greater spirals, without our being able to assign any necessary limit to their size.' The law governing the ever-increasing size of the spirals is a great question for the *History of humanity*. But this is not necessary for our present purpose.

²⁹⁶ Vico speaks of nations, but considers them in general

CHAPTER 18

Continuation: another error of politicians who support movement

662. The only thing that politicians who support movement can draw from absurd theories are even more absurd practical consequences and at the same time disastrous for society. Having confused good, well-ordered progress with *movement* of any kind, they inevitably conclude that all means are good if they help to move and stimulate society.

I have no doubt that evils and unfulfilled needs sometimes excite movement and stimulation in the human spirit and in human actions. But no rule of government could be more strange and contradictory than that which requires the needs of citizens to remain unfulfilled in order to keep society in continual motion! This political doctrine is as absurd as that of medical science which claimed as the best rule of medicine the promotion of continual, orderless and unmeasured movements in the human body, simply because observation reveals that life consists in ceaseless motion or in an incessant movement accompanying life. Nevertheless we should not be surprised if political theorists refuse to disown these consequences; they do in fact teach openly everything I have said. The following is how one of our authors requires government to make progress in social civilisation:

The primary means for furthering the civilisation of a country consist in increasing the intensity and quantity of needs, and the knowledge of the objects which satisfy these needs. The sum of desires is always greater than the total of the objects acquired. Consequently, increasing desires keeps human beings in a constant state of hunger, which then become a cause of perpetual motion.²⁹⁷

663. We see here how *perpetual motion* is considered almost

²⁹⁷ M. Gioia, *Prospetto delle Scienze Economiche*. — This principle of Gioia contradicts his other principle that ‘physical sensitivity can be considered as a constant quantity’, if we remember that in his sensistic system every need pertains to physical feeling.

synonymous with *progress towards civilisation*. Everything is achieved, it seems, by striving to promote perpetual motion, without the least effort to define the quality and quantity of the movement itself.

We also see in this system how contentment of spirit counts for nothing; only transitory sensations are considered valuable. This is a consequence of all sensist systems. No spirit exists when the total human being is reduced to corporeal feelings; it is impossible therefore to find the desirable state of spirit which I have defined as *contentment*.

664. This doctrine directly contradicts good, common sense which has always judged human beings unhappy in proportion to their unfulfilled desires.

Furthermore, it contains all that is base and immoral. Just as virtue brings peace of spirit and moderates desires, so vice causes unrest and immoderate desires. Virtue values habitual contentment of state as a stable good, whereas vice seeks transitory, intense and often tumultuous sensations which leave the spirit full of bitterness and blind wishes that continually recur independently of the will.

The politics of movement, as formulated in the principle: 'government must strive to increase unfulfilled needs so that a painful state is always present to stimulate human beings to perpetual motion', goes hand in glove with vice and excludes virtue as useless, even harmful, to the State solely because virtue generates tranquillity and peace.

Finally, the doctrine is far too inhuman and cruel; it tortures human beings for the miserable pleasure of seeing them move. Political theorists supporting it can fittingly be likened to cruel children who take great delight in hitting, wounding and dismembering some tiny animal; they want to see it twitch convulsively in response to their blows and slashes, and finally die after a succession of long, drawn-out tortures.

CHAPTER 19

Continuation: the third system, in addition to the systems of resistance and movement

665. The systems of *resistance* and *movement* were applied, and experience judged them. The effect of the system of *resistance* was to pave the way for the system of *movement*. Though seemingly contradictory, this is true.

If we want human beings to give themselves up to unbridled freedom, all we need do is over-restrain them. If we want them to produce insane, convulsive movements, we need only insist on perfect quiet. Whether they are restrained or forcibly kept quiet, the effect of their movement and of their freedom from unnatural repressions will be violent, disordered and blind. They can be subdued only much later, after working off the powerful will for action that everyone feels. In the meantime, unrest will seem the best thing in the world, and become the political system of movement. This was the system in the last century; the system of resistance belonged to preceding centuries

666. If the system of resistance naturally produces the system of movement, what does movement produce? In practice, it produces a third political system, a declared enemy of all progress towards civilisation and of society, the system of Rousseau.

First of all, authors conceived the principle that *becoming civilised* consists in *perpetual motion*. It was then thought that this movement of all the people would suffice to achieve the perfection of society; it did not matter whether they moved forwards or backwards, straight ahead or sideways, in an orderly way or jammed together. Next, the theory became reality. No one could remain quietly at their work any longer: everybody without exception had to be up and about replacing their neighbour, hyperactive, confused and driven by the intense stimuli of their ardent, implacable passions. After seeing all this, what thoughts will eventually penetrate the hearts of the exhausted actors and spectators? Having often heard what everyone was already thinking — that perfection, civilisation and progress is

simply the rough conflict of the perpetual motion they see, whose knocks and unpleasantness they experience, and to which they retaliate as much as they can — it will be quite natural for them to become enemies of human perfectibility, social progress and the attainment of civilisation.

It was in the 18th century that the system of movement produced its effects in the human spirit and in a dissolute society that vainly passed off its profound moral corruption as civilised refinement. It should come as no surprise therefore that Rousseau, the perfect 18th century man, 'was forced to agree that this distinctive, almost unlimited faculty of perfectibility was the source of all human troubles.' It was impossible for him not to have the confused idea of *perfectibility* common to his century; he could define perfectibility only as 'the faculty which, with the passage of time, reveals the insights and errors, the vices and virtues of human beings, and ultimately turns people into tyrants over themselves and nature.'²⁹⁸

We see here how *perfectibility* is confused with *deteriorability*. Rousseau is defining the general motion and development of human beings and society rather than the motion and development which perfect people. Once again, we are not surprised to find that human beings, saddened and disillusioned by all that is called the way to civilisation (it was really

²⁹⁸ *Discours sur l'inégalité*. — Rousseau was greatly blamed for having said, 'Human beings are born good; society corrupts them'. Understood literally, the statement certainly contains two exaggerations. On the one hand, it exalts exaggeratedly the origin of human beings; on the other, it undervalues society by recognising its power to debase, but not perfect human beings. But we must remember that the words of Jean Jacques are those of an impassioned orator; we cannot expect to find philosophical exactitude or the rigour of truth in them. Wishing to debase society, he exalts the human being; straightaway, forgetting or not caring what he has said, he acknowledges initial human corruption. If he thinks he has an opportunity to let his eloquence shine, he does not fail to exaggerate the innate corruption of our species. In the discourse I have quoted (*Discours à l'Académie de Dijon*) he says, 'Human beings are wicked. They would have been worse if they had the misfortune to be born learned.' Elsewhere: 'Before art had purified our behaviour and taught our passions to speak becoming language, our mores were primitive but natural. Difference in behaviour indicated at first sight a difference in character. BASICALLY, HUMAN NATURE WAS NOT AT ALL BETTER, but people found their safety in the ease with which they knew each other. This benefit, whose value we do not appreciate, protected them from many vices.'

corruption), should regret the faculty, so badly understood by their times, of perfecting themselves. This faculty

had drawn human beings out of their innate stupidity and ignorance, a primitive state in which they would not have differed from animals. Like animals, however, they would have roamed the forests at least contented and innocent.²⁹⁹

667. We can now see the link between the three exclusive systems under discussion, each of which successively dominates.

Human beings take care first of all to preserve what they have. Those who possess good things and power want to stop time; they fight energetically against it in order not to lose what in fact time will carry off. This is the system of resistance which, while it tends to *conserve*, sins both through excessive desire to preserve everything old and through the means used for this end. The means employed become more and more stringent and arbitrary and therefore more violent and hostile to the natural, legitimate progress of human affairs. Eventually, humanity in its unbearable frustration sunders its bonds like a maddened beast and leaps forward.

668. Immediately, however, the system of *movement* appears. Engendered by anger rather than reason, it also sins through excess, making society function without any moral purpose. Because the restrictions have been shattered, everybody thinks that all has been achieved; they are content with movement (the means), but neglectful of good (the end). The fact that they are moving is sufficient to make them think they have all that is necessary for the journey. But their hopes are not fulfilled: the most they obtain from the random movement is only an apparent, superficial refinement. Interiorly they remain deeply corrupt; the entire society, dressed outwardly like a society lady in fine, delicate attire, conceals its open, infected wounds.

These wounds are levity, pride, falsity and rank, calculated dissolution. But the society has a thousand courtesans who praise its practices and enjoy its wayward customs. Finally someone, perhaps from among those who had been happy to go along with society, is disaffected and weary of its smug appearances. He loudly proclaims the hidden defects of his former

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

lover, revealing the rotten, decaying interior under cover of the finery. All are invited to witness the corruption. For Rousseau and people like him, the cities are like fetid tombs, which they desert contemptuously for the ancient forest. And from their contempt they form a political system, stranger but no more culpable than the other two, claiming that they must completely destroy the illegitimate system produced by movement.

669. The first of these three systems can be called the system of *excessive conservation*, the second, the system of *excessive production*, and the third, the system of *destruction*. We need not stop to consider the last, which is more a lamentation than a system. We will take the first two and continue to consider them relative to contentment of spirit.

CHAPTER 20

Continuation: does an increase in needs greater than the means for satisfying them obtain always and necessarily the effect claimed by political theorists who support movement?

670. Although our observations clearly demonstrate the imperfection of the politics of movement, we need to continue our investigation of this system which still has a large number of supporters.

Its root vice, as we noted, is to value only external good and transitory pleasure, not contentment of spirit. Clearly, however, every time an external good does not satisfy, it is not a good — even pagan antiquity saw this.³⁰⁰

671. We leave this aside, however, and take for granted not only that the object of our investigation is material good but that peoples' progress in civilisation depends on this sole good. We ask whether it is a good rule, as suggested, to act in such a way that people's needs should increase more than the means of satisfying them on the grounds that the people, stimulated by their unsatisfied needs, will better develop their activity and increase their industry? Will such a means always and necessarily obtain the desired effect? And will the civilisation of peoples increase in proportion to the total, unsatisfied needs?

³⁰⁰ Cicero recognises that material benefits which do not content the human spirit are not good: 'Whom do we take to be rich? To which human being do we attribute the quality of wealth? In my opinion, to the person whose possessions are such that he is easily CONTENT with a free life in which he neither looks nor longs for nor desires anything further. OUR OWN SOUL must judge us rich, not others' opinion. It is our soul that must calculate that nothing is wanting, nothing further need be sought. If we are content and consider the money we have sufficient, we are, without doubt, rich. But if on the other hand our greed for money makes every gain good, if we cheat every day, deceive, beg, negotiate, purloin, steal — are these signs of a person who abounds or of someone in need? It is the human spirit that must be called rich, not the strong-box; as long as I see you empty, I will not consider you rich, no matter how full the safe is' (Parad. 6). Fine passages like this are frequent in the noblest authors of antiquity. The Stoa has the merit of having best formulated and clarified the truth of such noble teaching.

The rule is presented to us in all its simplicity and generality. Any possible exceptions of course should be indicated so that injudicious use of them in certain cases may not produce the opposite of what is claimed. Let us see if the rule is constantly verified in reality, as the supporters of movement imagine in theory. The effect intended by use of the rule is to civilise people. So let us first see how this is effected when applied to peoples who are still at the lowest stage relative to civilisation.

672. English settlers in North America made use of the rule in their contacts with the Indians of the West, who as hunters had few needs and were easily contented. The colonists caused many intense needs in the indigenous population without providing an equal portion of means suitable for satisfying the needs. What were the effects produced in the tribes by this increase in needs? Not civilisation, as we all know, but irreparable extermination.

673. An author who observed and attentively reflected on these people³⁰¹ describes the event as follows:

All the Indian tribes who inhabited the territory of New England, the Narragansets, Mohicans and Pecots are only a memory. The Lenapes who 150 years ago welcomed Penn on the banks of the Delaware, have disappeared today. I met the last of the Iroquois; they were asking for alms. Some time ago all these nations extended to the coast; today one has to cover 100 leagues into the interior of the continent to find one Indian. This primitive people have not simply withdrawn, they have been destroyed.³⁰²

This is the fact; let us look at the causes:

When the Indians lived in the deserts from which today they are banned, their needs were few. They made their own weapons; their only drink was water from the rivers; their only clothing, the skins of the animals whose flesh they ate.

The Europeans introduced guns, iron and whisky among the indigenous peoples of North America; they taught them to add

³⁰¹ Tocqueville.

³⁰² Today there are no more than 6273 Indians in the original 13 States of the Union.

our clothing to the rudimentary covering which up to that time had satisfied their Indian simplicity.

674. Thus Europeans stimulated new needs in them, as prescribed by the political theory of movement. The objects required for satisfying these new needs did not keep abreast of the needs, as the theory required. Let us see if this made the Indians more civilised:

Although the Indians developed new tastes, they did not learn the art of satisfying them. They had to turn to the industry of the Whites. The only exchange they could offer for the goods they were unable to make were the rich hides supplied by their forests. From that moment their hunting had to provide for the frivolous passions of Europe as well as for their own needs. They no longer pursued the beasts of the forest simply to feed themselves, but to procure the only objects of exchange they could give us.

In this way, as their needs gradually grew, their means continued to diminish.

675. Increased needs therefore do not always mean increased industry for satisfying the needs, as the system we are examining supposes. The supposition that human beings are always stimulated to industrious activity by the pressure of increased needs is false. In certain circumstances the pressure only produces impoverishment and even extreme misery of peoples, who give up even what is necessary for their existence in order to satisfy the irresistible urgency of their needs. The reduction of things necessary for existence means reduced population. Needs increased under these circumstances are more capable of destroying poor, primitive peoples than civilising and enriching them.

The American Indians are forced to offer hides to the Europeans in order to satisfy the new needs aroused in them by the proximity of Europeans. To be able to offer the skins, they must destroy beasts, but these, either having been destroyed or having fled the intensified war against them, no longer range the territories. Consequently, the lands become useless to the hunter-Indians. Finally, they sell their land at a low price because the hides are not sufficient to satisfy their new needs, and thus lose even the ground over which they wandered.

Let us continue with the description of the effects of the political doctrine that forms the object of our attention. It was applied to the Indians not to civilise but despoil them of their worldly possessions, their forests and their fertile wilderness:

Today the dispossession of the Indians is often carried out in a regular and almost legal way.

When the European population begins to settle closer to the wilderness occupied by a primitive nation, the United States government normally sends a solemn embassy. The Whites convene the Indians on a large plain, and after eating and drinking with them, say, 'What are you doing here in the land of your fathers? Very soon you will have to dig up their bones to live. How is this region better than another? Are forests, swamps and plains not found elsewhere? Could you not live under another sun? Beyond those mountains that you see on the horizon, and beyond this place which limits your territory on the west, other regions spread out where wild animals roam in abundance. Sell us your land; go and live happily in those places.' After this harangue, they immediately display to the Indians guns, woollen clothes, barrels of whisky, glass necklaces, bangles, earrings and mirrors.

If, despite the sight of all these riches, the Indians hesitate, it is intimated that they cannot refuse the consent asked of them and that in a short time the government itself will be unable to guarantee them the enjoyment of their rights. What choice have they? Half convinced, half forced, the Indians withdraw. They go and live in new wildernesses where the Whites will certainly not leave them in peace for ten years. This is how the Americans acquire for a despicable price entire provinces of a value that not even the richest sovereigns of Europe could pay.³⁰³

³⁰³ 'On the 30th May 1830, Mr. Ed. Everett stated in the Chamber of Representatives that 'the Americans had already acquired, by treaty, 230,000,000 acres to the east and west of the Mississippi.'

'In 1808, the Osage ceded 48,000,000 acres for \$1000.' 'In 1818, the Quapaws ceded 29,000,000 acres for \$4000.'

'On the 24th February 1830, Mr. Bell, reporting to Congress for the committee for Indian affairs, said, "In order to appropriate the wilderness, we have developed the practice of paying the Indian tribes the value of their hunting ground after the animals have already fled or been destroyed." The price the Americans intend to pay the primitive occupants is not the value of

676. I will quote part of an official report to Congress made by Clark and Lewis Cass on the 4th February 1829. The document is furnished by the author whose words I have just quoted. This description of the way the Americans persuade the Indians to sell their lands demonstrates very clearly how increased needs blind peoples, particularly simple peoples, and ruin them through the passions aroused in them, rather than develop their intelligence and lead them along the path of commendable industry, as some people think:

When the Indians reach the place where the treaty is to be made, they are poor and almost naked. They look at and ponder a large number of valuable objects brought by the American merchants. The women and children want their needs provided for and they torment the men with a thousand irksome requests, exerting all their influence to obtain the sale of the lands. The Indians' lack of foresight is habitual and invincible; their irresistible passion is to provide for and satisfy their immediate needs and instant desires; expectation of future benefits has little influence on them. They readily forget the past and have no worry for the future. If their needs cannot be satisfied immediately, it is useless to ask them to give up a portion of their territory.³⁰⁴

677. These facts teach us something about human nature and show how vague and general is the abstract theory that peoples' needs must be increased if their industry and civilised condition is to be increased. The theory therefore can very often be extremely harmful in practice.

678. The real facts presented by human nature and ignored by the theory are the following:

1. Unsatisfied *needs* generate *passions* in those in whom the needs are stimulated. Passions, instead of enlightening the intellect, darken and confuse it. On the other hand, industrious effort makes intelligence increase rather than diminish or become false. Whenever new needs cause strong, impetuous passions, they drive us on in a false, harmful direction.

the land but the *right of occupancy*, as it is possessed by those whose only profit from the land is to walk on it and sleep there.

³⁰⁴ *Documents législatifs du Congrès*, doc. 117.

2. Stimulated needs can be satisfied in different ways, each way having either no consequences, or good consequences, or finally harmful consequences. For example, I can satisfy my needs by honest labour or stealing. In the first case, in the very act of providing for my need, I obtain the benefit of increased industry together with all the good proper to an industrious life. In the case of stealing, I still provide for my need but worsen my moral state and incur all the evils resulting from immorality. There are therefore several ways of satisfying my needs, some good in their consequences, others evil. The needs I experience cannot be a cause of good for me unless I am in a state in which I *know* how to satisfy and *am able* and *want* to satisfy my needs by upright, useful means.

The Indian, for example, because he lacks *foresight*, does not even *know* how to choose industrious effort as a means for supplying his needs; he thus relies on the disastrous sale of his lands. Without sufficient *dominion over himself* to defer the satisfaction of his desires for even a short time (which would demand industrious effort), and because any delay would be unbearable, he *is unable* to choose the best means; instead, he chooses the worst and sells the only wealth he possesses and his only sustenance on earth. Finally, evil people choose immoral means to satisfy their increased need because such a means is easier, more convenient and, above all, more conformable to their evil character. They do not choose good means because they do not *wish* to do choose them. Granted these undeniable facts and granted the increase in artificial needs of improvident peoples, the effect is ruination. — If we increase the artificial needs of peoples of childish, unpredictable instincts, as uncivilised peoples must be, the effect is the same. — If we increase the needs of corrupt peoples, the effect will be to hasten their material ruin simultaneously with the rapid increase and deepening of their immorality.

679. We must note that there is no nation, no matter how civilised and cultured, that does not contain deep within itself 1. people entirely or partly deficient in foresight, 2. people who because of age or character have very childish, unpredictable tastes, 3. immoral people.

680. Clearly, therefore, the increase of needs brought about by the government of any nation whatsoever will produce a

fatal effect (in other words, an increase of misery and immorality) in these three classes of persons.

Wise politics must take into account this inevitable effect, which produces an increase of desires and of needs stimulated artificially in every nation. It is also clear that the harm done to the State by increasing the needs and desires of the people is in direct proportion to the number of people in the three classes.

681. The harmful effect produced by every artificial increase of needs explains a fact constantly and manifestly visible in the most civilised nations, particularly the capitals of Europe. In our magnificent capitals, of which we are proud, extreme misery is seen alongside excessive wealth, the most monstrous immorality alongside social virtues. This fact loses its mystery if we consider that in large cities and nations artificial needs together with intense desires are increased much more than in any other place. The excessive increase of these needs and desires necessarily produces the greatest misery and immorality in proportion to the large number of inhabitants who belong to one or other of the three classes I have mentioned.

682. If we were to keep children ignorant of artificial needs so that they lacked the intense desires consequent upon these needs, they would have no cause for lack of submission and affection for their parents, as becomes their nature, or for not living peacefully in their families. On the other hand, if these needs, together with the desires for satisfying them, are stimulated in the young, they will turn to stealing at home, to gambling and other illegitimate ways of obtaining their goal because they lack the legitimate means of satisfying their desires during their period of education. Increasing the number of artificial needs in the young is the same as causing disquiet and rancour in them, turning them away from decent, helpful education, which the parents want, and setting them on the road of immorality and corruption.

If the poor who could not work were ignorant of artificial needs, they would live peacefully and harmlessly off the little alms they received from the charity of others. But once they have the will to live in better conditions, their honestly received alms will no longer be enough; they will turn to thieving and contribute to human vice by prostitution, procurement and other despicable means of making money. Increasing the

e number of artificial needs in the poor therefore is the same as 1. increasing the number of thieves and consequently reducing the security of the property of honest-living citizens, 2. increasing the number of victims of dissolute living, 3. increasing the number of slaves of vice and making vice easier for all, 4. initiating a division and intestine war between the different classes of citizens — the poor, sunken in immorality and despicable, become not only incapable of escaping their miserable state but repugnant in the eyes of the other classes, obnoxious and inimical to society and deserving destruction rather than aid; they are full of hatred and are hated in turn. The loss of compassion towards the poor, an inevitable result of hardening of heart on the part of both classes, is an immeasurable injury to the moral and peaceful state of society.

683. In the case of other classes, the peasant and artisan know only those needs that are satisfied by working the ground or by daily earnings. Both live content in their families and enjoy domestic happiness. If their needs increase by one degree such that (according to the best possible hypothesis) they can satisfy their needs with a little more effort and care, they will feel no hardship, because the greater effort manages to satisfy their needs. The hypothesis of course applies only to individuals who are well used to the habit of work; others do not feel the same stimulus, which perhaps only helps to increase their evil and wickedness.

Peasants, artisans and manufacturers, therefore, who have been used to labour, respond to new needs with increased effort. Is this increase in effort good or evil? — Clearly, if the families of peasants and wage-earners are obliged to make an excessive effort to supply their needs, they become subject to a heavier burden and greater poverty. Excessive work, necessary for supplying their needs, finally becomes oppressive and unbecoming to human nature. Dissatisfaction with work itself sets in, and bodily strength is no longer conserved but dissipated. If anyone falls ill in the house or is unemployed, the reduction in income causes more intense, and perhaps even fatal worry. In other words, the more tired this class of people becomes, the more tempted they are to abandon the work in order to look for some means which can offer an immediate way to satisfaction without such oppression.

684. The previous case concerned artificial needs which have increased by only one level. What will be the effect if they increase by another level? — The first effect will be division and discord in the family.

Those who have observed the events of daily life will understand this immediately. A family is composed of a weak part (the women and children) and a strong part (the fathers and adult sons). If the needs to be satisfied are many, the result will inevitably be domestic tyranny or the oppression of the weak part by the strong. Heads of family who have many urgent artificial needs will leave their wives and children languishing in misery while they find contentment for their demanding appetites by squandering their earnings in taverns and places of riotous, dissolute living. The adult sons quarrel with their fathers, and war breaks out between the two strong parties.

Usually the sons win, either because paternal love mitigates the fathers' fury, or because the elder, stronger sons challenge the older father who works and earns less than they and whose disorderly conduct has never inspired respect. Amongst the adult men there are vices and discord; amongst the women, drudgery, deprivation and affliction. Education is abandoned, and joyless families left without anyone to govern them. Amongst the agricultural and manufacturing class, all this is undoubtedly the effect of artificial needs stimulated beyond a particular degree.

685. If the same political theory continues to be applied, artificial needs will grow in number and urgency, and income from work will be totally inadequate for satisfying them. Moreover, people urged on by desires and passions inadequate to their state are not disposed to renounce these desires and passions. They must choose one of two courses: either to employ illegitimate means to satisfy them, or to abandon underpaid employment to look for more lucrative work. This happens continually in the most advanced societies. I appeal to people who have observed societies: human beings, stimulated by needs which exceed the means offered by their employment, divide into two classes: those who turn to evil, and those who try to improve their state. Let us see whether it is helpful to society to direct people to one of these courses.

686. Those who turn to evil, such as assassins, fraudsters,

robbers, gamblers, pettifoggers and swindlers of every kind are persons acutely stimulated by artificial needs. Because they have no other way of satisfying these needs, they turn to despoiling others of property either by force or trickery. Thus, the cause of all the principal evils of society, which drives human beings to leave the decent classes amongst whom they live in order to go and destroy themselves in the delinquent classes, must clearly be seen in an excessive quantity of artificial needs and in the drive of the desires and passions which are produced by, and in turn produce the needs. This kind of political theory can never be helpful or wise.

687. In the same way we can easily maintain with solid reasons that those who follow the second course benefit society. They abandon their present state to look for something more lucrative which everybody thinks better and in which they can more easily satisfy their heartfelt needs.

They resemble the first group by abandoning their employment, but unlike the others do not choose an evil course. If peasants and artisans abandon their employment because their numbers exceed society's needs, no evil is done. But this is not the reason why they leave their profession; the reason is entirely selfish, not social. The needs which they now feel and of which they were previously ignorant are initiated by the government. Consequently, they no longer find pleasure in work which does not provide the means for satisfying the new needs. No government, we must note, responsible for arousing artificial needs in the members of the society can in any way limit the number of those who have these desires. In fact, such a move would be outside its theory which generally speaking prescribes that the growth of the needs must always exceed that of the means for satisfying the needs.

688. Needs, therefore, which are aroused in peasants and artisans and cannot be satisfied with available income cause these disaffected workers to abandon their profession. Such action can only be harmful every time they withdraw their labour from agriculture and crafts. The work deteriorates because of the reduction of workers, with consequent economic harm to industry and to the nation in general. A nation in which the employee's will to work is lacking and the price of labour is excessive faces a huge obstacle, which makes its progress in

industry and trade, that is, in its enrichment, difficult or even impossible. Such a people trails behind in the competition it faces from other nations.

689. We must further bear in mind that those who abandon their own profession to learn a more lucrative trade expose themselves and the nation to inevitable loss. They have to overcome difficulties which often result in failure to obtain what they had hoped for.

In regard to what is lost:

1. A period of time elapses between the feeling for a change of profession aroused by extraordinary needs, and the effective decision to change. During this period, the worker is plagued by uncertainty and increasing discontent. Each day, his love for his present occupation decreases; he becomes more negligent in his application precisely because he knows he must soon abandon the work. This uncertain, restless state is ruinous both for family economy and for morality. He gives himself up to amusement or passes the time in idleness whenever occasion offers; his habitual exertion is already far too irksome for him. Young men who abandon their initial profession nearly always suffer some unfortunate consequence .

2. The worker who abandons the profession in which, as it were, he was born, and takes on another, abandons a known skill to learn an unknown skill. The change thus entails a loss of both time and ability. Generally speaking, it is difficult for a person to become more skilled in a new trade than in that learnt from his parents and, as it were, assimilated with his mother's milk.

In addition to this difficulty he has many others to overcome. He has to pay for his course of studies and compete with other keen students while contending with adverse circumstances and the unfamiliarity of a state whose customs and practices he does not know. He lacks experience in dealing with concomitant dangers, and finds himself amongst colleagues who are already experts.

690. But even if we suppose all difficulties are solved, our political theorists still face a huge problem. The fact that they have aroused great desires and unrestrained needs in the agricultural and industrial classes forces these classes into the posts occupied by the upper classes. Similarly, the political system of

movement puts pressure on and dislodges the upper classes themselves from their posts by the same means, that is, by arousing new needs in all the citizens.

The great problem therefore is: 'Is it helpful to human society when everyone wants to abandon his own position for the sake of a higher position?' We may well wonder where all these people will move to. As far as I can see, the social pyramid, however flattened and truncated it may be at the apex, has a large base. I mean that the lowest functions necessarily occupy a large number of persons, the highest only a few. What happens if an immense multitude scrambles like looters for the highest positions and functions? Movement of this kind ends in restricted space for everyone. Ensuing pressure will inevitably lead to ferocious rivalry amongst all the contenders, and disappointment for the majority because the desired posts can only be held by a few.

The political theory we are discussing makes a universal need of insatiable ambition and of harmful thirst for honour, power and money. But it cannot increase at will the number of persons constituting the highest classes.

Consequently, the highest positions in society are always held uneasily, and are under constant attack by the violent or the more cunning — in other words, by those who have a more exaggerated need of high position, not by the best people. Those who achieve these posts are weary when they get them, wounded by their defeated rivals and uncertain of holding on for more than a short time. Modern governments have indeed increased immensely the number of bureaucrats, but have still failed to find enough posts for the great crowd of applicants; the universities continue to pour out into society hundreds of young people who feel an immense need to influence public affairs, but remain for years without positions or sustenance in families impoverished by the expenses incurred for their maintenance during the years of study.

691. If the defenders of a political theory which prescribes the increase of peoples' artificial needs were consistent, they would favour a hierarchy of many social levels, not cheaply acquired governments. This would allow for a greater distance between bottom and top. The different classes could move up without coming to a sudden stop and without contestation; each could

receive something to keep them busy at every rung of the ladder. But it is obviously incoherent for authors to claim that their policy makes them popular and supporters of material equality among citizens when the theory would only avoid harm in a monarchical society where it could indeed be practised for some time without destroying the whole society.

If this material equality could be established, every social movement would end. Clearly, in a State where all the people and every good were equally balanced and thus formed a single class, the only effect of any movement on the part of the people impelled by needs would be to deviate them from the common direction and destroy the established equality. Teaching which prescribes the stimulation of a people's artificial needs is therefore the mortal enemy of equality, and could never be reconciled with equality amongst citizens. Moreover it is impossible for needs aroused by government to increase in everybody in the same way and to the same degree. Consequently, the effort made by citizens to satisfy themselves must remain unequal, together with the procurement of the good towards which they strive with varying enthusiasm.

692. The possibility of greater movement is present, of course, where there is a great distance between the lowest and highest classes, as in monarchies. This movement can take the citizens closer to equality of opportunity and power, granted that the needs increase in the lower but not the upper classes. Careful consideration will show that what I have said is the key explaining the real origin of the political system of movement, a movement that has been dominant in peoples' minds and feeling during the previous three centuries.

What I have said also explains the movement's spirit and partly justifies its instincts while condemning its formulas. We oppose the formulas because they do not measure up to the spirit of the system; they are shown to be vague, undetermined, and therefore fatal to human society. In fact nothing could be more disastrous or indeed more evil than this system of politics: it requires that the artificial needs of the members of a society be increased, but does not indicate the quality or limit of these needs, or the classes in which the artificial needs can usefully increase, or the social circumstances which make the increase desirable. If artificial needs must increase in all classes, they

must also increase in the upper classes, even at the highest level. This must surely cause great ambition, insatiable voracity, cruelty and luxury in influential people and princes. It must surely arouse every kind of passion to the point of fury, and cause great temptation to the abuse of power in all those who wield it, whatever the form of government.

This, I repeat, is exactly what is prescribed by the formulas when taken literally. All who apply formulas alone, without letting their conduct be guided by an intimate sense of the times, act in this way. Nor would it be difficult to indicate the evil effects which these rigorous sensists have left and continually leave in modern societies.

693. If we observe the achievements of the political instincts of modern nations during the last three centuries, we will easily see that these instincts contradict, rather than express the abstract formulas which we have refuted. These formulas are not faithful expressions of the instincts (although their authors think they are). The very principle guiding the whole conduct of public affairs for the last three hundred years has not been to increase needs in general, but to raise the standard of the lower classes and awaken in them desires and hopes which would activate them.

It is also inappropriate to say that the conduct of public affairs aims at the increase of the people's *needs*. These needs are unfortunately a useless result, but not the end of the practical politics of the modern centuries, when these politics are correctly understood, that is, understood in their true spirit, in the better part of their spirit. This kind of politics really wants to increase in the lower class *knowledge of their own interests and the resolve to apply themselves to these interests with foresight and activity* (a praiseworthy policy); the *needs* are merely the evil inevitabilities of good business, as it were — in human affairs, every kind of improvement involves some new evil because of a deep, ontological, inevitable law which escapes the gaze of superficial *perfectionists*. But our badly equipped philosophers uphold needs as the principal, practical reality, and formulate their absurd theory on them. Furthermore, the noble desire of developed nations to see the masses less ignorant and inactive originated principally in the monarchical States where the lower class was beginning to produce developed, rich, cultured

people, that is, people influential in the social body through their hard work, ability and merit.

These individuals formed a middle-class between the lower class from which they had come and the aristocracy towards which they moved. They were in a position to reflect on the heavy burden of ignorance and inability that weighed on the great majority of nations, and see how, because of this ignorance and virtual stupidity, their own rights were undefended. They saw how the road to oppression was open to those whose education made them more powerful, more astute and more united. Their intention therefore was to raise the people higher socially; they hoped to accomplish this by making themselves the guides, teachers and inspirers of the people.³⁰⁵ But although they had originally been moved by a feeling of humanity, equity and justice, some amongst them were impatient, violent and evil. Some wanted immediate results from their plan whatever the circumstances; they chose the means they believed most adapted to accomplish the task, but without considering whether these means were prudent, just, equitable and upright. Others were disaffected by resistance; anger gave them weapons. Consequently, a task which was essentially peaceful turned into bloodshed and murder.

Finally, some, who lacked both morality and religion, united with the others for secondary ends and their own interest. They brought confusion into all the ideas determining the nature of the enterprise. In order to complete the task speedily (a task which their corrupt minds had deformed and disconnected from the original design), they spared nothing of what was most sacred and holy on the earth. They turned into an abomination the humanitarian movement that had started from a principle of justice and from a feeling of universal brotherhood, a feeling which Christianity had inserted and hidden deep in the human heart, so that it might germinate in society at the proper season.

These impatient, violent and evil people have channelled their passions into the most bizarre of political theories. One such

³⁰⁵ That this was the purpose of the politics we are discussing is confirmed by the observation that politicians who sincerely supported the system of resistance belong almost without exception to the upper classes of society and to their officials.

theory, it seems to me, is that which prescribes governments in general 'always to increase needs in society more than the means to satisfy them.'

694. It is true of course that not all supporters of the politics of movement are so extreme. Some explain their thought more moderately. According to them, not all the citizens should move to a higher class in reality, although competition for better conditions and positions should be open to all.

695. I fully support free competition for every kind of good, provided we do not misunderstand 'competition', an undetermined and equivocal word. I do not espouse competition as the sole source and principle of justice, but as the effect, not the cause of justice, that is, as the effect of justice which is anterior to and therefore determines the right of competition. If this important distinction is ignored, the meaning of the word remains uncertain, and opens the field to many unfortunate sophisms.

696. Secondly, does the increase of everybody's needs really make free competition open to all? Too many people crowding into restricted space obstruct each another, and the few for whom room is available can only enter more slowly and with more difficulty. Moreover, saying that the way is equally open to all is not the same as claiming that all *need* take it, even when they lack the energy. It is always a good thing to find a mountain path open, provided I am free to climb to the peak or not. But it is an intolerable burden if I am forced to ascend in unsuitable conditions, or *need* to ascend without being able to reach the top. In this case, I am simply risking my life uselessly.

697. In fact, it is the most needy who get hurt when many people compete in the way we have described. As we saw, the American Indians perished in their poverty because they could not compete with the rich when their desires had increased their needs. Rich people can satisfy their needs with what is superfluous, but the poor only with what is necessary. The Europeans exchanged their abundance for things indispensable to the subsistence of the Indians who, when they had satisfied their artificial needs, had nothing even to live on.

698. We must not think that this happens only when peoples who are still at the lowest level of civilisation come face to face with civilised nations. It is a universal fact put briefly to say that in a competition 'the prize goes to the strongest.'

Some Indian nations of the southern part of America, like the Cherokee and the Creeks,³⁰⁶ have taken steps in the right direction and made some progress, but

while these primitive peoples were working hard to civilise themselves, the Europeans were swamping them from all directions and putting greater pressure on them. The two races have now finally met. The Indian has become superior to his primitive ancestors but is far below his white neighbour. The Europeans, aided by their means and insights, hastened to appropriate most of the benefits derived by the Indians from possession of the land. They settled amongst the natives, took over or acquired their lands at a very low price, and ruined the Indians through unsustainable competition. The latter, isolated in their own country, were now only a small, inconvenient settlement of foreigners in the midst of a numerous, dominating people.

699. The effect of competition, always fatal to the poorest, is the same even when people have taken a third step towards becoming civilised, that is, a step beyond the Cherokee and Creeks. Again, our example is in America. Before the coming of the American settlers, the city of Vincennes on the Wabash, founded in the wilderness by the French in the middle of last century, lacked nothing. The Americans, who were richer than the French (who had already taken what they wanted from the Indians) ruined the French through competition; they purchased their land at a very low price, and the French population, already reduced in numbers, had to move elsewhere to find sustenance.

Similar effects are produced by competition in nations at three different grades of progress towards civilisation; 1. when primitive; 2. when making progress towards civilisation; 3. when almost civilised, but still somewhat uncouth. When competing with fully civilised nations, primitive nations are destroyed; those at the second level lose the means and will to progress along the road of civilisation; decadent nations are impoverished and break up.

700. In all these facts we should note that competition

³⁰⁶ They live in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi.

between civilised peoples at different stages of development would not entail such sad consequences if *artificial needs* had not been aroused in the less civilised. Why do tribes who hunt sell their wilderness? Why do people who have already applied themselves to agriculture sell their agricultural tools? And finally, why do those on the verge of civilised life sell their cultivated lands? The answer is always: the need for drink, fine clothing, useless ornaments, and other necessities and longings aroused in them. Having no other way of satisfying these needs, they sacrifice the most essential things. If these entirely artificial needs had not been aroused, they would never have consumed their sole and entire source of subsistence in order to second their needs. The greatest consumers are those with many needs; and more consumption means more poverty. The successful person is the one who produces and sells his produce to those who need it. Needs therefore are useless for enriching needy people; they enrich only those without needs, and at the expense of those who have needs and want to satisfy them.³⁰⁷ If superfluous needs are removed, devastating competition is no longer possible between unequal peoples.

701. What has been said about competition between nations at different stages of progress towards civilisation must also be said about the different classes of people who make up a nation. If we supposed the needs aroused in different classes of people to be equal, they would require equal expenditure to satisfy them. But equal pressure to spend is certainly not an equal burden for people with different means; it is a greater, more harmful burden for those with lesser means. For the hard-pressed families of artisans and peasants, ten pounds wasted on carousing can be much more disastrous than a thousand pounds wasted by a rich family on a banquet. Competition is not always the best thing for a nation, as some think; very often it profits only the rich, especially the industrially rich.

702. Finally, from all these reflections we can form a most important principle for determining 1. the level of needs which does not prejudice the well-being of families and the State, and 2. the point where the harmful excess of needs begins. The

³⁰⁷ Cf. my other observations which demonstrate the same thing in *Saggio sulla Definizione della Ricchezza* in *Opuscoli Filosofici*, vol. 2, pp. 307 ss.

principle is: 'Artificial needs'³⁰⁸ must never exceed the quantity of means proffered by net income from possessions or work. If they exceed this level, they raise consumption beyond the possibilities of the family, which they destroy.³⁰⁹

The level of harmless needs is not equal for every class and family of citizens; it varies according to the net income supplying the means to satisfy the needs. Above this level, needs are passions enticing people to spend what is necessary on superfluities. People of balanced mind and incorrupt heart will never think they need what will lower their state. Arousing excessive needs is always united in human beings with moral corruption and darkening of the understanding.

703. We have determined the level at which the needs of the different classes and conditions of persons are harmless to the material well-being of families. We can now answer the question: 'How can these needs increase without becoming harmful?' Our reply is a consequence of the answer we gave to the preceding problem.

If needs must not exceed income, clearly they will not be positively harmful as long as 'they grow at the same speed as, or slower than, the income intended to satisfy them. They must never grow more quickly.'

Income increases and diminishes in different nations according to certain laws. These laws must be defined by economists using data obtained from accurate statistics. It is clear that in a nation where the citizens' income, because of special circumstances, is diminishing, government wisdom should be seriously applied to reducing artificial consumer needs. The measures taken to achieve this end would undoubtedly be more praiseworthy than prohibiting foreign goods so that domestic industry may have time to develop.

704. However, the income available for artificial needs results partly from the fruits of one's possessions and partly from industrial products.

³⁰⁸ I take for granted that the discussion concerns artificial needs that are in themselves upright.

³⁰⁹ It is clear however that, if the whole of the disposable income is consumed, the wealth of a family remains stationary. Wealth grows in direct proportion to the size of the income and in indirect proportion to the needs.

In this last case, industry, crafts and ways of increasing wealth in general are not learnt instantly by the uneducated for whose education time must be set aside. During the period which must be dedicated to learning, any contact with cultured people is usually fatal. The products of cultured peoples are inevitably better and less expensive than those produced by less educated peoples whose industry is still young and equipment primitive.

This kind of unequal competition endangers their nascent industry to some extent, because people will not work hard unless there is some hope of gain for themselves. In these difficult circumstances, what hope is there for people who cannot be denied the goods of their richer, more powerful and better educated neighbours? It may be possible to restrain people, but who will persuade them to restrict their desires to goods produced by their own country? Such a sacrifice would suppose great understanding and self-discipline. Only morality supported by religion could in part achieve this.

To increase needs beyond the means of satisfying them is not the way for peoples to become civilised; rather, their knowledge and practice of moral and religious virtue must be increased.

705. Our argument should also be applied to citizens of the same nation but of different classes. Constant facts prove the truth of these teachings, which can be summarised as follows:

1. In classes or, more accurately, in families where effort and activity are in increasing movement, artificial needs can increase without causing any notable and obvious economic harm.

2. In classes and families where effort and activity are stationary, needs must also be stationary; any increase would be harmful.

3. In classes and families where effort and activity diminish, economic deterioration follows inevitably unless needs are simultaneously reduced.

4. Finally, if effort and products increase in different ratios in different classes and families, that is, progression is faster in some than others, but needs develop equally in all with maximum progression, the class where effort has maximum movement will rise above all others, who will rapidly deteriorate.

These are the guidelines which wise government should use to calculate the remotest effects of its enactments.

706. However, it will still be objected that by removing many artificial needs the stimulus of human activity has been removed. People who talk like this either do not understand or do not want to understand what I am saying. I said that artificial needs are harmful when they exceed a certain level, which I established. This does not remove the stimulus to human activity, but simply prevents excessive stimulus from killing all effort. I also said that artificial needs give tremendous scope for hard work and business, to the advantage of those without such needs, and to the harm of those with them.

707. If we understand 'need' in a very general sense, we can distinguish all artificial needs into two classes. The first class would contain *needs for enjoyment*, the second *needs for enrichment*. Based on this distinction, my argument should be applied only to the first class which includes the needs generated by consumption. Needs for enrichment move human beings to thrift and production; properly speaking, therefore, it is these that stimulate effort, not the others. But neither the political theorists who uphold movement nor popular language accept this distinction. Popular language usually calls artificial only those needs that we call luxury goods. The term is never applied to the needs of a father who desires and strives to have what is necessary to feed his wife and children or to leave them sufficient inheritance, or to the needs of a miser who is insensitive to every need except that of amassing riches.

Hence, Gioia justifies the maxim which I have refuted: 'The hope of being one day in the position to obtain *luxury pleasures* is a very powerful stimulus for the lower classes; as the stimulus is blunted, the masses draw closer to a state of inertia, laziness and torpor. The result is the emergence of those well-known vices that accompany this state.' These words unjustly ignore the stimulus against inertia given by love of wealth and social influence, and by affection for one's family. Above all, they do not recognise the most sacred, moral stimulus of one's own duty, which foresees and provides for the future necessities of domestic and civil society in a way more helpful than any other duty.

CHAPTER 21

The system of movement as it effects Christian societies

708. I intend to speak later about social progress and to indicate the legitimate, certain direction it must follow if it is to avoid losing its way and fulfilling its purpose. The system of resistance will collapse of itself in the face of our observations, but I cannot defend progress and guarantee its good outcome without first exposing all the disastrous consequences that accompany the system of movement, the greatest danger to progress. What harm therefore do nations suffer when incited by imprudent people to restless, uncontrolled movement along tortuous paths, people

‘Whose overhaste delayed them’?

In the previous chapter I indicated the material, economic harm. Here, we consider the harm to morality.

709. The words, ‘artificial needs’, themselves imply something immoral. ‘Need’ implies necessity. Thus, those with unnatural, artificial needs are subject to a kind of slavery, and do not have the time and calm necessary for calculating the effects of their actions. It should come as no surprise therefore that the virtue of prudence in human beings, so necessary for procuring a state of satisfied existence for themselves and their dependants, diminishes in the measure that imaginary *needs* grow.

710. But let us consider the moral consequences more widely. We saw the final condition of nations before the coming of Christ: the *spirit of sense* prevailed over the *spirit of intelligence*³¹⁰ and snuffed it out. Civilisation also was blotted out,

³¹⁰ The word ‘spirit’, in the sense in which I use it here and elsewhere, is proper to oriental languages. In philosophy, it is a special word for which I would not be able to find a substitute. ‘Habit’ or ‘practice’ has a very different meaning from ‘spirit’. Habit is simply a power which with use acquires ease of and inclination towards movement, whereas ‘spirit’ expresses movement itself. It does not, however, indicate a particular act but a frequency of acts; it indicates the characteristic which is common to all acts and determined by the words used to qualify ‘spirit’, for example, ‘spirit of intelligence’, ‘spirit of sense’, along with ‘spirit of life’, ‘of fortitude’, etc. Such phrases, therefore, characterise 1. the quality and nature of a collection

together with the light of the understanding. Isaiah had said that the nations would perish in darkness, but he had also predicted a rising star in the midst of the universal night: 'By the light of this star, the pagans and their leaders will set out on the way again and go forward.'³¹¹ The state of Christian nations is in fact very special: a stream of light will ceaselessly shine out from Christianity into human societies, its rays reaching even the nations furthest from the Christian faith. Sensual corruption, however great its increase today, cannot extinguish the intellectual light. This light continuously renews itself, shining on the earth from a source which cannot be extinguished by the most brazen efforts, just as a handful of dust thrown into the air cannot obliterate the light of the sun and stars.

711. Nevertheless human wickedness continues. Indeed it spreads further afield, exhausting all its forces as it increases; moreover these forces, when exhausted, incessantly renew and consume themselves. In ancient nations, nature limited human wickedness. Although finally the intellectual light lost its power and became useless to human beings, as if it no longer existed, at the same time wickedness gradually self-destructed together with human beings who, deprived of all practical use of intelligence, were no longer susceptible of great immorality.

712. The case is different in a world become Christian. The amount of active light continually diminished by human wickedness is constantly compensated by new light, a light of maximum activity. The wickedness of the human heart, no longer confined to its ancient limitations, is granted unlimited space; but so is virtue and merit.

713. Only these considerations can explain the terrible,

of acts normally done by a person, 2. the principle from which these acts originate, and 3. their tendency. Sometimes the collections of acts grouped and characterised by these phrases refer only to animality. For example, we speak of the *spirit of life*, *spirit of sense*, etc. At other times, they pertain to the order of intellectual things: the *spirit of intelligence*, *spirit of wisdom*, etc. Finally, they indicate the moral principle of action: *spirit of fortitude*, *spirit of piety*, etc.

³¹¹ 'For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising' (Is 60: [2-3]).

ceaseless and immense struggle taking place in the Christian world between the principle of darkness and the principle of light. Strange as it may be, the former draws its sustenance from the life of the latter, so that even when extinct in the struggle of battle it seems to be reborn .

The same considerations explain all the progress of modern industry and trade. Nations now become fearlessly proud because of their progress; ancient nations greatly suspected such increase, and their more perspicacious politicians railed against it. The sense of courage (I exclude rash pride) of modern nations is as reasonable as the sense of fear proper to ancient nations. Modern nations feel powerful and capable of combating material corruption without perishing. The pagans were very much aware that their existence could not last when assailed by the softness which accompanies luxury.

We must not think, however, that luxury causes no harm in modern nations, and that corruption does not have the same consequences as in ancient nations. The difference is that the harm done by luxury to modern nations is compensated by the great healing action of Christianity. Desperate sickness finds a prodigious remedy in Christian belief, which, acting hiddenly in the nations themselves, prevents the sickness from causing death. Today, industry, trade and the delights of luxurious living partially harm nations, and can cause unrest and agitation; but they can no longer destroy nations. Hence continual progress has become possible in these things, accompanied by all the material benefits human society draws from this progress. Indeed, nations have become proud, and see themselves as superior to the ancient nations who they consider primitive, poor and despicable. With the passing of the centuries, pride increases. This century, for example, has lost its balance simply because it has been proclaimed the century of steam and the railway. But ultimately the vain are consumed by vanity, and good people enjoy every good from whatever source it comes.

714. It will be helpful if we investigate the nature of the corruption and unhappiness proper to Christian societies. We have already outlined this corruption, and will now compare it more accurately with that of the nations preceding the Christian epoch.

CHAPTER 22

Continuation: the *CAPACITY* proper to Christian nations is infinite

715. The diminution of happiness in human beings consists in their continual growth of *capacity* without a corresponding increase of objects to satisfy that capacity.

Analysis of the continued growth of capacity of spirit and inability to satisfy it shows how the state of human beings deteriorates, and becomes more dissatisfied and unhappy.

Although nature inserts in our spirit an instinct for all we can conceive as good, the actions of this instinct are conditioned to our mental conception of good. Hence, as long as our faculties of knowledge do not develop, the faculties of appetite and desire themselves cannot develop. Each good can be desired only when it is known. *Desire* is born in us therefore when we want *absolutely* a good we know, but do not have; the *capacity* of this desire gradually develops with the knowledge and experience of each good.³¹²

716. Through the knowledge and experience of divine things, the capacity of human desire extends infinitely. In fact, the effect of Christianity in the spirit corresponds to the effect produced by Christianity in human intelligence

We have seen that Christianity posited an inexhaustible and truly infinite fount of intellective light in the human mind; it raised up an inextinguishable flame, as it were, in humanity. We also saw that the luminous object of Christianity is not some cold, abstract mental conception, incapable of guiding human beings in their actions, but a real, absolute good, suitable for becoming the supreme and very efficacious principle of human activity.³¹³ Thus, human beings come to know an infinite good and almost in spite of themselves find it occupying their minds because of its extraordinary greatness and intimate, hidden congruity with human nature. It is no

³¹² The reader should recall what I have said in chapters 12 and 13 about capacity of the spirit.

³¹³ Cf. bk. 3, c. 223.

surprise therefore that even the capacity of their desire spreads and extends infinitely.

This immensity of desire is the most clearly visible characteristic of Christian nations.

Members of the nations previous to Christ never had such a full, absolute concept of happiness as that given to the world by the gospel message. Their happiness was a composite, an assemblage of different kinds of earthly good. A few philosophers saw that the contemplation of truth together with the practice of virtue was necessary for real happiness. But this did not give human beings any positive knowledge of the supreme good. The reason for this is seen in the following reflections.

717. The supreme good offered and promised by Christianity is threefold, that is, it contains *real* good, *intellectual* good and *moral* good, three equally infinite goods but all in a single, totally simple object, God. Christianity further teaches that human beings were destined to enjoy this supreme good in a totally ineffable way, and that a wealth and abundance of good would be revealed to them at the moment the joy was brought to completion. No matter how great and intense their desire, this good and joy would be 'what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived'.³¹⁴

718. The whole of human wisdom was infinitely inferior to these sublime concepts.

First of all, no philosopher had ever seen the intimate union of the three elements of true beatitude (that is, absolute real good, absolute ideal good and absolute moral good) all together in a single, excellent nature. This mystery was revealed to the world by Christ alone.

Second, even if human happiness had been seen as a necessary consequence of the three categories of good, the connection between the categories was never found, as I said; human beings had not the slightest idea of it. But granted they did, granted that someone had in fact seen how necessary the three supreme categories of good were for happiness, human philosophy never succeeded, nor could it succeed, in describing these three elements satisfactorily.

719. Relative to the formation of the *real* element, the only

³¹⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 2: 9.

available materials in the human mind were the good of the present life. Without suitable materials, philosophy was confused and at a loss about carrying out the great work of construction. Disagreement between the builders, which soon set in, gave rise to two sects. The first of these saw clearly that feelable good could not be suitable matter for the formation of human happiness, and completely rejected it. Their concept of happiness was *ideal* and *moral*, but lacked the *real* element. Such a concept however is insufficient for human nature, which seeks above all the *reality* of good. The second sect saw that happiness deprived of reality was too nebulous and beyond human attainment. Thus, they retained temporal good, and in doing so introduced limited, relative good into the concept of happiness. But relative good is incapable of producing happiness; worse still, it is frequently irreconcilable and in conflict with the other two elements of happiness, the *ideal* and the *moral*. The result is a happiness whose concept is false, contradictory and discordant. This error is far more serious and simplistic than that of the first sect.

720. Philosophy did no better when forming the concept of the *ideal*, intellectual element of human happiness. This element consists in the contemplation of truth. Consequently only those who possessed truth fully could have an adequate concept of it. Philosophers, whose knowledge encompassed only a tiny part of truth, rather than truth itself, could only conceive and speak of the contemplation of this little bit of truth. The other part of truth, hidden from their eyes, could not be supplied by their imagination. Their fantasy produced only chimerical compositions which, far from leading to truth, serve to divide human beings from truth. Moreover, philosophical truth is only an abstraction, a tenuous, bodiless idea; Christian truth is simultaneously an idea and solid subsistence, a child of God.

721. The same applies to the *moral* element. — I showed elsewhere the intrinsic, necessary imperfection of all the moral teachings of antiquity. There can be no perfect teaching about virtue without a perfect concept of supreme, real good. Ancient philosophy, which did not have this concept, could not say what virtue was.³¹⁵ Lacking the gentle wisdom of the true,

³¹⁵ Cf. *Storia comparativa e critica de' sistemi morali*, c. 7, a. 3, §7.

proper concept of moral essence, it could not fuse moral good, which it did not know, with the concept of supreme good. Consequently the concept remained imperfect in all its three parts.

Because no positive concept of absolute good³¹⁶ existed before Christ, the corresponding capacity, which is always limited by the imperfection of knowledge, could not be opened up in the human spirit. But once the positive concept of supreme good had been given to humanity, an infinite capacity was opened up in the human heart. This explains why the golden age described by the pagan poets, the happiness which Virgil, the greatest mind of the pagan world,³¹⁷ depicted, was considered a frigid, childish song by Christian nations.

722. I should add that there is something even more human in the action of Christianity on the human spirit. It is not simply a case of a concept of supreme good given to humanity, but of a mysterious *experience* of God himself.

This arcane but real communication of God to the human being is the essence of the Christian religion, its principal and fundamental dogma. It holds out to human beings the promise of enabling them to feel God in their soul, and maintains that promise. In fact, if humanity had had no experience of supreme good, it would not have been conquered by Christianity. The divine author of the Gospel would not have bound all nations to his triumphal chariot, nor would the mental conception of God and of supreme good, which is God, have been positive and efficacious enough to tear the hearts of mortals away from the created universe, raise them up and draw them to God himself — *omnia traham ad meipsum* [I will draw all things to myself]. Thus there is something deeper and more mysterious than we might think in the lack of contentment of Christian nations, in the insatiability of their desires, and in the portentous and indefatigable activity which drives and stirs them from deep within.

At other times human beings were able to find some contentment in nature, which alone stimulated their desires and

³¹⁶ Varro's 280 opinions about supreme good show that, in such an important matter, ancient philosophy groped in darkness.

³¹⁷ *Georg.*, 2, 467–474. — Hesiod's concept of happiness and the rewards promised by this poet to virtue are also restricted to the pleasure supplied by feeling nature. *Theogon.*, vv. 223–345.

determined their vague idea of happiness. After Christ, however, natural happiness offers nothing to the expanded heart that finds its rest solely in the supernatural. To be closed within the universe is to feel oneself confined in a narrow prison. The size of the cell is indifferent because the heart now abhors all walls and restrictions.

CHAPTER 23

Continuation

723. I realise that a great number of objections will present themselves at this point. It will help, I think, if we pause to examine two which, because of their apparent special difficulty, could make my readers uncertain of the path we are taking.

724. The first objection is this: 'According to the most ancient history we have of the human race, and the most constant, universal traditions, the first human beings to inhabit our planet were not left solely to the impressions made upon them by nature. They also received knowledge of, and communicated with, the first being from whom the universe had originated. But if knowledge of divine things has the power to open an infinite capacity in the human spirit, this capacity must have been present before Christianity.'

The second objection is: 'If the infinite capacity of the spirit is opened through knowledge and experience of divine things, those who abandon religious beliefs inevitably restrict the capacity of their desire. They no longer acknowledge anything infinite and, as we know, desire cannot be conceived without its object.'

I will reply to the first objection in this chapter, and to the second in the next.

725. The first objection requires me to examine the degree of development possible to the capacity of spirit in nations that preceded Christianity. What I have to say about this point will, I hope, answer the objection and at the same time throw new light on the way in which the capacity of the human spirit is enlarged, and on the various stages it must experience at different periods in mankind's existence.

726. Let us grant, therefore, that from the beginning human beings already had knowledge and experience of two kinds of totally distinct entia, that is, of natural entia and of the sovereign ens, the source of all natural entia. From the very beginning, in fact, human desire, finding itself aroused by a twofold stimulus, would have begun to open its capacity in a finite way to finite,

natural good, and in an indefinite way to God, whose protection could only be considered as a good. We must not believe, however, that this capacity had already reached the limit of its development.

727. First, the same object is desired at different moments with varying degrees of intensity. The thrust of the capacity, therefore, could always be made more intense. Moreover, the first human beings, considered in the state in which they were found when they began to father succeeding generations, did not have simultaneous knowledge and experience of all natural good. Similarly, we have to believe that their knowledge and perception of the good present for them in their Creator could be increased. We must grant, therefore, a successive development in the capacity of human desire for every natural good and for infinite good. Let us begin with natural good.³¹⁸

728. Human beings first of all perceive real good. Later, they form abstract ideas of good. For the sake of brevity, I shall use the phrase, 'faculty of thought', to indicate that group of powers of the human spirit which refers to real entia and real good.³¹⁹ The phrase, 'faculty of abstraction', indicates the other group of powers referring to abstract ideas, that is, to ideal, generic and incomplete entia. As long as human beings have not reached the degree of development in which they have formed abstract, generic ideas of good, their desires can have as guide only the *faculty of thought*, which is the first to spring into activity. This

³¹⁸ The successive broadening of human capacity relative to natural good has been explained in *AMS*, 612 ss.

³¹⁹ The *faculty of thought* contains: 1. *intellective perception*, through which the human being puts himself in communication with real entia; 2. *the specific idea of things*, especially the *full idea*, as we have called it, which shows us something furnished with all its knowable qualities, although still within the order of possibilities (Cf. what I have said about the nature of these *full ideas* in *NE*, 2: 518, 646–659). The faculty of thought does not contain *persuasion* amongst its constitutive powers. Persuasion is the activity with which the spirit *affirms* that a thing exists; it can be truthful or fallacious. When we affirm irrationally that something exists, we activate *intellective creation*, which is a function of *persuasion* (Cf. the *Synoptic Schema of the Faculties of the Human Spirit*, *AMS*, pp. 414–415). The faculty of thought never makes a mistake because there can be no error in our *intellective perception* of real things, nor in our direct formation of the *specific ideas* of real things (*NE*, vol. 3).

faculty presents only real objects to human desire, as we said, and guides it to find them only through the *full ideas* of such objects. This is the first stage in human capacity.

As long as no further development takes place, human beings are easily contented. They can only desire real, attainable things. They have not yet manufactured for themselves chimerical objects, the later result of the use of their faculty of abstraction.

729. The further back we go into the ancient memories of humanity, the more we find that the eudaimonological state of human beings approaches the first period during which only the *faculty of thought* is brought into movement, and spirits are seen to be for the most part placid and content.

We have to note carefully that in this period people do not give an ideal value to physical objects. Increasing the value of physical objects by adding ideal values to them requires the prior formation of many abstractions.³²⁰ Physical objects are considered for what they are, and nothing more; people do not go searching madly to satisfy their spiritual needs by bodily good, as they would later. Bodily good has the power to really satisfy corporal needs; nothing more is claimed for it during this early period when it satisfies people. This explains the nature of extremely simple golden ages during which there was no artificial wealth; everything was natural. People, I have to repeat, did not want to satiate with physical good the voracity of spirit aspiring to things outside the confines of reality.

730. The memory of this first contentment, formed of few, simple objects, and the later experience of something similar by temperate persons, suggested the following philosophical teaching: 'nature contents itself with little; true wealth is poverty adjusted in accord with natural laws.'³²¹ The faculty of

³²⁰ This explains why spiritual love, which has had such a tender effect on Christian literature, seems unknown to pagan letters.

³²¹ Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 27. This first period, in which the will has no other object than the *real* or at least *determined* things presented to it by the faculty of thought must be divided into two lesser periods: that in which sense and understanding work in perfect harmony and seem a single power, and that in which the understanding separates itself from sense and works in opposition to it (Cf. *AMS*, 612–635).

It is not in fact necessary for the human being to *act* in accordance with the

abstraction, however, soon began its activity. At this point, the human will found itself faced with both the real good presented to it by nature and merely abstract good; the second stage of human capacity, immensely broadened through the formation of ideal, abstract objects, now began.

731. This is also the beginning of mankind's fatal deception, and of the self-induced, mortal anguish that results from a search for the impossible. Human beings now begin to take their chimerical ideas for realities; they give flesh to abstractions; they now decide to pursue not that which physical beings can truly provide, but all the good human thought has succeeded in producing in an ideal formed by the spirit's power of passing from the incomplete to the complete, not only in the order of reality but also in the order of ideas.³²² As soon as we have come to desire some good by means of a concept aroused through *intellectual make-belief*,³²³ we want to realise it, that is, we want to experience it in reality. With this in view, we become unjust towards things around us by requiring from them the satisfaction of our desire, and claiming that they should fulfil our immense capacity. But the natural things surrounding us cannot do this; they do not possess in themselves the ideal good that is asked of them. Hence our lack of tranquillity, our restlessness, the irritation caused by our passions, the repeated attempts to find in physical good the happiness that is absolutely not there to be found. Our experiences, faced with cold reality, shake our ardent illusions for an instant, but are incapable of preventing their immediate resurgence in more terrible, ferocious forms.

dictates of the understanding in order that the understanding begin to separate itself from sense; he does not have to forsake the invitations of feeling which urge him to rebel against the understanding. It is sufficient to have formed a judgment opposed to the sensuous instinct, a judgment declaring that a certain pleasure must be avoided or some pain must be endured, even if the will does not conform its operation to this intellectual dictate. The formation of such a judgment takes place as soon as the sense invites human beings to anything opposed to the rules of utility, decency or decorum known by the understanding. By this fact alone, the understanding and the sense have already separated and taken opposite different directions. Remorse is a sign of this.

³²² Cf. *NE*, 2: 639–645.

³²³ I call 'intellectual make-belief' (*fictio intellectualis*) the function of the intellect with which the reason discovers the *types* and *archetypes* of things.

This is certainly what occurred in people who lived before the Christian epoch, but does it follow that the capacity of these people was truly broadened to the infinite?

732. I have to reply, as always, that the breadth of this capacity could never exceed the idea of the good to which it referred. It is certain, however, that the *ideal of good* which human beings make for themselves is never equally perfect, but only an approximation that accords with the varying development of our intellectual faculties and the varying suitability of materials available for constructing the ideal. It is clear also that the greatest plausible good imaginable to human beings in material states is far less than that which a cultured, spiritual person could imagine and construct for himself.

Moreover, human beings acquire prejudices about good and form arbitrary opinions which largely modify the idea of happiness. By introducing heterogeneous elements repugnant to the idea, they prevent it from reaching perfection. It is true that every abstract idea contains something unlimited. Consequently, an individual who has reached something abstract has reached what is unlimited. This does not prove, however, that the abstract idea of happiness attained by antiquity was completely true and perfect, and contained all the elements of an absolute good. What we said in the previous chapter proves the contrary; all the efforts of philosophers were insufficient to provide a truly exact and sufficiently complete concept of human happiness. Only Christianity has done this. The development of the intellectual powers, therefore, and of the capacities of the human spirit corresponding to them was infinitely less, before Christ, than that produced in the world after the appearance of Christianity.

733. We can go further than this, however, and point to the waywardness, obscurantism and diminution of the understanding in ancient nations as it threatened to die out under the weight of sensual corruption. Clearly, with sensuality prevailing to such terrible effect, the objects considered best would finally be those pertaining to corporeal pleasure. What other ideal of good could humanity fabricate with such materials alone or with other available materials, if humanity considered corporeal good as best of all? The formation of an ideal of good is a sublime work of the understanding. How could this be carried out successfully by people whose neglect or mockery of

intellective things meant that their life was more animal than human? The ever-growing prevalence of the *spirit of sense* over the *spirit of intelligence* was, on the one hand, a wound inflicted on capacity of spirit by the sharp edge of passion, which *intensified* and inflamed the capacity; on the other hand, it *restricted* rather than enlarged the capacity precisely because it continually diminished its object.

734. The objection will be pressed, however: religion continued in the world; consequently ideas about the divinity were never lacking. In other words, the infinite object of human desire did not diminish in human understanding.

I grant this to a certain extent. Elsewhere, I noted yet another profound and extremely solemn, constant fact in the whole history of humanity: always and everywhere human beings had need of God. This need is inherent to human nature and independent of the will, so that whatever force human beings have used, they have never been able to free themselves from their mysterious need of religious beliefs — even involuntarily, they have been unable to do without recourse to the divine things which they have willingly abandoned and denied.

When the first human beings lost the knowledge of God through their wayward heart and the abuse of their senses, they soon turned to idolatry, at first sight an apparently inexplicable fact. They claimed to create of themselves the divinity they lacked, the divinity of which they could not remain deprived. Driven by a fury similar to insanity and madness, they divinised everything — all the entia, good and bad, small and great, ridiculous and powerful which they encountered in nature. There was no limit to the idols created by their delirious, corrupt imagination; they made idols of their faculties, their passions, their virtues and vices, themselves and the universe. As impious people stripped God of his nature and denied him, they fell into the reprehensible contradiction of bestowing the divine nature upon themselves and thus proving how impossible it was to prescind from the divinity.³²⁴

This very important fact shows clearly, from the first origins of our race, the presence in the human heart of an open capacity

³²⁴ Cf. *Frammenti d'una Storia dell'Empietà* (Milan, Pogliani, 1834), where I have analysed at length this extraordinary fact and its causes.

of desire which aspires to divine things. At the same time, it shows again that this capacity, deprived of its object, leaves human beings restless, unhappy and in continual movement, searching vainly for something they never find. The movement drawing mankind to create imaginary divinities ended by connecting extreme depravation of morals to the worship of God. Consequently, as civil society perished in sensual corruption, religion also perished and gave way to the despairing, monstrous impiety that made the final period of the Roman empire so shameful.

735. There is no difficulty in granting all this, but can we therefore infer that the capacity of the human heart before Christianity had already been expanded to the infinite degree to which it later expanded? To establish such a paradox, it would be necessary to demonstrate two impossible things (impossible because they are obviously false): 1. the idea people had of God before the coming of Christ was as perfect as that which they had after the preaching of the Gospel; 2. this idea which mankind had of the divine nature contained the concept of God as infinite, absolute good.

736. Surely it is obvious that the tremendous fact of idolatry, found in all the nations of the world, proves the extreme imperfection of knowledge of the divine nature in human minds? Polytheism excludes a truly *infinite* God precisely because a true infinite excludes all multiplicity and requires perfect unity of nature. Let us grant that there was a notion of a supreme, good God above all the gods. It does not follow that the concept of this God provided the mind with an infinite nature which must, in every case, be unique. All that the human mind possessed was the concept of some indefinite greatness which surpassed the limit of known things, nothing more. Philosophers themselves were unable to bring together the true concept of the divinity; often they assembled it from the perfections proper to natural things which they aggrandised without realising that the divine nature possesses nothing similar to contingent nature. The greatest effort made by philosophers in their endeavour to fabricate the idea of God seems to be that of Socrates and Plato. Yet Socrates, who according to the Oracle was the wisest man who ever lived, and according to Plato the most just,

died simply for the sake of a God-idea. Certainly, passing from the concept of God-necessity to that of God-idea did entail progress. Nevertheless, the Gentiles never took the third step which would have led them from God-idea to God-holiness.

737. People were also ignorant of the fact that the divine nature constituted an infinite good which alone could bring bliss to human beings. Gifts and graces were indeed awaited from the gods, but no one ever thought that the divinity would give itself to mankind, or that human beings could possess and enjoy the divine nature given to them in an ineffable manner totally transcending all that the imagination could visualise. It was therefore impossible that the concept of God possessed by pagan nations could have caused the capacity of the human heart to expand to the breadth unfolded by the Good News. The Gospel communicated to human beings the concept and the much more important hidden experience of a truly infinite, holy and beatifying God.

738. The objection may be pressed by insisting that the Hebrews at least had the true concept and some kind of experience of the divine nature. Needless to say, I do not deny that there was in the Hebrew Church a true concept of God and an experience proportioned to that concept. I want to insist, however, that the Hebrew concept of God, although true, was nevertheless extremely imperfect when compared with that received by Christians through Gospel teaching. I pass over the lack of an exact, expressed concept of God amongst the mass of the Hebrew people who could only refer to the concept possessed by a few great names amongst the nation. This would explain why we read of the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob; it is a reference to the true concept, held by these Patriarchs, of the divine nature, but too difficult for the people's understanding. Hence the people's almost incredible tendency to idolatry, and the need of prodigies and punishment to protect them from such a gross error. I will mention, however, the true, pure concept which the ancient Church always had of God, and insist that finally it is only a seed in comparison with the great concept possessed by the new Church.

739. In the ancient writings, God Almighty appears as an

extremely powerful, just sovereign of the world he has created, One who rewards good and punishes evil. The good promised to those who observe his law is however temporal good; spiritual good, although not totally lacking, was almost obscured by the shadow of temporal good. 'I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit', says the God of the old law.³²⁵ These are the ancient promises. It is true that he also promises to give himself to the Hebrews, but the promise is obscure: 'And I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the Lord your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.'³²⁶ Christians accept these words in a spiritual sense and see in them an allegory of the graces bestowed upon the soul. Their literal, material sense — the sense in which they were understood by the Hebrews — mentions only the temporal benefits received from God when he freed them from slavery; this meaning shows us God Almighty as a king who leads his people and protects them from their enemies.³²⁷

740. Most of what we read in the old Scripture is hidden; it is reserved for the time of the Messiah. Without wanting to uphold (with Warburton and others) that Moses never speaks of the immortality of the soul and of the future life in his books (I think this is false), we can however affirm with certainty that the ancient scrolls do not present us with a clear, distinct vision of God which must form the bliss reserved for mankind in the other life.³²⁸ Enabling us to know God in his fullness as our Beatifier

³²⁵ Lev 26: [4].

³²⁶ Lev 26: [11–13].

³²⁷ Almighty God is represented in the Scriptures by an angel who precedes and guides the Hebrew people. This further distances the thought of a God who beatifies.

³²⁸ We find the belief well rooted in the Hebrews that the sight of God would bring death: 'No one who sees God will live.' It was the 'terrible God' who revealed himself; the loveliness of this terrible God would be revealed in its fullness only at the time of the Messiah.

was reserved for the great Prophet, the new Legislator, the Messiah.

For the same reason, it was the Messiah's task to form true adorers who would worship the Father in spirit and in truth.³²⁹ True worshippers, however, cannot be such unless they perceive the object of their bliss. Again for the same reason the ancient scrolls describe in a very obscure manner the state of souls separated from bodies. When there is a question of the reward awaiting these souls, we find that mention is made of the *resurrection* (always the hope of antiquity), not of the divine vision.³³⁰ In fact, antiquity certainly did not lack hope in a resurrection, that is, of a reunion of the soul with its body, and consequently of a happy life enjoyed after the resurrection by the just. But they had no idea how the soul, separated from the body, could live blissfully. In fact, the bliss of souls separated from their bodies is entirely the work of the Messiah who had to operate a kind of resurrection for the souls of antiquity which lay as it were asleep in limbo. He does the same for the souls of the just as they go on dying.³³¹

741. The imperfection with which the Hebrews knew God as the object of bliss explains why the capacity of their desire was infinitely less broad than that of Christians. Having received the holy Spirit, Christians come to know clearly and to feel how the soul finds its unique bliss even separated from the body by adhering, through the union of an ineffable communication called vision, to the essential being from whom all other beings take their origin. This being is the principle of all reality, ideality

³²⁹ 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things' (Jn 4: [25]).

³³⁰ For example, in the second book of Maccabees, c. 12, Juda offers sacrifices for the dead. His reason for doing this is hope in the resurrection: 'For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead.' All the hope the Hebrews had was concerned with the good that the just would enjoy after the resurrection of the body.

³³¹ Hence the Messiah himself said: 'I am the resurrection and the life' and insisted that the one who 'lives [believes] in me, though he die, shall live' (Jn 11: [25]). This is Jesus' way of speaking about the effect of the separation of the soul from the body. It would fall into a state similar to that of death, that is, into a kind of inaction, if Christ did not revivify it in some wonderful way.

and sanctity. This sublime teaching — from the height of which human beings see the universe as smaller than a grain of dust — this supernatural belief is the cause of the infinite capacity and infinite activity of Christian generations.

CHAPTER 24

Continuation: how the infinite capacity of desire can endure without any determined object

742. We still have to say something about the second objection put to us: 'If the infinite capacity of the spirit is opened up through the knowledge and experience of an infinite being, this capacity should conversely be restricted in those who do not desire the object of the same experience, for example, those who reject Christian beliefs or do not conform their heartfelt affections to these beliefs.'

743. We need to distinguish happiness, that is, the greatness of the desired good, from the object suitable for realising that happiness or great good. Nothing is easier to conceive than that an individual may want and intend to obtain some given happiness, some given greatness of good, while ignoring the object suitable for bringing this about. He could erroneously search for things altogether unsuitable for obtaining the greatness of good which he desires. It is, of course, true that there can be no desire without an object. At the same time, we have to consider that the object of desire is presented to our cognition in different ways. Sometimes we know it as proper and positive, sometimes as general and abstract, and sometimes at different levels of abstraction. Different ways of desiring the object will correspond to each of these different ways of knowing it.

744. If our cognition is determined, proper and positive, desire will also be determined to its own proper object. If cognition indicates only the general characteristics of the object, without fully determining it, desire also remains vague and undetermined.

The most undetermined knowledge of all, which nevertheless can serve as a support to the affection of our desire, is that presented by good in general. Another cognition presenting a rather less undetermined object is that of *happiness* in general. This is an abstract concept; here, the proper object forming and actuating happiness is not expressed in the idea of happiness; it still has to be sought through human freedom.

It is precisely this happiness conceived abstractly which serves as the object of the infinite, undetermined capacity of which we are speaking. By means of this capacity, the individual feels that he wants some limitless good, but he does not know what this good is; he does not perceive it, and has no positive concept of it.

745. Notice that when human beings have perceived an object, the positive knowledge of the object endures even though the object itself is later removed from their feeling. The same can be said about objects of desire. In order that desire may be actuated in the human spirit, it is necessary that some positive knowledge of an object should have been involved from the beginning; nevertheless, desire outlives positive knowledge of the object. It simply happens that as positive knowledge grows weaker, or is lost altogether in the general conception of some great good, the desire also, without losing its intensity, does in some way break free of its limits. We desire, and we desire intensely, but we cannot name exactly the object we desire. Our affection, or rather our soul's general attitude of affection, remains in act; the capacity of our heart is open like a yawning gap which we try in vain to close by throwing in different materials. We do not know who will be heroic enough to close the chasm by plunging into it.

This capacity, bereft of any determined object, when opened in many individuals belonging to a social body, is propagated to the whole body and preserved from generation to generation. The example of immoderate wishes, and language, are sufficient to communicate it.

746. Some authors have distinguished the *religious feeling* observed in all peoples and at all times from the various forms which this feeling is capable of producing in religions and in acts of divine worship.³³² Two fundamental errors can be observed in this doctrine. In the first, it is falsely supposed that religious feeling precedes religions and has produced them as a result of its need to manifest itself under determined forms. Psychology shows, on the contrary, that although the germ of religious feeling lies in human nature itself, it could never be developed and changed into true feeling and an actual need of religion if

³³² B. Constant.

external communication, operating through language, had not provided human beings with some knowledge of the divinity. History, in agreement with psychology, shows that religion preceded religious feeling in humanity, not vice versa. The first religion, having found the human spirit disposed by nature, enkindled a religious feeling; this in turn survived the ruin of the first religion which had produced it.

747. The second error of the doctrine consists in considering all so-called religions from the same point of view, without distinguishing religion as such from its various corruptions in the endless superstitions commonly called religions. Such improper use of the word gives rise to a long chain of sophisms. Instead, we should say that human spirits were opened to the need for religious forms after religion, already communicated to human beings, had produced religious feeling in them. That need remained when the first religion decreased as a result of the sensual corruption which had entered mankind through ignorance and the obscuring of the understanding. Mankind needed to substitute other forms for that of religion, which had perished because it was too majestic and pure for the material state to which mankind had reduced itself. From this moment, the activity of religious feeling began to use the ruins of the ancient religion which itself was mixed with other materials to manufacture religious forms totally conformed to the state of the human mind and heart. This is the true element in the distinction between feeling and religious forms found in the author we have mentioned.

748. It is true, therefore, that some religious feeling was always present in mankind — provided we grant that it was aroused by the knowledge and experience of the divinity communicated to the first human beings. It is also true that this feeling found itself without an object as religion diminished; it became one of those vague needs and undetermined desires whose existence we wish to ascertain in this chapter. Thirdly, it is true that all these vague, undetermined desires, as well as religious feeling, have in themselves a tendency to self-security, self-determination, and self-expression in definite forms. Finally, it is also true that human beings, having stimulated themselves to find determined forms and objects for their vague desires and general feelings, did not always find these objects

adequate. In such circumstances, mankind only achieves what it knows, what it is capable of and what it wants. In this case, the result of its effort necessarily shows the mark of its ignorance and malice. Mankind willingly deceives itself, and persuades itself of satisfaction from forms and objects absolutely incapable of satisfying it.

The time then comes when it tires of the forms it has discovered and the objects on which it has concentrated its attention. Opening its eyes, and realising its illusion, it goes off in search of better objects and more suitable forms. It is forced to change these over and over again according to a certain type of progress which, instead of leading mankind ultimately to the truth, only succeeds in bringing it finally to a state in which, tired of all forms and of all religious objects, it rejects them all and abandons itself to impiety and atheism. Here, humanity is close to true religion; in such an extremity it feels more than ever the yearning of its heart which longs once more for a God, a true God, an infinite God.

God the Almighty waited for humanity which, having abandoned him, was at the brink of death. He allowed human beings to exhaust all their attempts to provide a surrogate of the divine nature for themselves. The moment of grace arrived when he saw mankind, fallen into the depth of evil, in despair at ever returning to its starting point. Christ came and said: 'Behold, the regions are white for the harvest.'

This is the thread to be followed by anyone wishing to write the history of ancient superstitions — of this strange labyrinth in which humanity had lost itself without hope of exit until he came who at the very moment of despair would lead it out.

CHAPTER 25

Continuation: the different states of unhappiness in the human spirit are reduced to a single formula

749. Some acts of the intelligence depend upon the free will of human beings. All human actions take their origin from this kind of intellective acts; we have called the power that presides over them *practical reason*.³³³ Describing the mistakes of practical reason, or classifying its errors relative to good and evil, is the same as describing and classifying the waywardness of the human will. By doing this, we go to the very root of the matter and, as it were, surprise this waywardness in the very act by which it deviates from the right path.

750. *Practical reason* dominates the faculties of thought and abstraction, and makes both serve its own purposes. If practical reason uses the *faculty of thought* and the *faculty of abstraction* according to their natural functions, the two faculties act in agreement to enlighten the progress of human beings; individuals do what is right, and reach a state of contentment and happiness. However, if practical reason claims from the *faculty of abstraction* more than the latter can give (by requiring from it that which only the *faculty of thought* can give), it confuses the natural objects of these two powers, and produces error in the understanding, disorder in the affections and unhappiness in life.

751. All this needs clarification because it is only from the abuse of these two faculties by practical reason, which confuses their functions, that a general formula can be drawn up to express all the different states of unhappiness to which the

³³³ Cf. *PE*, 114–181. It is a misnomer, and the source of many errors in moral disciplines, to call *moral reason*, *practical reason*. We have shown the immense difference between *practical* and *moral reason* in *PE*, 182–190. — Signor Baroli, in his vast work *Diritto naturale e pubblico*, again follows German authors when he says: ‘Practical reason is the fount of law.’ I believe, on the contrary, that we ought to say that *moral reason* is the fount of laws. *Practical reason* is the fount of the *actions* with which we either fulfil or fail to fulfil whatever laws prescribe. The intrinsic value of the expression, *practical reason*, is the same as that of *operative reason*.

human spirit is subject. These states of unhappiness, because they are produced by the individual on his own behalf, all begin, as we said, from a willed error in the intellect. In other words, they begin from an error which is the efficient cause of affections and external operations. This error can only be explained in human beings if we posit a faculty proper to error. This, in turn, is a function of the practical reason itself, a more general power.

752. Many who deal only superficially with the problem believe it is easy to explain how we make errors in our judgments. This is not the case; the actual fact is very difficult to explain. They also believe that the faculty which enables us to know what is true also enables us to take what is false as true. If we go to the heart of the problem, however, we shall see that this is not so. Truth is independent of us; it is easy, therefore, to conceive a faculty that receives what is true. But what is of itself false is nothing, and does not exist independently of our judgments. We shall not succeed in explaining error, therefore, if we are satisfied with the existence of a faculty that simply receives it in itself; we also require a faculty that produces and creates it.³³⁴

753. How does this faculty of error come to disturb the functions of the two faculties of thought and abstraction, as we have called them? The natural function of the faculty of thought is that of constructing *ends* for our actions; these ends can only consist in the acquisition of real good. The natural function of the faculty of abstraction is that of providing human beings with *rules* that serve as *means* suitable for attaining those ends; each of these rules is an abstraction.³³⁵

³³⁴ *NE*, 3: 1245–1362.

³³⁵ It will help us here if we clarify by means of examples the different functions which we attribute to the *faculties of thought* and *abstraction*.

If I want some remedy for a high fever, and the doctor prescribes sulphate of quinine, I can find the medicine, although I have never seen the substance, by using the abstract ideas of its physical characteristics. If, on the other hand, the doctor, instead of describing these characteristics, simply tells me to ask the chemist for it, I have acquired from my conversation with the doctor an abstract cognition that can be reduced to the following proposition: 'the substance called sulphate of quinine, which chemists sell under this name'. The ideas contained in this proposition are only relationships, or negative information about the sulphate itself, which help me to find it. It is easy to see how each abstract presents our spirit with a rule

754. In the state of Christian humanity, in which this capacity touches its final term of development, people want to find the highest good; they are not content with less. The abstract idea corresponding to such a good is that of happiness; its characteristics are absoluteness and infinity.

If, in searching for this good, we pause before some object which does not possess the two characteristics we have indicated, we can persuade ourselves that the object *does* have those characteristics. The power which achieves this is *practical reason*, the function of error, that is, intellective creativity. In persuading ourselves internally that we must find the happiness we seek in this given good, we put in this real object something that it does not contain; we arbitrarily place in it the characteristics of good, characteristics which we know abstractly. Thus we create a chimera, a vain idol, for ourselves. In other words, we abuse the faculty of abstraction by attempting to make real for ourselves the characteristics of absolute good, characteristics which this faculty submits to our mind as ideal rules and nothing more. In making the characteristics real by means of this kind of intellective make-belief, we see them where we want to see them, although they are not in fact present. We place them in the objects of our passion, which then differ in our spirit from what they actually are.

755. This internal operation of ours has changed what is *abstract* into what is *real*, and confused the functions of our two faculties; it is the simplest, most universal formula of all errors made by our practical reason about good. These errors are the foundation of an equivalent number of states of unhappiness in the human being. I repeat, our capacity, which requires a real object, will always be discontent with a self-fabricated chimera for which we cannot provide true, real subsistence; and our discontented capacity will always remain unhappy.

enabling us to find objects corresponding to it in the faculty of thought. The abstract idea of pleasure, for example, leads us to know pleasurable objects; the idea of uprightness what is upright; the idea of beauty what is beautiful, and so on for every other abstraction.

CHAPTER 26

A description of the various states of unhappiness in which the human spirit often finds itself

756. What are the causes drawing us to such extremes that we place ourselves in a state of unhappiness through bad use of our practical reason? How does it come about that practical reason is led to disturb the functions of the two faculties of thought and abstraction by requiring from the second faculty the real good which only the first can give?

There are two causes of this fatal effect: human freedom is certainly one; the other is the passions which enslave us when we consent to them. These passions are stimulated by the general capacity of our human desire.

757. By means of this general capacity, we have unlimited desire. This desire lacks an object, but requires one and wants to be satisfied at all costs. As human desire cries out imperiously for satisfaction, all the passions emerge from the human heart and present themselves one by one. Each says: 'I am here to content you; I possess the objects capable of satisfying your longings.' We hope for what we desire, and we believe what we hope. The urgency and intensity of the general desire for happiness makes us totally confident in the promises of any passion which first presents itself. We immediately begin to experiment with it, seeking the good which we need by abandoning ourselves to a tyrant who then betrays us.

Thus the states of unhappiness, that is, the states of our *infinite, discontented capacity*, are as numerous as the passions moving the practical reason to commit the error of claiming that an infinite capacity can be filled with finite objects. We must make a short list of such fatal errors.

758. The first attempt to acquire happiness consists in seeing if it exists in bodily gratification. When we set out on this road, we do so to satisfy the spirit, not the body, with sensual enjoyment. Note carefully: we say that sensual enjoyment for the person who seeks happiness in it is not merely bodily enjoyment but a mixture of bodily and spiritual enjoyment. We do

not wish to use what we find gratifying; our end is gratification itself; we do not seek the real thing in gratification, but the abstract which we imagine we can find there. It is the rational, personal will which, although it requires satisfaction, cannot be satisfied with anything limited (it can only be satisfied with the unlimited good that corresponds to the general idea of happiness which serve us as a rule) and seeks within bodily enjoyment something infinite which cannot be present, and which therefore we never find there.

759. This explains the unrestrained libido proper to human beings alone, and unknown in animals. Human desire for ever-increasing pleasure is never satisfied; people often prefer to die rather than renounce it. This also explains the infinite longings and perpetual deceits of physical love, as well as all the arts of seduction. Moreover, the very efforts people continually make to content their capacity by means of some inadequate object are themselves the source of arousal relative to the particular pleasure in view: the more individuals feel they enjoy such pleasure, the more they are strengthened in their vain hope of contentment through an increase of the pleasure itself. No increase however can provide this contentment; particular pleasures cannot satisfy general desire, such as intellectual desire. Consequently, after experiencing pleasure, people desire still greater pleasure. The capacity, never satisfied, increases indefinitely, and with it the torment and unhappiness that come as people see themselves subjected to long-awaited but perpetually frustrated satisfaction. The resultant self-pity and immense emptiness of heart is followed finally by a state of never-ending rage and inexplicable fury far worse than madness. Other consequences are the conjunction of effeminacy and ferocity, the black moods and lack of love between dissolute fathers, mothers and children, the voluptuous dwellings and luxurious clothes which shelter the hearts of tyrants as they develop their insatiable thirst for blood. People suffering great emptiness of spirit become restless, frenetic, ferocious; the slaughter of millions appears of little importance to the dark hunger of such beasts if they can but succeed in surpassing the achievements of their fellow human beings.

760. Another kind of experience impels individuals to find their happiness in exterior good by means of the idea they form of wealth.

Pleasure cannot provide individuals with any opinion about the aggrandisement of their nature; it can only attract them deceitfully to feed on vivid gratification. The contrary is true of the material good which makes up wealth. Because this good has a lasting existence, it can easily produce in individuals some opinion of their own greatness; people who see themselves accumulating many possessions can easily persuade themselves that they have grown in stature.

761. The practical reason can therefore deceive itself in two ways relative to the possession of external things. First, it begins by trusting in its power to find *status* in the possession of wealth considered as a kind of extension of the person's own existence. This is an abstract idea, posited in a material, finite object. Then it hopes by means of wealth to obtain any pleasure it wants. Wealth, it seems, can secure for individuals the enjoyment of all their desires, and make them enjoy all pleasure simultaneously through the hope and assurance it gives them.

762. This explains the origins of disgusting, twofold avarice — avarice whose end is money, as though money made human beings great, and avarice which sees in money the means for obtaining comfort and enjoyment. Strangely enough, however, avaricious persons can never be induced to throw away money on pleasure because they are continually afraid of losing it all. They are quite happy at finding themselves in an apparently *secure* state where they can enjoy pleasure when they want to; this appeals to them more than *actually* enjoying pleasure. In both cases, these persons spend nothing. In the first case, on principle; in the second, because of the unending deception that makes them defer the enjoyment they love for the sake of always having it within their power.

763. However, because it is really impossible for people to find in wealth either *status* or complete *dominion* over enjoyment, it is also impossible for them to find contentment and happiness in accumulating treasure. Human capacity, aggravated by this, grows; the heart attributes lack of fulfilment solely to the small quantity of wealth possessed and acquired. People press on to riches with greater cupidity which, as it increases, feeds like a starving wolf on all their desires. It is no surprise, therefore, to see in misers an increase in their longing and need for wealth as their riches grow. At the sight of what

they have attained, their confidence grows that more of it will surely bring them nearer to the ideal status and security they long for. Moreover, this capacity does not increase by arithmetical progression; like every capacity, it increases by geometrical progression, because what people gain in this way, unceasingly intensifies their previous capacity. In other words, this capacity expands and sharpens extremely swiftly in individuals. Finally it produces blind men and women who sell their all — their tranquillity, health, chastity, blood, life itself — for the sake of money. We should not marvel that the human heart behaves like this; there is greater reason to wonder at the attitude of certain economists crazy enough to maintain that the wealth of nations may be increased by the sale of virtue, and that vice should be encouraged if the State would otherwise lose some of its wealth.

In this way, our infinite, undetermined capacity takes the external form of bottomless avarice as compelling and extensive as the capacity which it represents and expresses. The illusion driving people to seek in masses of material riches the abstract idea of status necessary to content their rational will gradually becomes more common and eventually a maxim of State. It is this which has furnished nations with their restless search for gain and self-interest, a clear symptom of their unhappiness.

764. I have already noted that cupidity for artificial wealth³³⁶ is more noticeably intellectual than the result of sensual gratification. The *spirit of sense*, although more immediately dominant in sensual gratification, also dominates in cupidity. In fact, to say that intelligence has a part in a certain operation does not mean that the *spirit of intelligence* dominates in it. This spirit prevails in our operations only when we are moved to act by an object of the *faculty of thought*, that is, by a real, not a

³³⁶ Aristotle's observation, that *avarice* properly speaking entered the world with the invention of money, seems to be both true and philosophical. He continues: 'Wealth dependent on such a method of gain is *infinite*. Every art seeks its end without limit; only the means employed are limited as a result of the end. Thus, this art of making money has no term; wealth like this, and such a method of achieving it, is itself the end' (*Politics*, bk. 1, c. 6). — The moral effect of the invention and use of money had already been seen before Aristotle by Lycurgus, who had forbidden the use of gold and silver coinage.

chimerical object. As long as we want pleasure or gold not for the objects they actually are but for the objects we imagine them to be, we are deceived by the spirit of sense which persuades us to posit enough affection in a material object to raise it fictitiously to the level of a spiritual object.

765. The third object according to which the *infinite capacity* of the human heart seeks to determine itself is power. In this case, the undetermined capacity manifests itself under the form of *avidity for domination*.

Domination of course is always a particular, limited object. Practical reason, however, deceiving itself in the same deplorable way as before, seeks in domination two things which are impossible to find there: unlimited *power*, to which it is led by the abstract idea of power, or *security* in the possession of goods. This *security*, also unlimited and therefore *general*, is not real security, which is fallible and restricted to one good or another.

In the first case, *power* is *end*, in the second *means*, but means valued and loved as much as the end.

766. Let us consider how the chimerical fabric created by people's intellective imagination becomes ever more complicated and extensive. Power loved for its own sake is only a deceitful ploy by which individuals persuade themselves that their real greatness consists in the force they use to subject to themselves many of their fellows. Hence the ambition to apply as much force as possible, and subject to oneself the greatest possible number of human beings. This special capacity, once aroused in people, produces its own growing itch in a way similar to that of pleasure and wealth. The good instinct present in still undepraved nature teaches primitive peoples what the Scythians declared to Alexander: 'Take heed that we can neither serve anyone nor want to command anyone.'³³⁷ But the avidity for domination, awakened in the spirit of a people, together with its hopes and successes, whets the appetite of the nation far more effectively than the other two capacities we have described. The history of conquerors shows how soon such a capacity maddens human beings. They even deny humanity for the sake of attributing divine honours to

³³⁷ Quint. Curt., bk. 7.

themselves. And these are people in daily danger of suffocating in lust or wine, or dying ingloriously by poison or the sword to the sound of universal mockery.

If immoderate power is not sought for itself but as means to wealth or pleasure, the chimerical edifice rises still higher. What people want is power in general, not power to a particular degree. In other words, they want unlimited power to which they are drawn by the abstract notion of power. They want to realise this abstract notion of power in order to attain and realise yet another abstract, that of wealth. This interminable desire of wealth, abstractly considered, is itself desired as a means of attaining pleasure, yet another chimerical entity. And again, it is not a question of a determined kind of pleasure, as in the case of the other two objects, but of pleasure conceived by the mind and impossible to fully realise.

What a fine, three-storied building! What a triple chain of errors human beings use to entangle themselves! They take their abstract ideas for real beings and subordinate them one to another; they put themselves in a state of perpetual agitation as they try to reach one impossible mirage by means of another, equally impossible, which itself is sought through yet a third impossible mirage. Yet, once the undetermined capacity is self-determined to power considered as an object in itself, everything is sacrificed to this end.

767. If, however, power is considered as a means for attaining and defending wealth, everything is sacrificed to power except wealth itself — strangely enough, even wealth could be sacrificed in an infrequent contradiction by which the *power of attaining wealth* is more sought after than wealth itself; it is rather like sacrificing pleasure to money for the sake of having in one's power the ability for enjoying pleasure rather than actual enjoyment. Again, the thirst for wealth which of its own accord sacrifices everything to itself could have pleasure as its aim. In this case, it sacrifices everything except pleasure, an undetermined pleasure because it springs from a general concept. As a result, it always happens that the human spirit's endeavour to satisfy itself through power proves impossible. Its *capacity* simply extends itself precipitously and constantly through its very attempts to content itself, and through the increase in the good for which it is searching.

History shows how the most outstanding actions suffer aggravation from the capacity for power as a result of its useless efforts to content itself. Rome, as it became incapable of increasing its conquests in proportion to the growth and pressure of its capacity for dominion, fixed its attention more avidly than ever on arenas soaked in human blood. Rome's Neros and Caligulas are easily explained if we keep in mind how the capacity of these men, first rendered lustful, blind and immense through the very *quantity* of their subjects, then had to seek satisfaction in the *quality* of their subjugation. It felt itself master of human blood, although this brought no contentment but rather incitement to greater fury and a burning, increasing longing for power.

768. The fourth good in which the vague desire for happiness seeks its determination is *glory*, through which human capacity expresses and clothes itself in a new form, that is, in the desire to make one's name famous.

Glory also can be considered either as end in which human beings place all their happiness, or as a means for attaining power, wealth or pleasure. In addition, love of glory is either totally undetermined or has an object to which it is referred.

769. When people seek happiness in glory without reference to any other object, or without making glory serve some other end, their aim is chimerical and base. Yet we still see virtue defined as 'love of glory'.³³⁸ Imaginative young men tend towards this illusion; they burn as they hear this cry. If, in these circumstances, fame is sought for itself, without its being fixed on any object, everything is sacrificed to it. This principle was followed by the arsonist who set fire to the temple of Diana at Ephesus. Every famous thief justifies himself with this principle; every great confidence trickster makes it his boast.

770. If the desire for *fame* stops at fame alone, it is not yet *glory*; fame is glory only when united to praise. The first of these two longings, more abstract and undetermined than the other, is also more dangerous. It equates great crime with great virtue; it is always in search of what is noticeable, not what is just and beneficent. The second has an object — praise — which, however, is neither solid nor real, but as variable as

³³⁸ Alfieri, *Del Principe e delle Lettere*.

human caprice. Human beings, according to the level of their degradation, sometimes exalt things, sometimes despise them. First, they argue about whose military undertaking is most to be praised; the same people then want to decide who receives glory for first inventing *pâté de foie gras*.

Individuals who seek only praise are indifferent to vice and virtue; it is all the same to them whether they are praised for the quantity of wine they can hold or for their temperance,³³⁹ for their vast estates or for their poverty, for their power of vendetta or their meekness. If what they first seek is no longer praised by people, they magnanimously reject it; like some new Sesostres, if the story is to be believed, they turn back to their native Egypt, satiated beyond measure with the pure glory of conquest, after conquering nations beyond the Ganges and as far north as the Danube.³⁴⁰

771. If an individual is not eager for praise as such, but only for the kind that derives from some special source, it remains to be seen if his object is sufficiently determined and real, or whether it remains abstract and chimerical.

The glory sought can be referred to four chimerical objects: pleasure, wealth, power and knowledge. Referring it to pleasure produces *vanity*; to wealth, *luxury* and *sumptuousness*; to power, *ambition*; to knowledge, *presumption*.

772. In contradistinction to animals, only human beings change bodily pleasure into a spiritual object, that is, into a means for contenting the general capacity of their spirit. *Vanity*, therefore, is proper to human beings alone. It would be impossible to vaunt physical pleasure without drawing from it a corresponding abstract idea and providing it with some kind of subsistence. This explains why women and attractive men find a stimulant to self-love in their power to arouse pleasure, love, desire and hope in others, or at least in their power to generate in others the realisation that such tenderness and emotional tumult can be aroused at will. This would be impossible unless others' senses were continually flattered and provided with a foretaste of

³³⁹ As a young man, Cyrus wrote to the Spartans encouraging them to help him deprive his brother Artaxerxes of the throne. Amongst his other reasons, he affirmed that he could *drink more wine and hold it better than his brother*.

³⁴⁰ Herodotus, bk. 1, and Diog. Sic., bk. 1.

pleasure serving to incite them to investigate the possibility of more intimate enjoyment. Feeling, however, is of such a nature that it tires of its own object; the law governing animal-fibre forces it to slow down and renders it incapable of maintaining the same tension for a lengthy period. Hence the ever-present need to revise thought and effort, the continual, untiring volubility of fashion and of all those niceties which constitute smart society. The speed with which these changes take place offers an infallible rule for measuring the *vanity* of nations.

The frivolity or superficiality of this cupidity does not detract from its infinity. This explains its constant disquiet; the vain thrust of the person concerned is unable to absorb the abstract of pleasure he has proposed for himself. This capacity, like every other, extends itself ceaselessly, but only to madden its subjects and urge them on towards the unattainable, that is, towards full satisfaction. Totally frivolous society is finally so aggravated that it goes out of its mind and loses all common sense; it falsifies all its ideas by filling them with extremely vain, ridiculous prejudices which form and agitate the intellectual fantasising of smart society.

773. Luxury and sumptuousness, which appear to be loved more for the sake of ostentatious wealth or power (wealth comes to stand for power) than for pleasure, accompany fashion. The passion for sumptuousness is itself as unlimited as other capacities; an individual can eat at a banquet fit for a king but still not be content precisely because in *sumptuousness* he seeks something other than sumptuousness.

774. The same occurs in the case of *ambition*, through which people seek the glory proper to power; ambition neither has nor can have limits in the minds of those who desire it. The very lack of limits means that there is never a limit to the acquisition of power.

775. Literary fame is also without any fixed object if it is reduced to a general desire for a name as writer or scholar. Authors who seek fame flatter the vices of the world, and impress upon their work all the corruption that stains the world. They sacrifice to their vanity both religion and virtue, and all that is decent and useful for the world; they corrupt literary and artistic taste, which they drag down with themselves. Yet these base members of society remain discontent; they are more restless,

envious and contentious than ever. Their need for fame becomes more urgent, as they come to believe they have attained it.³⁴¹

776. Six kinds of glory can, therefore, be desired: the most extended kind, which consists simply in fame, the most restricted, which consists only in praise, and the four kinds we have listed, which have as their objects pleasure, wealth, power and knowledge. The quest for all these types of glory is marked by illusion and impossibility because they lack a determined object. Their aim is unlimited glory, not a fixed quantity of it.

777. Finally, the glory of virtue may be desired without love of virtue. This is *hypocrisy*, a seventh kind of glory which must be added to the other six.³⁴² Each of these kinds of glory can be sought either for itself or as a means of obtaining pleasure, wealth or power. We know that Helvetius sought literary glory for the sake of pleasing women; mercenaries usually seek fame as soldiers for the sake of money; other people desire to be known as courageous and valiant in order to acquire authority and power in society.³⁴³

³⁴¹ Rousseau, speaking about literary vanity, says: 'Every artist wants applause; the praise of his contemporaries is the most precious part of his recompense. So what does he do to obtain it if he has the disadvantage of being born amongst people and at times when fashionable learning has made frivolous youth the standard for smart society? Or if people have sacrificed their taste to the tyrants who oppress their freedom? Or if one of the two sexes, able to approve only what is proportioned to the pusillanimity of the other, neglects noble pieces of dramatic poetry and rejects prodigious harmonies? He will lower his genius to the level of his age and prefer to compose common works admired during his own time rather than wonders to be admired only after his death. Arouet (Voltaire), you are famous! Tell us how you sacrificed virile, strong beauty to our false delicacy, and how your spirit of gallantry, so fertile in little things, has deprived you of what is great!' (*Discours à l'Académie de Dijon*). — The person who seeks glory longs for immediate, instantaneous glory to the extent that he is dominated by the spirit of sense. In such circumstances he has less strength of soul to appreciate delayed, but lasting glory. As we said, space and time vanish in face of the spirit of sense.

³⁴² The glory of false virtue is reduced to one of these six kinds. Virtue is false when made to consist in the art of acquiring one of the four types of good we have enumerated.

³⁴³ Desiring greater glory than one merits is an injustice pertaining to the cupidity which wants glory for its own sake without reference to some other end.

778. The fifth and last vain attempt that individuals make in their search for the happiness they have mentally created for themselves is to look for it in *knowledge*. The undetermined capacity of the human heart, when seeking determination in this way, takes the form of desire for knowledge without any deliberate choice about what it wants to know. This is *curiosity*.

779. Knowledge can also be desired for itself, or as an instrument for obtaining some other good. Considered *per se* it presents two kinds of good to individuals: *enjoyment*, when they actually meditate the truths known, and *enrichment of spirit* when they reflect that they possess these truths as a kind of treasure kept in a safe place from which it can be taken out at will and admired and enjoyed. In both cases, love of learning can tend towards undetermined and inexhaustible, rather than real, determined information.

However, people may not want to draw on the pleasure that can be theirs from sight of the cognitions they have obtained, or from consciousness of possessing them; instead, they may want to turn to the unlimited pleasure that will fully satisfy the happiness they aim to find in knowledge. In this case, they open within themselves a new capacity that will never be fulfilled. Meditation on already acquired cognitions, and the effort to acquire new cognitions, will have neither term nor order. Literary personalities grow immeasurably cranky and irritable as a result; their unhealthy dens, where individuals grow lined and old, reverberate with contempt for their fellow-workers; together, they come to deny even common sense.

780. The longing for knowledge becomes insatiable and a source of increasing unhappiness, whether the aim is pleasure in general or the accumulation of spiritual riches. The same is true if, through knowledge, we seek physical pleasure, wealth, power or glory as a result of conceiving these things ideally, that is, without limit. If the end has no determined limit, the means used to achieve it has no limit either; whatever its increase, the means will never attain a fitting, sufficient measure.

CHAPTER 27

Continuation: outlines of a map of the human heart

781. We have listed the principal states of unhappiness in which the human spirit can be found. As we saw, *happiness* of spirit consists in the satisfied capacity for an absolute good, and *unhappiness* in unsatisfiable capacities. Consequently, the enumeration of the states in which human beings are unhappy consisted and could only consist in the enumeration of longings through which we hope to uncover the infinite in the finite, that is, make possible what is intrinsically impossible.

782. The vastness of the human spirit is best seen through a consideration of the innumerable different states in which the spirit can find itself. These states can be multiplied without end, especially when we are dealing with states of unhappiness.

The state of happiness has something unique and absolute, although it too is infinitely variable relative to the quantity of enjoyment connected with it, and relative to the various modifications that can be found in the quantity of this enjoyment. I offer this affirmation without proof, and leave it for the readers' consideration.³⁴⁴ Let me pass on instead to some reflections on what I have said.

783. These reflections are of the most immediate interest in a discussion on the end of society, and on the philosophical aims which wise government must set before itself if society is to be induced to follow its lead. Just as it is obviously necessary for government to be aware of the topography of the country it is governing, it is no less necessary and important for it to have a map, if I may put it like that, of the human heart, which is no less vast than the greatest empire.

Journeying through the heart, however, is more difficult than crossing an empire; triangulation of the heart is more difficult again. We are dealing not with a specialised but a general map, that is, with outlines suitable for describing certain territories

³⁴⁴ We have, however, already offered reasons for the first part of the proposition, and shown why the *quantity* of enjoyment can vary in happiness of spirit.

and limits. These are drawn by indicating various satisfied and unsatisfied capacities which can be found in the interior of the human spirit. Let us first synthesise what was said in the preceding chapter, and simply enumerate the illusory capacities to which the human spirit is subject; we shall also point to the incredible multiplicity of the different states of unhappiness constituted by the same capacities as they struggle together in so many ways.

784. We see, therefore, that the errors which the *practical reason* can make about unhappiness, and the various kinds of *illusory capacities* which continually extend and aggravate the human spirit as they lead it to a state which can only be called *moral madness*, are one hundred and twenty-eight.

Physical pleasure has one unsatisfiable capacity whenever the pleasure sought is not real and determined, but conceived in general.

Wealth has two unsatisfiable capacities; the aim is either wealth in general, or wealth sought for the sake of pleasure in general.

Power has four unsatisfiable capacities; the aim is either power in general for its own sake, or for pleasure in general, or for wealth which again, as we have said, forms an undetermined object whether sought for itself or as a means of obtaining pleasure in general.

Glory has fifty-six capacities, all of them unsatisfiable of their own nature. I have distinguished seven kinds of glory, each of which can be desired 1. for itself, or 2. as a means for obtaining physical pleasure, which has only one abstract concept, or 3. for the sake of obtaining wealth, which admits two abstract concepts, or 4. for the sake of obtaining power, which admits of four abstract concepts under which it is presented to our appetite as an abstract, chimerical object.

Finally, sixty-five capacities can be listed in *knowledge*. All of these are unsatisfiable, extend indefinitely in human beings and can never be filled. They are present 1. when pleasure in general is sought in knowledge; 2. when indefinite richness of mind is sought. Knowledge, considered as enrichment of mind, can then be desired for itself, or as a means to pleasure, or power, or wealth, or glory. As we saw, pleasure opens the gate to error in the intellect and waywardness of heart in one way, wealth in

two, power in four and glory in fifty-six ways. All these ways constitute the same number of illusory, indefinite ends for which knowledge can serve as means.

Added together, all these unsatisfiable capacities, each specifically different from the others, is found to number one hundred and twenty-eight. This is the vast labyrinth in which the hearts of men and women wander endlessly and lose themselves.

785. What we have said, however, is nothing compared to what has to be known in order to follow all the complex meanderings of this immense labyrinth. Let me add some new reflections intended to throw light on the infinite complexity of its tortuous paths.

First, to the hundred and twenty-eight unsatisfiable capacities which form an equivalent number of states of unhappiness, we have to add that capacity which sums up all of them in itself. This capacity has its origin in the deceit and weariness generated by all the others in evolved and spineless nations, or as we normally say, in nations grown old in civilisation.

786. In all errors about happiness, human beings always judge rashly through precipitous, inexperienced and unreasonable affirmations. They do this because they want to. They judge that the good before them which shows itself attractive must indeed be the object of the happiness they seek. The profound root of this rash judgment is not only the need to be happy, but also the proud hope that they can choose for themselves the object which must make them happy. Human beings do not want happiness alone; they want it precisely in the object of their arbitrary choice, as though they were the creators of what must make them happy. This extremely stupid presumption of the human heart is the natural seed of human evils, as well as the most difficult to discover and bring to the light.

Sometimes the individual, overwhelmed and shaken by abuse of exterior things, comes to see his error. But instead of turning back to the truth, he abandons himself to some new deceit, persuading himself in the end that happiness does not consist in something definite, but in perpetual agitation and continual change. He tells himself (this is sophistry at its extreme limit) that life consists in movement, death in rest; that true, real happiness does not exist, but only a brief illusion of happiness which has to be sought incessantly as one illusion

gives way to another. Thus, he sustains deceit and continual agitation.

At this point, the individual has passed from error to true moral dementia; although he has abandoned everything else, he has not renounced himself. He thinks that nothing can make him happy except an act of his own will; he believes he can believe in his own happiness which, as he knows, is nothing. What a state to be in! Our individual cannot deceive himself totally, nor deceive himself endlessly, nor deceive himself to the extent of finding tranquillity in error, nor does he want in any way to know the truth. This final state of the human spirit would seem impossible unless experience had shown it to exist in many people, and unless these principles, proclaimed by some as the quintessence of moral philosophy, had been followed even in political theory.³⁴⁵

All one hundred and twenty-nine illusions of happiness, therefore, include the intimate persuasion that people can make themselves happy. Nevertheless, they still seek assistance in other illusions as they work to make themselves happy. In the last illusion, however, human beings, convinced of the impotence of other things but not of their own, wish to do everything of themselves. This false feeling contains diabolical grandeur.

787. The illusions of the practical reason are, therefore, one hundred and twenty-nine, each of which constitutes a path to human unhappiness.

Note, however, that none of these excludes any others, and that the final illusion does not exclude those which precede it, granted the contradictions to which human beings are subject as slaves of error. It is possible to find crammed together in the same spirit two, three, four or more of these cupidities right up to the number we have indicated. There are as many states of unhappiness in the human soul as there are approximation to one, two, three and so on of these hundred and twenty-nine illusions. These different approximations and states reach such an impossibly high number that if they were expressed in Arabic numerals, this entire

³⁴⁵ Cf. my *Saggio sulla speranza in Opuscoli Filosofici*, vol 2 (Milan, Tipog. Pogliani, 1828), and *Storia comparativa de' sistemi morali*, ch. 4, art. 4.

sheet of paper would scarcely be enough to hold them. The variety of human spirits is indeed incredibly greater than that of human faces.

788. Nevertheless, even this is not sufficient to show the immense variety of unhappy states in human spirits. The immense number of which we have spoken contains only the specifically different states in which the human spirit can be found ('specifically different' because the unsatisfiable capacities forming these states are specifically different). In addition each of these unsatisfiable capacities which open in the human heart varies according to the degree of intensity to which it is raised; each capacity can open itself to different degrees, and each can be agitated to a different degree. These degrees of agitation and openness form a series without limit of any kind, except perhaps of human insufferance which lapses into despair, incapable of bearing its pain.

These are the unhappy states in which human beings can find themselves in the present life; we have said nothing about the happy states. Surely the vastness and variety of the regions of the spirit, the arduous work needed to map them is, as we said, clear to all!

CHAPTER 28

The hierarchy of the unsatisfiable capacities of the spirit

789. The immense number of physiognomies assumed by human unhappiness can be classified into a kind of hierarchy in the same way as we classify the mental abstractions which serve as the basis of the various kinds of unhappiness we are describing. Because abstractions are more or less general, illusions about happiness rest on more or less general abstractions.

790. In our case, the most general abstract idea is that of *happiness*. This, however, lies under an infinite number of other abstract ideas which become continually more determined until they conclude with the determined idea to which real objects correspond. Individual, real objects could not be considered as objects corresponding to the general idea of happiness unless they were mediated through more restricted, special ideas of good to which the objects directly correspond. Let me explain.

Every time we falsely take a real object as that which corresponds to our happiness, we commit an error in which on analysis we would find other errors. We do not, in fact, erroneously assume something as the object of our happiness unless we have substituted various abstract ideas of particular kinds of good for more general ideas. This substitution is carried out as we go on putting restricted ideas in the place of ever broader ideas, until we come to the point where we confuse particular ideas with the idea of generic happiness. I mean: 'Every abstract idea is a rule by which we are led to acknowledge the real object corresponding to it.'

This occurs infallibly every time the abstract mental conception and the positive conception of a real thing are present and compared with one another. When, however, the positive conception of the real thing is removed from our mind, we no longer know how to indicate to ourselves in a determined way the object signalled by our abstract mental conception. This conception no longer harmonises perfectly with any of our positive mental conceptions and consequently remains in the mind as an empty outline, an undetermined notion. Despite this, if the real

object corresponding to our abstract conception is of extreme interest or necessary for us (our happiness is a case in point), we confuse the general abstract conception (the abstract idea of happiness) with all the special abstracts which are either subject to it or form part of it (unless we once more stumble across the real object itself). For example, we take the abstract conception of pleasure as the abstract of happiness (the first class of error).

Indeed, we take all the real objects known by us through their correspondence in some way to the special abstracts as objects corresponding to the general abstract (the second class of error). This is what actually happens in the illusions of false happinesses which we have described.

791. If we place our desire of happiness in relationship with the true, proper object which achieves it, our desire comes to be determined by the unity of this object. If, however, this desire and conception of happiness are divided from their proper object, they remain undetermined and empty. At this point, our heart wants something, but does not know exactly what it wants. It conceives its happiness, therefore, in a general, undetermined way; through its longing to give some kind of determination to its happiness it confuses happiness with other abstract but less undetermined ideas. The special ideas of which I am speaking have a certain relationship of likeness with the more general idea of happiness, of which they can become elements. Let us see how this is applied.

792. The absolute good corresponding to the fully undetermined, abstract idea of happiness has five characteristics and elements. These five elements are known through the abstract ideas or mental conceptions corresponding to them. It is precisely these abstract ideas or conceptions that we confuse and exchange with the *general abstract of happiness*.

793. The first characteristic and element of happiness is that happiness is *actual enjoyment*. Thus, human beings find a likeness to happiness in felt pleasure. Immediately, they produce the abstract idea of pleasure. This special, abstract idea is then exchanged for the generic, abstract idea of happiness. We then go on to believe that the object of the special abstract idea is the object of the generic idea. This is the origin of the first class of illusions.

794. The second characteristic and element of happiness is

that this enjoyment should come to us from the *possession of an object* different from us; human beings are capable and desirous of possessing other things in order to make up for their own limitation. In material wealth, and in ownership of every kind, people find some object to possess, and therefore some likeness between wealth and happiness. Once formed, the special abstract of wealth is confused with the general abstract of happiness, and we begin to hope that real wealth, which corresponds to the idea of *wealth*, corresponds also to the idea of happiness. This is the origin of the second class of illusions.

795. The third characteristic and element of happiness is that the object of happiness possessed by us *should amplify our nature*. Human beings believe they find this effect in *power*, through which some are persuaded of their superiority over others. As a result of this apparent likeness between the conception of power and that of happiness, the special abstract of *power* is taken for the general abstract of happiness, and the object of power as the object of happiness itself. Hence the third class of illusions.

796. The fourth characteristic and element of happiness is that the pleasure and the object possessed, and one's own greatness, *reside in the spiritual part of human beings*.³⁴⁶ Especially attractive to our spirit is the possession of knowledge, which contains a close resemblance to happiness. Consequently, human beings deceive themselves by imagining that their happiness consists in knowledge in general. They take the abstract of *knowledge* for the abstract of happiness, and exchange the objects of happiness with those corresponding to the idea of knowledge. Hence the fourth class of illusions.

797. Finally, the fifth characteristic and element of happiness is that human beings, when reflecting upon themselves, *see* or can see and describe *themselves as happy*. They have a sure, lively consciousness of this state, which is authenticated and confirmed either by some infallible witness or at least by the greatest possible number of witnesses. Moreover, they want such witness in favour of their state of greatness and happiness to endure eternally, or at least be repeated as often as possible

³⁴⁶ We have shown that human beings are not content except through an act of the intellect.

and with the greatest efficacy and vivacity. All this is desired so that they may have the highest conviction and most actual perception of their own greatness.

This is achieved by *glory*. Glory brings home vividly the greatness of the individual, and provides him with a secret complacency. This triumph seems to come from the glory of the people persuaded of his greatness, from whom he draws his praise. Finding a resemblance between glory and happiness, he first confuses the abstract of glory with that of happiness, and then goes on to believe that the realisation of human glory is the same as the realisation of his happiness. This gives rise to the fifth class of illusions.

798. These are the five special abstracts, superior to all others, which are confused with the most general abstract of happiness.

799. As I was saying, therefore, other minor abstracts are ranked beneath the five special abstracts captained by the general abstract of happiness. Although they are too many to be listed, they form a hierarchy of ideas, of which the last represents the lowest kind of real objects.³⁴⁷

A hierarchy of possible errors and illusions about happiness corresponds to this hierarchy of ideas when human practical reason confuses one or other of the levels in the hierarchy. It takes the lowest real object in the hierarchy and elevates it level by level as it were to the highest level of all occupied by the most abstract notion of happiness.

³⁴⁷ For example, under the abstract of felt pleasure, we have the lesser abstracts of pleasurable food and physical love. Some people would reduce all pleasure, let us say, to eating, and thus confuse the idea of this specialised felt pleasure with the idea of felt pleasure in general. The objects of the former are then taken as the objects of the latter.

CHAPTER 29

Political harm arising from unsatisfied capacities

800. We have listed the unsatisfiable capacities and seen the ferocity to which they can rise when provoked. We still have to consider the gravity and incurability of the harm they inflict on human society.

801. First, they go so far as to destroy the end of society, which is simply contentment of spirit.³⁴⁸ Nothing is more contrary to wise, civil government, therefore, than arousing in subjects the states of disquiet and unhappiness we have enumerated; nothing is more in keeping with wise, civil government than removing from society those occasions which give rise to the useless opening of unfulfillable capacities. On the contrary, what is needed is intense application to obtaining the conditions necessary for contentment.

802. This radical evil, which strikes at the very life of society by impeding the end for which it exists, is not alone in inflicting harm on society. Other public evils arise indirectly from the unsatisfied capacities of its members. The following are the principal:

1. People torn apart by unsatisfiable capacities necessarily form false judgments about the happy or unhappy state of others.

These false judgments are harmful to society to the degree that those holding them influence society.

There are two principal false judgments about the happiness or unhappiness of others. The first consists in judging that all good, everything that can bring people nearer the state of happiness, is found in the *objects* of people's own capacities. Those who judge in this way measure public happiness by the number of objects corresponding to people's capacities. Examples of this are the quantity of pleasure, wealth, and so on.

The second false judgment consists in judging that all evil consists in a lack of objects proper to people's capacities. According to this judgment, the least suffering undergone by

³⁴⁸ Chapter 1.

the senses, the least possible poverty, and so on, are the things that produce the happiest nation.

803. Consequently, if love of pleasure, for example, or vanity, but above all the final cupidity of movement, is dominant, a curious kind of prejudice will arise leading practically everyone to judge that public happiness consists and increases in proportion to the instability of forms and to the speed given to all social movements. In other words, instability and speed seem to contribute power to the spirit and to stimulate life. In this state, no credence will be given to sober, virtuous individuals who maintain that they are content with their modest way of life — their severe way of life, as their contemporaries will call it. These individuals are either cursed as hypocrites, or at best deplored as crazy and abhorred for their stubbornness and obstinacy. At the same time, politicians believe themselves great benefactors if they succeed in preventing citizens from contenting themselves with a sparse, decent life.

Nonetheless, these great politicians, whose refined sensitivity is disturbed by the serene, moderate spirit of the citizens they govern, sometimes confess their own unhappiness, and often feel a void in their hearts which they vainly try to fill by continually increasing the cupidities which produce it.

804. 2. Granted the presence of many people without peace because of the unsatisfiable capacities opened in them, the natural motion of society is disturbed.

Here we can observe the rapidity of social movement and the obstacles society finds in this movement.

The *rapidity* has its origin in the desired object to which society is drawn or in the hated object at which it balks.

All one hundred and twenty-eight cupidities produce movement of the first kind (movement towards a term) because of the imaginary object that attracts them.

The final cupidity produces the second kind of movement (movement from a term), according to which people tend to flee without having any object to which they can move.

The right degree of speed in social movement must be defined by reason alone, which prescribes its varying velocity either according to circumstances or according to the calculation of the effects, with reference to their total utility. On the other hand, unenlightened passions hasten uncontrollably to their

aim, and senselessly add to the quantity of movement judged suitable by calm reason. We can, therefore, say with certainty that 'the cause accelerating all movement in society is the degree of total unhappiness.'

805. As a machine breaks down and disintegrates when its different movements are driven in a way foreign to its nature and construction, so too the social order is endangered when unhappy disquiet in spirits throws everything into great agitation. However, while the other cupidities provide too fast a movement and harm different parts of the social machine, the final cupidity has as its immediate, proper effect that of radically disturbing society.

806. The *obstacles* encountered by rapid movement are the most efficacious, immediate cause of the disintegration of society. These obstacles, standing in the way of inflamed spirits, are of two kinds. One is made up of obstacles springing from the essential impossibility of contentment. This makes people habitually unhappy and puts them in a *permanent state of anger*. The degree of this anger depends for its intensity on the extent and aggravation experienced by the empty capacity that makes people miserable. The other springs from the impossibility of increasing the objects of the capacities in proportion to the growing extent of the capacities themselves. The result is an ever-increasing lack of objects, which inevitably leads people to express themselves in all kinds of ways: novelty, eccentricity, barbarity, exaggeration and frenetic undertakings become the order of the day. From this point of view, there is some truth in the words of the sophist who wrote not long before the French revolution:

Let us allow the arts and sciences to calm in some way the ferocity of the individuals they have corrupted. Let us try to divert their passions wisely and change them; let us feed these tigers in some way before they devour our children³⁴⁹

— which they did.

In the second half of the last century, the arts and science were also convulsed by frenetic movements during a period very like that of the Greek sophists: literature was tainted by it — a

³⁴⁹ Rousseau, *Réponse au Roi de Pologne*, etc., towards the end.

black, bloody tint ensured a place in humane literature for descriptions of unhappiness and wrong-doing, and nothing more (*App.*, no. 12).

Peace and rest are impossible for a society in which movement, mere movement, has become the supreme need. This need is one of those secret reasons which alone explain certain social revolutions that would otherwise remain a mystery.³⁵⁰

807. 3. The essentially unhappy condition of people in whom unsatisfiable capacities dominate gives rise to extremely harmful theories in right and politics.

Individuals ruled by passion have two characteristics: an *indefinite hope* consisting in their imagining that they can bring about their own contentment with absurd means; and *continual anger* at seeing themselves thwarted in all their efforts which, however, they never tire of repeating with ever-growing vehemence.

The first of these characteristics gives birth to unlimited presumption which believes that all things are possible for human beings, especially government to which, therefore, are allocated all the ills that fall upon society. The second characteristic produces maximum agitation, a tendency towards universal harshness and hostility. Consequently, we find:

1. An inclination to destroy every principle of equity on the basis of a claim that everything is founded on strictest right.

2. An inclination to construct for oneself a claimed right, entirely to the advantage of one's own interests and passions. No ground is given here; rights are defended ferociously and written on the barrels of guns.

3. An inclination to believe that government, with this code in hand, can do as it pleases for the sake of the majority or for common utility.

³⁵⁰ The fall of the first-born branch of the Bourbons is attributed to its incapacity for providing suitable nourishment to French activity which, devoid of an object, finally burst over the head of State (cf. Conny's booklet, *De l'avenir de la France*). — Going a little further back, we would have to say that the Bourbons had no idea of how to prevent the disordered development of so-called *French activity*, and direct public affairs towards the contentment of spirits. Instead, they co-operated in extending those infinite, unsatisfiable capacities of the heart (as we have called them) which lead society, and humanity itself, to a convulsive death.

Such are the founts of the public right which comes to the fore at times when these unsatisfiable cupidities are opened and agitated in the human spirit.

808. People should not deceive themselves that the monarchical form of government is safe from such vices because, as they boast, it has honour as its support. But of what use is the monarchical form if society does not attain its end? — Monarchy without happiness is useless. Even if it were true that a monarchical constitution would not be directly endangered by numerous ambitious, avaricious and lustful people, and so on, it still could not avoid the three evils which, as we indicated, inevitably arise from such dispositions of spirit. Honour itself, this imaginary support of absolute governments, is another Proteus ready to change forms and object in accordance with ways of life. What is honour if it is accompanied by corruption rather than integrity, by vice rather than virtue?

809. We conclude, therefore, with this extremely important rule: 'Those political means are best which aim at keeping the human faculties of thought and abstraction in their natural equilibrium, and thus impede human beings from claiming to satiate the general capacities of their spirits with particular objects.'

CHAPTER 30

The union of virtue and happiness

810. Our preceding reflections, which enable us to judge accurately the political system called ‘movement’, contain an obvious demonstration of the error of this system. At the same time, they lead to a conclusion of great comfort for lovers of virtue; they reassure us that virtue and happiness are more closely united even in this world than is commonly believed.

811. In fact, we saw that human unhappiness is and can only be an infinite capacity characterised as unsatisfiable and absurd. It is when we desire to satisfy it with a finite object that it remains an immense need, always increasing in intensity and always moving further from any possibility of satisfaction. This pathetic disorder is the work of the *will* moving the *practical reason* to the *false judgments* that serve as foundations of the various *passions* we have listed as destroyers of the human heart. It is obvious, therefore, that people are unhappy because they want to be unhappy. This reflection alone is enough to justify Providence fully.

812. Moreover, if the human will deceives itself by claiming that an infinite satisfaction, equal to the capacity of the spirit, must be found in some finite good, it is surely just that the will be chastened for its distortion. It merits the penalty that it seeks and manufactures with all industry and effort, and which it holds dear, so to speak, in the object it will not consent to abandon. Such a will is morally evil; indeed every moral evil is reduced to this degenerate operation of the will. The will that sins morally is the same as the will that produces the state of unhappiness with its sin. As the Bible says: ‘He that loves iniquity hates his own soul.’³⁵¹ On the other hand, an upright will moves the practical reason to make upright judgments about the value of things. Upright judgments give way to reasonable desires, to capacities that can be contented because they are always commensurate with their object. Virtuous people, therefore, never lack contentment of spirit. It is impossible to

³⁵¹ Ps 10: 6 [Douai].

conceive a more intimate union than that between virtue and happiness, and between vice and unhappiness.

813. This does not mean that the vicious person has no pleasures, or the virtuous person no sorrows. We must remember what has already been demonstrated: *pleasure* and *contentment* are different things, just as pain and unhappiness are different things. Human beings can enjoy things, yet still be discontent; they can suffer and be happy. The contradiction is only apparent; the truth of what we are saying is seen every day. Whether vice is crowned with roses, or virtue with thorns, we still maintain that the roses crowning the furrowed brow of the vicious person offer him no happiness, while the thorns marring the beautiful face of virtue do not detract in any way from the substantial happiness possessed by virtue and hidden like a treasure in the depths of the heart.

814. This contentment is never lacking in the case of virtue because it is essential to virtue to exclude every desire that cannot be fulfilled, and to limit its desires proportionately to objects which it can attain. Resignation is an indispensable element of virtue to such an extent that a person's degree of virtue is finally that which makes him tranquil and content; his degree of restlessness on the other hand shows how far he has departed from virtue.

CHAPTER 31

Error in the political system of resistance

815. Having shown the harmful errors at the heart of the system of *movement*, we now have to indicate those which infect the contrary system of *resistance*. The very word *resistance* sounds harsh and inimical to mankind, and ensures that the system it indicates is less popular and less damaging than the system of movement.

816. There is no doubt that humankind has a natural, legitimate movement. Opposing this movement entails opposing nature and God, the author of nature. At the same time there exists an illegitimate, stimulated, troubled movement which proceeds not from nature, but from the abuse of human freedom. Opposition to this movement means opposition to evil, and defence of nature and its author.

It is not hard to see that the system of wise government is not that of movement alone, nor of resistance alone. It must be a mixed system, that is, consist 'in the promotion of the natural and legitimate movement of mankind, and in the prevention, to the extent that government can achieve this, of unnatural, illegitimate movement.'

817. Up to this point, things are simple: no one of good sense is going to veto such a temperate, all-embracing system. Differences of opinion can arise, however, when we consider the natural, legitimate movement we have to promote, and the unnatural, illegitimate movement we have to prevent. The answer to this problem will be found to a great extent in what we have already said.

818. The great end of every society is contentment of spirits. This has to be the rule with which to discern natural from unnatural movement. Human nature as a whole, considered as person, seeks contentment alone. Natural movement, therefore, is that which leads to this state. This has to be promoted; the contrary is an evil which, as far as possible, must be prevented.

Unsatisfiable capacities are absolute impediments to contentment. We saw that their origin lies in the will's abuse of the

faculty of abstraction. This faculty, in contradistinction to that of thought which conceives things in their entirety, presents the spirit with the separate qualities of things. The spirit, halting before these separate qualities, seeks in each of them what is found only in their entire complex, and sometimes not even there. Its desires are frustrated. The principle leading human beings to contentment is therefore 'the just judgments with which things are esteemed for what they really are when the part is not taken for the whole, nor the abstract for the concrete.'

Such integrity of judgment should form the principal aim of education. A view as complete and all-embracing as this is due, as I said elsewhere, to Christianity.³⁵²

³⁵² Cf. *Saggio sull'unità dell'educazione*, in the first volume of *Opuscoli Filosofici*, p. 213 ss.

CHAPTER 32

Continuation: the natural movement of society

819. The contented spirit has all it desires. There are, however, different kinds of contentment dependent on different kinds of desire. A person who desires twenty and has twenty is content, just as another who desires a hundred and has a hundred is also content. Nevertheless, although both are equal relative to contentment, the contentment of the first is formed of twenty degrees of good and pleasure, and that of the second of one hundred degrees. Equally content, their enjoyment is different; the second individual enjoys four times as much as the first.

820. It cannot be denied that I have benefited an individual, if I succeed in leading him from one of these two states to the other. While keeping his spirit fully contented, I have provided him with eighty degrees of greater enjoyment which he previously lacked. This passage from contentment containing fewer degrees of good to contentment containing more degrees of good is a kind of natural, legitimate movement for mankind and for society.

821. Let us suppose now that we have an individual who has a capacity for twenty and possesses twenty. I stimulate his capacity and succeed in enlarging it to one hundred. Made restless and active by his new desire, he succeeds in obtaining for himself sixty, let us say, of the desired objects. Forty degrees of his capacity are still unsatisfied; he now experiences forty degrees of unrest although his enjoyment, which has now reached sixty, has increased threefold. But is the increase in enjoyment of any help, granted the loss of contentment of spirit and consequent unhappiness? His enjoyment, increased by two-thirds, has not bettered but worsened his state. My mistaken benefice has rendered him very bad service.

822. The service I render him is bad even though we are dealing with determined, not with unsatisfiable and infinite capacities. The difference between the two is infinite.

As I have said so often, unsatisfiable capacities are those by which individuals seek an object proportioned to some good,

abstractly contemplated, which lacks an adequate object.³⁵³ Such capacities constitute states of absolute unhappiness. On the other hand, capacities, if determined, may or may not be satisfied. If they remain unsatisfied, individuals lack contentment, but are not necessarily unhappy as a result. The disquiet and penalty they suffer is limited, just as the capacity to which it refers is limited.

States of *non-contentment* exist, therefore, which are not in fact states of true *unhappiness*. Nevertheless, they are defective, and must not be encouraged in individuals under the pretext of increasing enjoyment. The contentment lost by these individuals is worth infinitely more than the enjoyment they acquire.

823. These observations enable us to conclude that the determined desires of which we are speaking are not harmful in certain peoples who possess the means for satisfying them. The same desires amongst other peoples without the means of satisfying them cannot be encouraged without serious error on the part of government. If, for example, we compare the conditions of the new American nations with those of the old nations of Europe, we can all see that the desire for material wealth, which encourages hard work amongst the former, could only be extremely harmful to the latter if the same desire were opened with the same intensity. As one renowned author says:

In Europe we are accustomed to look upon restlessness of spirit, an unlimited desire for wealth and extreme love of independence as a great social harm. All these things are precisely the guarantee of a long, peaceful future to the American republics. Without these restless passions, the population would be concentrated in certain places and would experience, as we do, needs difficult to satisfy.

In France, we regard simplicity of taste, a quiet lifestyle, family spirit and love of one's birthplace as guarantees of tranquillity and prosperity for the State. In America,

³⁵³ Every abstract excludes limits. If its objects are limited they can never come to the point of being adequate for the abstract itself. For example, the abstract of physical pleasure indicates pleasure without limiting it in any way; at the same time, every real, physical pleasure is limited to some extent. Consequently, physical pleasures, however much they are multiplied, never exhaust pleasure conceived by means of abstraction. On the contrary, physical pleasures remain *infinitely* distant from it.

nothing would seem more harmful to society than such virtues. French Canadians, who have faithfully preserved the traditions of their old ways of life, today find difficulty living off their territory; this tiny, recently born nation will soon be a prey to the miseries of ancient nations. In Canada, those who are more enlightened, more patriotic and more humane make extraordinary efforts to dissuade the people from the simple well-being that is still sufficient for them. They laud the advantages of wealth as they would perhaps praise amongst us the attractions of middle-class living. They do more to excite human passions than others do elsewhere to calm them.³⁵⁴

824. Two causes already mentioned account for this singular phenomenon in the United States, where great desires for wealth produce activity which is not harmful in the present conditions of society. They are:

1. American desires are determined. The object of this principle is not an abstract idea, but real things.

Americans love the order necessary for prosperous business, and value above all the regularity in ways of life which serves as a foundation for good families; they prefer the good sense that creates fortunes rather than the genius which dissipates them; their spirit, accustomed to positive calculations, fears *general ideas*; practice is more admired by them than theory.³⁵⁵

2. Americans have abundant means for satisfying promptly such *determined* desires.

³⁵⁴ *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, c. 9. — In this chapter, the author describes the immense eagerness with which Americans take possession of vast new territories, which are never lacking. He notes that the population in Connecticut, which still has not more than fifty-nine inhabitants to the square mile, has not increased by more than a quarter in the course of forty years as a result of the continual migrations of people who seek their fortune in the wilderness. In the Congress of 1830, there were thirty-six members who had been born in the little State of Connecticut, of whom only five were deputies of the State; the others belonged to families established and grown rich elsewhere. Ohio has been in existence for fifty years only, but its population has already set out again on its march west despite the presence in Ohio itself of uncultivated territories.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

In the United States new needs cannot be feared because all such needs are satisfied without difficulty; there is no need to be afraid of arousing new passions because every passion finds easy, helpful nourishment; people cannot be made too free because they are almost never tempted to make bad use of their freedom.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 33

Continuation

825. If we want to see human beings and society advance along the path of well-being, it is necessary to open up capacities within them. These capacities, however, must be *capacities for real objects*, which alone can satisfy. In addition, those who open these capacities must really possess the means³⁵⁷ for attaining the real object assigned to the capacities, which unsatisfied would simply torment their spirits. Although, as we pointed out, this may not make people unhappy, it would at least leave them unfulfilled and discontent.

826. Having established these conditions, can we say that stimulating new desires in people or helping them to enlarge their already existing capacities will always be advantageous? If so, what kind of precautions have to be taken? The answer to these questions will present itself of its own accord once we have distinguished the different kinds of desire.

827. First of all, we have to exclude all unsatisfiable desires. These contribute as much to human immorality as to human unhappiness. We must also exclude desires which have a real object lying beyond the power of the means available for attaining it. We are dealing, therefore, only with desires that have a real object, obtainable by means in the power of the persons desiring it.

These desires can be divided into two classes. Some are accompanied by a hope which, as human energy and activity increase, provides a foretaste of the good that is hoped for without leaving bitterness or discontent in the spirit. The state of a spirit that desires but does not yet possess its object is devoid of bitterness when there is certain hope of attaining the object and

³⁵⁷ Technology is one of the first of these means. The colonists of the United States set out for America taking all the crafts and refined industry of the old world. If we were dealing instead with peoples who acquired civilisation step by step, no desires, however determined, could be aroused in them beyond the limit gradually achieved by their *technology*, even though the means offered them by nature were immense.

the spirit itself is highly virtuous. In these conditions, the individual tempers his desire in such a way that it is in complete conformity with the reality of things. In other words, this person has a conditional desire; he desires some good on condition that it will be attained not immediately but at the moment in which he is destined to have it. The desire, made joyous by this hope, and moderated by such light of reason and virtue, does not impede the spirit's state of contentment. Nothing is lacking to the spirit when its desires are of this kind; it wants to possess its good only on those conditions and at the time it will effectively have it. At present, the spirit is satisfied not to have it but simply enjoy the hope of it.

Such desires are moral and happy. They move human beings to better things while providing them with activity that is simultaneously highly effective and peaceful. Christianity makes virtue originate by means of such desires. The title, 'man of desires', is consecrated in the Bible to indicate a high degree of holiness; the Church does not refuse to be known upon earth as 'the field of those who hope'.

Stimulating such desires in the human spirit, which is made more active by such felicitous impulses, can only be praiseworthy. The movement proceeding from desires of this kind is more in keeping with rational and moral nature than any other motion. People pass from a more restricted to a broader state of contentment without ceasing to be content for a single moment. Such desires bring in their wake rest and movement, contentment and activity. If virtuous, happy people permitted nothing else in their heart, they would never cease to increase their own degree of virtue and happiness.

828. Other desires, which form the second of the classes we have indicated, are indeed projected towards a real object proportioned to the means available to the person desiring it, but are accompanied by a probable hope only. In this case, the spirit, if lacking the virtuous moderation of which we have spoken, presses on unconditionally towards the object which it wants to possess as soon as possible. These desires, the most common amongst those found in uncorrupted people, are nevertheless defective and restrictive. As such, they greatly impede full contentment of spirit.

Nevertheless, they are immensely different from the

unsatisfiable capacities that constitute unhappiness. In the first place, desires of this kind are finite; if unsatisfied, they do not cause more than finite unrest or pain. Again, if such desires find unforeseen difficulties in securing their object, they grow less as hope grows less, and cease to torment the spirit. They are very different therefore from unsatisfiable desires, which become more agitated and fierce as they encounter difficulties in gaining contentment, and find contentment ever more remote. This happens because unsatisfiable desires have as their end happiness, which human beings cannot renounce. Desires for limited and determined objects, on the other hand, are not necessary; we can easily rid ourselves of them.

829. Third, if the object is attained by means of activity excited by desire, the goodness of the object can compensate for hardship suffered during its absence, and for the efforts needed to possess it.

We may want to determine in some way the point at which compensation derived from this good equals or exceeds the hardship caused by its privation. In making this calculation, we first presume that the person with the desire judges correctly the probability or improbability of attaining it. Granted this, the hardship produced in the spirit at each moment is equal to the *intensity of the desire*,³⁵⁸ multiplied by the known improbability of attaining the desired good. On the other hand, the pleasure of expectation is equal to the probability of attaining the good, multiplied by the value of the good under consideration. If the hardship is equal to the pleasure of expectation, the two are at the same level. Otherwise, the pleasure of expectation can be greater or less than the intensity of the hardship. In the first case, there is some gain relative to the calculation of enjoyment; in the second, loss. However, contentment, which is worth more than every gratification, is lacking in the spirit until it possesses the good, or relinquishes its painful desire.

³⁵⁸ The degree of intensity of desire is relative to a) the good and b) the speed with which it is attained. Sometimes, there is a great desire for some good, unaccompanied by impatience to possess it; sometimes, great hardship is felt in remaining without the good even for a short period, although the desire itself may not be as great as in the first case. Intensity of desire is made up of these two elements.

The activity of these desires cannot, therefore, be reasonably considered as good for those who have them although, by preparing objects suitable for satisfying capacities later, it may help them or their descendants. From this point of view, government can provide occasions for opening such desires. Government must remember that society, which does not die with individuals, will be able to harvest what has been sown. However, a moral government will permit rather than further this by using negative not positive means.

CHAPTER 34

The objects of desire

830. Activity and movement exist, therefore, in the individual and society, which harmonise wonderfully with contentment and are legitimate means of social progress.

The error of the system of resistance lies in the disavowal of these means and in the belief that movement and activity cannot be reconciled with the state of a contented spirit; the system sees nothing in movement except what is hard and evil.

True social progress is the progress of virtuous desires, which come about through the harmonious development of the intellectual and moral faculties. Because these desires aim at *real objects* pertaining to the *faculty of thought* (we have also called it 'the faculty of ends'), this faculty, through its development, becomes the mother of true progress.

831. An argument worthy of analysis would be the investigation of the laws governing the development of the faculty of thought, and the way in which legitimate desires, corresponding activity and subsequent progress come about in human beings through this faculty. We shall have to content ourselves with hinting at this.

The faculty of thought gradually develops as it comes to know more and better real objects; the extension or excellence of legitimate desires must come about in the same way. The faculty of abstraction also has an undoubted part to play in this development. Just as the progress of *substantial perfection* in society originates from the progressive development of the faculty of thought, so the progress of *accidental perfection* originates from the progressive development of the faculty of abstraction.

Note, however, that accidental perfection of society has no value unless it harmonises with substantial perfection. Any attempt to obtain accidental perfection without prior attainment of substantial perfection will result only in *apparent*, artificial *refinement*. If the matter is taken further so that accidental perfection becomes the end to the exclusion of substantial perfection, the result is *corruptive refinement*.

832. Let me explain this briefly. We need to remember that abuse of the faculty of abstraction consists, as we said, in mentally substituting vain abstractions for the real objects of the faculty of thought. This explains our mental sophisms and our wayward hearts.

833. On the other hand, the services and legitimate uses of the faculty of abstraction in social progress are:

1. 'To remove accidental defects from the process which substantially perfects human society.'

The faculty of abstraction sees *relationships* and qualities in isolation from things. Its function is to find *distinctions*, which are extremely useful to right judgment about things and their right use.

Every new, good object of the faculty of thought provides the spirit with a new possible aim, new material for its desire, a new principle of reasoning and a new stimulus to activity. However, under certain aspects this object may not be good. These aspects are seen only by the faculty of abstraction which however tries to reveal the object in its pure goodness, leaving aside, if possible, the evil that the object either possesses or brings with itself.

If, at this stage, my faculty of thought, which re-presents entities in their entirety, is not assisted by corresponding progress in my faculty of abstraction, I will undoubtedly acquire along with the good the accidental evil that accompanies the good. I am, in fact, seeking to obtain that object without reference to my own advantage. If, on the other hand, my faculty of abstraction progresses in a way corresponding to the progress of the faculty of thought, I shall come to distinguish accurately the good present in the object from the accidental evil adhering to it. At one and the same time, I shall devote myself to obtaining all the good and to ridding myself of all the evil that the object could bring me under some accidental relationship.

It can rightly be said, therefore, that the accidental perfection brought to society by the progress made by the *faculty of abstraction* in harmony with that of the *faculty of thought* consists 'in removing accidental evils from the act which substantially perfects society.'

Nevertheless, it would be extremely harmful, as well as erroneous, to believe that the evils accompanying the good can always be avoided. This vain, presumptuous hope pertains to

the ruinous system of *perfectionism*, and arises, as we have often mentioned, from ignorance of the great ontological law of the limitation of things.

If, on the other hand, the faculty of abstraction is more advanced in its development than the faculty of thought, the subsequent disequilibrium gives rise to the error by which accidents are given priority over substance. We can say that the *faculty of abstraction* is abused relative to its first service when: 1. people hope that the good and evil which are indivisible in the nature of things can be divided; 2. substantial good is endangered through exaggerated fear of some accidental evil; 3. through exaggerated love of accidental good, there is some compromise with the substantial evil accompanying it.

834. Another service rendered by the faculty of abstraction is:

2. 'To administer *means* for the attainment of good, that is, of *ends* presented to our soul by the faculty of thought.'

We have no need of abstractions to carry out any activity which directly attains an end because such activity does not require the instrumentality of means. Abstractions are necessary every time the end is distanced from us by a series of means that we have to employ to reach the end. Every artificial society, even civil society, is a complex of means brought about by human beings to attain a given end. Societies therefore can rightly be called products of the faculty of abstraction.

We should not be surprised to see that the spirit of association continues to increase throughout humanity. This is a necessary consequence of the continual development of the faculty of abstraction.

Civil society, one of the principal societies, does not choose its end of itself, but finds it chosen and determined in the nature of things; it conceives its end mentally by means of the faculty of thought. Civil society is, therefore, a legitimate child of the faculty of abstraction, and as such is a pure means, a complex of means; it is not an end. Consequently, the function of the faculty of abstraction is to order and regulate civil society in such a way that 1. it attains the end proposed for it by the faculty of thought; 2. the families composing this society are helped as much as possible and at the same time harmed or disturbed as little as possible; finally, 3. the individuals composing the

families never lose their contentment of spirit but increase their real, true good to the limit of their possibility of enjoyment.

All the *arts* rendering the use of external things more comfortable, less costly, more delightful and elegant, and all the arts devoted to showing how several benefits can be drawn from a single object are simply consequences of the continual, increasing development of the faculty of abstraction.

All these things are useful if they have a solid end previously established for human beings by the faculty of thought. It is always true that 'the applications of the faculty of abstraction bring true utility when, and only when, they are subordinate to the ends established by the faculty of thought.' By nature the faculty of abstraction serves the faculty of thought. Disaster follows if the maid tries to extricate herself from service; her erratic activity, not directed to any end, is a sign of madness.

As we have seen, the *abuse* of the faculty of abstraction when applied to the search for happiness consists in an error of practical reason; we want to obtain an end abstractly conceived by means of a particular object not on a par with the abstraction. Similarly, the *imperfect use* of the same faculty of abstraction applied to the search for a particular good consists in not sufficiently determining the means for obtaining that end, and that end alone, without which the badly defined means brings, together with the desired end, some other unforeseen, harmful consequence.

835. A third service of the faculty of abstraction is:

3 'To provide suitable signs for communicating our ideas.' It is, therefore, the faculty which diffuses the teachings of the learned minority and the process of civilisation amongst the populace. It is the faculty underlying methods, languages and writing — printing, lithography and so on are its work.

Modern inventions are almost entirely the result of progress made by the faculty of abstraction. What we have seen so far is truly wonderful, but there is more to come.

836. The faculty of abstraction sometimes advances in a straight line, and sometimes spreads out. When I have some distant end to attain, I must line up, as it were, a series of means that lead me straight to the end; when I want to influence many people rather than target a single point, the calculation I need to evaluate the means available to me becomes more complicated.

This is the case if, for example, I want to influence many individuals through inventions for promoting culture. Because the action of the means is very extensive, I have to calculate all the elements composing the means, not only to see if they will obtain the end I propose for myself, but also to decide if they produce other effects along with the end I have in view. In other words, I have to calculate both their direct and indirect action. It is not sufficient for me to obtain my end; I have to obtain it free from defects.

The desire to see a rapid diffusion of insight often lacks this kind of sagacity. For instance, I may propose some method suitable for teaching the whole world how to read and write. This method will be useless if, at the same time, it nourishes presumption and pride in those following the method, or renders young minds mechanical and material. I have to provide my method with sufficient precautions to ensure that young people derive good not evil from it. They must not be harmed through insufficient determination and provision on my part. If this is achieved, humanity may justly thank me for my discovery.

837. The faculty of abstraction would make greater progress in this respect if it were used in an orderly fashion, without harm to the faculty of thought. People today have a wonderful aptitude for fixing the means necessary to obtain some *external* end; this is not the case with moral ends. Weakness in the faculty of thought does not permit ends to be posited firmly and completely. The only end permitting us to judge if methods are adequate or harmful rather than useful, is that which is perfectly and fully conceived.

838. Upright people will embrace the methods we are speaking of, and prudent people will praise them, when they are well-defined, supported and protected against everything that can corrupt them or render them indirectly harmful, and balanced in such a way that they tend neither to left nor right.

CHAPTER 35

The law governing the development of the *FACULTIES OF THOUGHT and ABSTRACTION*

839. There are two quite different opinions about the Middle Ages. Some people see this period as the epitome of wisdom, others as the epitome of barbarism. These different viewpoints are explained by the distinction between the *faculty of thought* and the *faculty of abstraction*. Those who see the Middle Ages as supremely wise look at the progress made by the faculty of thought; others view only the progress made by the faculty of abstraction.

There is no doubt that enormous efforts were made at the time by the faculty of thought. This explains the sublimity and vastness of concepts, and the generosity of Catholic undertakings which filled these centuries. However, it is very difficult for the two faculties to go hand in hand. Development of the faculty of thought has to precede that of the faculty of abstraction.

The Middle Ages were rough and ready because progress on the part of the faculty of abstraction had not imbued the period with refinement and the diffusion of the arts. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that all the seeds of modern progress in civilisation were sown during these warlike and Christian centuries when Christianity, and mankind with it, made such substantial progress through the development of the faculty of thought.

840. The last three centuries, on the other hand, form a period destined by nature to the brilliant, captivating development of the faculty of abstraction — a development made possible, however, only by the previous progress of the faculty of thought. Modern times should not be childishly proud of its refinement, nor insult the roughness and crudeness of preceding ages. This would be an act of base disavowal similar to daubing a picture of Raphael with paint, insulting the artist long-dead, and boasting that the result was better than the master's.

841. All the defects accompanying the sublime, Christian undertakings of the Middle Ages consist in the imperfection of

the means employed. Accessories were neglected; there was a lack of precautions and guarantees against the accidental damage the work could suffer. In a word, the faculty of abstraction had not been greatly developed; time had not been sufficient to distinguish the harm mixed with the good, or to discover how to disentangle them.

It was completely natural, once the faculty of thought had suffered many frustrations in obtaining its desired objects, for human beings to be shaken by their unhappy experiences, and to seek the cause of their failures. They found them finally in the imperfection of the means they had used to attain their ends.

842. The investigation of these means was the work of modern times, and is entirely the function of abstraction. We should not be surprised that the world, taken off balance by the brilliant, rapid results, should form an exaggerated, exclusive devotion for the faculty of abstraction, to which it owes so much. In this respect the world goes too far, and wrongly undervalues the solid work of the faculty of thought. This explains why the sciences concerned with ends have been despised in modern times, and why unbalance between the two faculties has been renewed. Abstraction has gained the upper hand and produced an unbalance more harmful than that present when the faculty of thought prevails over that of abstraction.

843. The natural progress of human society can, therefore, be suitably divided into the following periods.

First period: society in which both the faculty of thought and the faculty of abstraction are scarcely developed (state of total imperfection).

Second period: society in which the faculty of thought is developed, but without any corresponding development on the part of the faculty of abstraction (state of accidental imperfection).

Third period: society in which the faculty of thought has already been developed, and the faculty of abstraction is developing proportionately (state of perfection of society).

Fourth period: society in which love of the objects of the faculty of abstraction begins to grow, and attention is given solely to the development of this faculty, to the neglect of the

faculty of thought. As a result, the faculty of abstraction develops vigorously, while the faculty of thought does not receive any corresponding development (state of corruption of society).

These periods correspond to the four social stages which we have previously distinguished.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ Cf. *SC*, c. 8, and also the present work.

CHAPTER 36

The influence of governments on the lawful and unlawful desires of subjects

844. We shall now sum up. We have spoken about the varied rapidity of development of human desires and activities, and we have seen that:

1. The imperfection of society depends upon the low level of development of its desire and activities.

2. The development of desires can be lawful and natural. In this case, society is led through development to degrees of ever higher perfection.

3. The development of desires can be unlawful. In this case society degenerates and falls into a state much worse than that of its initial imperfection.

845. We have distinguished four classes of desires.

The first embraces what we called 'unsatisfiable desires'. These are essentially absurd and immoral. They distance people from contentment (the end of society) and constitute the state of *unhappiness*.

The second embraces those desires through which we desire finite good. This good, however, exceeds available means and industry and cannot, therefore, be attained (these desires differ from the unsatisfiable desires of the first class which set out to attain an infinite good with finite means). Unsatisfied desires of this kind do not properly speaking form the state of *unhappiness*, but that of *non-contentment*. They deprive society of its end, and draw it towards incalculable harm, as we have seen in the case of the Indians of North America.

The third embraces those desires with which we long for the good for which both means and industry are sufficient. These desires are normally satisfied, although they bring pain and disquiet to the human spirit every time their satisfaction fails. In these cases, they are morally defective; they are too absolute; they are unchecked and unconditioned. In a word, they do not confirm to truth and the reality of things. The harm caused by these desires affects individuals more than society; the activity

they arouse in people is sometimes useful in general and for the future, even if they have no immediate, particular utility. Nevertheless, even these desires are defective and in part opposed to the end of society.

The fourth embraces those desires which harmonise wonderfully well in human beings with the contentment of their spirit. They include moral desires, both for the object they propose and for their upright measure; and desires which generate totally beneficial activity that leads individuals and society to attain ever more perfectly their noble end, that is, good, contentment and happiness.

846. Governmental wisdom must be devoted to promoting positively this last class of desires.

Every civil government can influence and does influence beyond all belief everything that concerns the desires of the members of society. There is not perhaps a single governmental enactment, whatever it may be, which does not produce a good or bad effect on the spirits of the members relative to the desires that the philosophy of government ought to foresee and calculate.

847. Normally, the harmful immorality of different desires are like the links of a chain.

The desires of the third class, which are less harmful and immoral than the desires of the other two classes, degenerate and change into desires of the second class.

The desires of the second class, which are less harmful and immoral than the desires of the first class, continue to deteriorate and become desires of the first class.

848. It frequently happens that active people, longing to advance, fall into the most profound depravation when circumstances thwart all their efforts. Their desires originally pertain to the second or third class, but soon take on the harmful characteristics of the first class, and become unsatisfiable capacities.

The opposite also occurs. These people can find themselves in other circumstances where they are as rich and as honoured as they desired. At this point, they return to sound principles, their unhappy, angry hearts are calmed, and they set out once more on the path of uprightness and good conduct which they had abandoned.

This is a fairly common case in America where peoples, nurtured in Europe, flourished. In the main, desires found satisfaction, while passions did not overflow into the blind anger of unsatisfiable capacities.³⁶⁰

849. *Inequality* (relative rather than absolute) is normally an ample source of desires.

When laws and usages establish various *de iure* and *de facto* inequalities amongst individuals, or more generally amongst the inhabitants of a region, people desire more, and find more reasons for comparing themselves with those who possess or enjoy more than they do.

If the inhabitants of a region subject to the same government are divided into distinct classes definitively separated from one another and carefully determined and accepted as part of daily living, people compare themselves with those of their own class. They rarely make a comparison between themselves and those of a higher class. Their desires aim for *relative equality* among their neighbours, not for absolute equality, that is, equality between all human beings of whatever class. The constant separation of classes leads to limited desires. It is true that too absolute a separation keeps society overlong in a state of *imperfection*, but it is also true that it distances the danger of a lapse into *corruption*. A government watching over equality amongst members of the same class has done everything possible for security in the society and a great deal for contentment of spirit.

850. This observation explains the political reason for castes, and their great duration amongst Eastern nations.

It also clarifies the origin of the great difficulties facing governments which, animated by a spirit of humanity, want to enfranchise slaves (once these have become very numerous). It

³⁶⁰ A. Tocqueville describes a celebrated radical whom he had met in America. After the man had made his fortune, he became totally different from what he had been forty years previously. He himself attributed this to the extraordinary change for good which had made him wealthy: 'I was poor, and now I am rich. If only well-being, in acting on my conduct, had left my judgment free! But that was not the case. My opinions have changed with my fortune, and in the happy state which I now enjoy, I have truly found the determining reason which I had previously lacked' (*De la Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, 59).

would seem highly probable that the following reflection was made on the difficulty to be experienced in freeing the great number of slaves in the southern States of America:³⁶¹

There is deeply impressed in the human heart an extraordinary principle of relative justice. People are touched far more by inequality within the same class than by the inequalities noted between different classes. Slavery is easy enough to comprehend, but how can one conceive the existence of many millions of citizens perpetually subject to the brand of infamy and abandoned to misery that lasts from generation to generation?

Slavery makes people resigned to not desiring the good of freedom. Once the law has set them free, however, their desires and pretensions are endless. They no longer compare themselves with their fellow-slaves, but want to be on a par with freemen. As a result government, with a single law, immediately releases within them an incredible number of desires. Such is the kind of influence government, through its enactments, can exercise on the human spirit!³⁶²

³⁶¹ In 1830, the state of Maine had one black for every three hundred inhabitants; Massachusetts one for every hundred; the State of New York two; Pennsylvania three; Maryland thirty-four; Virginia forty-two; South Carolina fifty-five. — In the northern States, where slavery has been abolished, whites number 6,565,434, blacks 120,520; in the States where slavery exists 3,960,814 whites, 2,208,102 blacks. — The black population in the five united southern States increased with greater rapidity than the white population. From 1790 to 1830, whites increased 80%, blacks 112%. — In certain parts of southern America, slaves are much more numerous than freemen. For example, in 1835 the island of Martinique numbered 78,076 slaves and only 37,955 freemen. Before the revolutionary wars, the disproportion between slaves and freemen was even greater: in 1790, freemen numbered 16,000, slaves 83,000.

³⁶² The dangers that governments foresee in effecting the liberation of slaves does not justify the immorality they commit by permitting and legalising those elements contained in modern slavery which are contrary to human rights and Christian rights. All governments have at least the following duties towards slaves which must be satisfied without any excuse and *without delay* of any sort, even if it is not possible to remove with immediate effect the hateful word 'slavery' from the laws. Governments have the sacred duty: 1. to acknowledge the *personship* of slaves, and those inalienable, imprescriptible rights which spring from their personship; 2. to determine these rights by law in the clearest and most solemn way; 3. to take

851. Desires increase as competition for all social classes and responsibilities becomes more universal.

Sometimes this competition is open to all equally by laws and custom. In fact, it is then impeded by the great numbers who trample one another down in the rush to fame and fortune. In this case, only a few manage to satisfy the desires and activity they share with the many. The majority look upon their fortunate rivals, with whom they have compared themselves so often, and see themselves at the bottom of the heap. Such numerous, frustrated desires and painful comparisons are normally the source of great harm to public morality and cause immense evils in society.

The materialism of ordinary persons in socially developed countries does not come simply from their poverty and ignorance, but from finding themselves in daily contact, poor and ignorant as they are, with learned, wealthy people.

They see their own lot and weakness and contrast it every day with the lot and power of some of their fellows. This must arouse within them a feeling of inferiority and dependence which upsets and humiliates them. This interior state is reproduced in their external life and in their language; they are insolent and base at one and the same time.

slaves into their care, considering them as minors and defending them against the abuse their masters make of the dominion they have over their *work*; 4. of granting them the right to claim compensation for injury to their rights in the presence of competent tribunals charged with the responsibility of doing them fair, loyal justice; 5. of rendering this right *effective* by providing the means to make use of it, and putting these means in charge of someone who can make use of them in the name of the slaves; 6. of removing all obstacles to their intellectual-moral progress, which they should indeed encourage in every way compatible with the *work* slaves owe to their masters so that a way may be prepared towards full freedom. — Christianity destroyed the slavery of antiquity precisely by strongly reproofing everything about it that was immoral and opposed to human dignity. Constantine, Christian that he was, forbade the hanging of slaves, their being thrown from heights, death by introducing poison into their veins, burning over a slow fire, abandonment to death by starvation and other horrors of this kind. Other emperors after him added further prohibitions (*Cod. Theod.*, 9: 12). The Church condemned everything that showed slaves as other than brothers to freemen. The very word 'slave', and its legal connotations, disappeared in their own time. This is the way to make slaves free: first destroy the reality, then the word.

This deplorable effect of such contrasting conditions is not found amongst savages. American Indians are all ignorant and poor, but all equal and free

— hence their virtues and simple contentment of spirit.

852. Examining all the circumstances which influence desires, and hence have power to modify the state of society by modifying spirits, does indeed provide an inexhaustible subject for discussion — an obligatory subject of meditation for legislators and public rulers before they decide on some law or pass some enactment. They must ask themselves: ‘What effect will this law or enactment have on the human SPIRIT?’ This question is equivalent to another: ‘Will this law or enactment draw society nearer to or further from its end?’

CHAPTER 37

The necessity of politico-moral statistics

853. I shall conclude this book by noting how the wise government of a nation necessarily requires knowledge of the state of the spirit of the people who make up the nation. This shows the insufficiency of economic statistics, and the necessity of comprehensive, philosophical statistics about which I have spoken elsewhere.³⁶³

854. Politico-moral statistics form part of comprehensive, philosophical statistics, and present a vast, almost untouched field for learned investigation and research. The *physical symptoms* of the *moral state* of peoples, which should be collected in such statistics, require as their foundation a classification of human passions and cupidities. The hundred and twenty-nine capacities of spirit listed by us offer an outline, however imperfect, of these passions and cupidities.

855. Amongst the physical symptoms of the passions of the spirit, we find various values of affection given at different times and in different places to the things which form the objects of these passions.

856. By means of the politico-moral statistic we are discussing, government would reveal two things: 1. the nearness or distance between spirits and contentment, the end of society; 2. the influence exercised by things over human spirits themselves. The spirit, as seat of contentment, is the *end* of politics; as acting agent turning its own activity upon itself and modifying itself, or as acting upon the external things around itself which then re-act on the spirit, it is the very *means* of politics.

857. The *spirit* (considered under this second respect) and *things* modify one another respectively. The abundance of things present to the spirit has a persuasive force which modifies the spirit and stimulates its movement towards them. On the other hand, the love or passion that the spirit has towards things is that which at every instant determines and fixes the value of things. The value of things in its turn (other things

³⁶³ Cf. SC, c. 15.

being equal) is equivalent to the degree of force that things have for acting upon the spirit.

858. Humankind will never arrive at uniting all its brothers and sisters in the loving society which Christianity calls it to form unless all these things are considered carefully. These teachings must become commonplace, be perfected, and serve as the source from which are deduced the saving rules that governments must note as they proceed. The rules themselves must be made so obvious that everybody sees them and demands their observance by rulers. Finally, rulers themselves must feel that they cannot abandon these rules without falling under universal condemnation.

Appendix

1. (63)

[Romagnosi and government without written laws]

Romagnosi discussed the question, 'What kind of government is most suitable for bringing legislation to perfection?', and observed: 'Aristocracies are opposed to passing laws that are certain or block the interpretation of laws already passed; democracy is guided more by philosophical doctrines than by a deep sense of civil reason; finally, only monarchy really seeks to establish clear, certain laws.' The lack of written laws at the time of Alexander in the monarchy of the Pori (the most civilised of India) is attributed by Romagnosi in great part 'to the innate, perpetual refusal of the priestly, aristocratic governments who ruled at various times (as we have seen in upper Hindustan) to draw up written, general laws through which the autocratic decisions of the rulers might be subject to definite, known regulations held in common with the people.' As confirmation of this defect which he had observed in aristocratic governments, Romagnosi offers the following examples from the many he could have given:

We have noted this instinct: 1. in the Roman patricians, against whom the people had to maintain a bitter struggle to obtain the compilation of the laws of the twelve tablets; 2. in the Venetian Republic where, apart from the first statutes prior to the establishment of rigid aristocracy, cases were decided on the basis of examples and the so-called *caso seguito*; and finally, 3. among the Swiss who, after the ancient statutes prior to their emancipation, never made any systematic collection of laws; on the contrary, many legal privileges obtained from their ancient lords were gradually torn from the rural populations, who revolted a good fifteen times against the dominant cities, as can be seen in Zschozke's recent history of Switzerland.

(*Ricerche Storiche su l'India antica*,
supplements to Part 2, art. 4, §5)

[App., 1]

The constant facts of history confirm Romagnosi's opinion: England's lack of a Code is clear proof that civilisation itself has not yet been able to overcome this defect, which seems inherent to the aristocratic element in governments. However, I will hazard a prediction of which I am thoroughly convinced, although to many it may seem to place excessive confidence in social progress: 'A time will come when any remaining aristocracies will depend upon the protection of laws that are certain and free from all equivocation; at that time, the very problems of those aristocracies will induce them to promote perfection in legislation (the contrary of what they did in the past).' But we must remember that civil legislation cannot be perfected if all the other parts of universal legislation are imperfect, especially if we do not separate the confused private and political elements in present civil codes, and in the political element distinguish *seigniorial* and *social right*.

2. (127)

[Authoritarian and oppressive government]

Oppression on the part of the majority is in fact a manifest and extremely harmful injustice in democracies. Alexis de Tocqueville had many sound things to say about the authoritarianism of the majority in the United States of America (*De la Démocratie en Amérique*, t. 2, c. 7ss.). Here I refer to only a few quotations from this author.

On seeing democratic States fall into anarchy, many think that their government is naturally weak and impotent. — I think, however, that the nature of democratic power does not entail lack of force or of means. On the contrary, it is almost always the case that such power falls through abuse of the forces and means at its disposition. Anarchy arises little by little from oppression or ineptitude in a democracy, not from impotence. —

If freedom ever comes to be lost in America, this will have to be attributed to the *overwhelming power* of the majority who by reducing minorities to desperation have forced them to recur to material force. Then we shall see anarchy, but as the consequence of despotism.

[*App.*, 2]

We should consider this with the utmost care because it expresses the feelings of the greatest politicians of America, whatever their party. Tocqueville cites Madison and Jefferson, that is, a federalist who was very conscious of the need to constrain the American government, and a man who through his election as President led the Democrats to victory in 1801.

Madison wrote:

If a society existed in which the stronger party were easily able to draw upon its forces and oppress the weaker party, we could say that anarchy reigned as completely in this society as in the state of nature, where the weaker individual has no guarantee against the violence of the stronger. In an anarchic government we see the same process as in the state of nature: the difficulties of an uncertain, precarious future lead the stronger parties little by little to submit to a government capable of protecting weak and strong alike. If the State of Rhode Island were separated from the Confederation and abandoned to a popular government sovereignly exercised within such narrow limits, there would undoubtedly be oppression on the part of the majority. This would render the exercise of rights so uncertain that a power altogether independent of the people would be sought. The same factions who made this power necessary would have recourse to it themselves.

(*Federalist*, n. 51)

Thomas Jefferson saw the same danger in the overwhelming power of the popular majority.

Executive power in our government is neither the sole nor principal object of my anxiety. Oppression on the part of the legislators (that is, of the people) is now, and will be for many years, the real danger we have to fear. Oppression by the executive will come in its turn, but much later.

(*Letter to Madison*, 15th March, 1789)

This is what America's greatest statesmen, including Jefferson, the leader of the Democrats, thought about the danger of despotism on the part of the sovereign people. If we appreciated the thought of such men at its proper value, some serious errors would indeed be eliminated from our European minds.

3. (168)

[Grotius and the principles of *Right* in political theory]

Grotius praises Aristotle for dealing with political theory separately from questions of right, and reproves Bodin's method which confuses the two sciences (*De J. B. et P., proleg.* §57).

Grotius' observation is correct, but needs some explanation.

Certainly the principles of *Right* are of their nature anterior to and independent of those of *political theory*. According to the order of ideas, the science of Right, at least relative to its fundamental propositions, must be dealt with prior to the science of the government of society, that is, to political theory. The same must be said about the principles of *ethics*. When political science finds itself face to face with established principles of rights and duties, it can and must make use of truths pertaining to the sciences of philosophical right and of ethics. They are not however truths which political science teaches and demonstrates, but truths already proved and taught. It would be altogether absurd and monstrous to conceive of a political science which wanted to abstract and prescind totally from the mutual rights and duties which associate human beings. This is Machiavelli's disastrous abstraction, which made him a master not of political theory but of vile despotism, and of every kind of abominable rapine, and in great part responsible for the ruin of Italy.

One of the principal ends of government is to defend the rights of individuals. The art of government must, therefore, have the science of right as its first foundation. The second end of government is to remove the impediments obstructing the moral betterment of human beings, and assist moral growth by means within its competence. The second foundation of political theory must, therefore, be the science of duties, that is, morality in all its extension. These truly noble ends of civil government show that the art of politics, must be founded on right and ethics. It is also clear that government cannot attain these moral ends without the use of moral means, that is, means which are completely *just* and *upright*. Hence, it must know fully, first of all, that part of right affecting itself if it is not to exceed the limits of what is just and upright.

[*App.*, 3]

Aristotle, praised by Grotius, did indeed put ethics before political theory by uniting the two, rather as we have done. After describing virtue as an acquired habit, in the final chapter of the *Ethics*, he shows that virtue in a person presupposes a well-ordered city-state because good civil enactments are of the greatest help in producing virtuous habits. At this point, he takes the opportunity of passing to political science.

We see in this concept of Aristotle that politics, as the art of civil governments, is considered as a *means* of producing virtue in people. This is the same thought that we wanted to express when we said that the art of politics and society itself are simply a *method* of perfecting individuals, and must therefore serve as *means* to their perfection (cf. *PE*, 6 ss.).

In modern times we have moved a long way from principles which at one and the same time are so simple, and so helpful to the peace and prosperity of the world!

4. (191)

[The classification of authors of political theory]

As I have frequently remarked, the errors which vitiate philosophical systems depend on certain exclusive, partial views of writers. Consequently, the *positive part* in every author is nearly always true; the *negative part*, which authors deny and omit from their investigations, is nearly always false. I have applied this principle to writers on political theory and classified them according to their varying exclusive, partial ways of viewing politics (cf. *SC*, c. 14). Provided the classification is exact, it is extremely helpful because it enables us to see immediately where an author is defective and incomplete.

Furthermore, we must note that the classification, carried out according to the principle indicated, is multiple — authors may have neglected not just one but many views when discussing a question. These omissions can be reduced to certain general truths, which are always few in number. Hence, the different ways of classifying authors are few.

In *The Summary Cause* etc., c. 14, I classified writers on political theory according to their exclusive views about the *forces*

[*App.*, 4]

which move civil society to its end. I showed that these forces are principally reduced to three: 1. the activity of the human spirit, 2. external goods with the power to modify the dispositions of the human spirit, 3. the social organism which influences directly both the human spirit and the production, distribution and consumption of external goods. I therefore classify these authors into three different categories which correspond to the first, second or third of the forces they choose as the exclusive object of their meditation.

But consideration of the *end* of society is as important as consideration of the *forces* which drive society. It seems to me that in the case of the *end* of society both the teaching and spirit of political authors are generally extreme and defective. Here again authors can be divided into three categories:

1. Those who posit the end of society in abundance of *external goods* or show that they regard material prosperity as the sole social end.

2. Those who think that society and the government directing it must tend solely to the increase of common *pleasures*.

3. Finally, those who indeed acknowledge that the social end must consist in *contentment of spirit* but fail to evaluate correctly the means for contentment and take as the type of a contented spirit the indolence of savages.

We can indicate the error of these classes of authors with partial views by calling them respectively *miser* politicians, *pleasure* politicians and *savage* politicians. Examples of the three classes can easily be found in economists, in Helvetius and in Rousseau.

It is not the fault of economic science if nearly all economists belong to the first category. Because every science has to deal with a single object, scientific method requires economy to deal solely with wealth. The defect therefore lies not in the science but in the scientists who, obsessed by wealth as the sole object, reduce the entire State to wealth alone and make all society tend exclusively to it.

5. (287)

[The struggle between seigniorial and social elements]

A history of the visceral struggle between the *seigniorial* and social elements, and of the continual alterations undergone by these elements as they fuse more or less happily in varying proportions, would be an important, novel and altogether worthy undertaking of a great publicist. — The Roman republic, for example, formed a society, not a *seignior*. At its origin, the Roman empire itself was simply the republic with a perpetual leader at its head. In other words, the Roman State, which was at first mere *society*, acquired a *seigniorial element* and began to change into a seignior. However, the seigniorial element introduced into Roman society never entirely destroyed the social element, the society.

Modern States took the place of the Roman empire after its destruction by the northern peoples. New *seigniories* now appeared. Mere seigniories cannot last for long, however, in the midst of Christianity, an eminently social religion. Hence the popes, the representatives and heads of the Christian people, re-established the Christian Roman empire as soon as they were able to do so. An examination of the constitution of the empire of Charlemagne, the Golden Bull and the ordination of the seven electors at the time of Otto III in 1001, shows clearly that the form taken by the new empire was simply an imitation of that of the Church; a *society* was established, not a *seignior*. This *society* had to temper and rule, through its principles of humanity and meekness, all other existing *seigniories* which, without such a brake, were intolerable to Christian peoples. Just as the empire which succeeded the Roman republic had cast a seed of ever-growing indestructible seignior into the republic, so many centuries later, Charlemagne's empire, re-established by the popes at a time of conquests and conquerors, cast a seed of ever-growing, indestructible society into the seigniories.

Whoever writes the history of this important point of public social right must note how 'in every change affecting an out-going form of government, preceding customs endure for a lengthy period.' An example may be seen in the first Roman

empire. Although of its nature *seigniorial*, it preserved its republican, social customs for a long time because it succeeded to the republic. The second Roman empire, although of its nature social, kept its seigniorial attitude for a long time because it succeeded to *seigniories*. This explains why the Roman empire, when replanted amongst Christian kingdoms to form a single society from so many seigniories, took on necessarily a very different aspect from its eminently social character and retained the attitude and behaviour of a seigniority rather than of a society. It also explains why the popes, after forming the empire of the West, saw the necessity of limiting its exaggerated power. This led them to favour the freedom of the kingdom of France, Poland and other States against the claims of domination put forward by the emperors.

Some emperors did not act according to their *de jure* position as heads of Christian society, but as *de facto* absolute rulers, which they wanted to be, and placed themselves in direct opposition to the laws of the Church which had founded and consecrated their thrones. In the end, they were overthrown; the disintegration of their splendid majesty and its gradual lapse into extinction has to be seen as the result of the blows inflicted on the empire in its great battles with the Church. Nevertheless, the restoration and re-establishment of the empire of the West was not a failure; the *social element* sown by the Supreme Pontiffs remained in the world, where it was hospitably received by all kingdoms and Christian seigniories. It mingled with the seigniorial element, and even became confused with it; and in its battles with this element it sometimes lost and sometimes won. This in germ is the history of the public right of modern States. All civil progress in modern society must finally be attributed to the indestructible Christian element.

6. (303)

[Romagnosi's gratuitous hypotheses]

G. D. Romagnosi made several attempts to establish the precise steps normally taken as nations become more civilised. These endeavours are to be praised, although this Italian

[*App.*, 6]

philosopher, in following foreign authors, made gratuitous hypotheses rather than facts the basis of his theories. One of these totally gratuitous hypotheses, altogether contrary to genuine fact, presupposes *feticism* as the first form of religion to appear in the infancy of nations. According to this theory, people cannot arrive at *monotheism* without first passing through the superstition called *Sabaism*.

Another completely anti-historical hypothesis, which contains a still more serious error than the previous theory, is Romagnosi's supposition that the doctrine of the unity of God does not pertain to primitive tradition but depends on philosophical abstraction. As a result, Romagnosi infers that the one God adored by the world is only man himself with all his limits removed:

The second extreme comes much later when wiser people have succeeded in forming an idea of the interior human being with his intellectual qualities and moral virtues. They go on to abstract every limit and defect from this being, and make him the unique author and conservator of nature and the object of the majority's belief.

(*Supplementi ed Illustrazioni alla Seconda Parte delle Ricerche Storiche sull'India antica*, Robertson, note 1)

I have commented on this opinion of Romagnosi under its religious aspect in an article in *Annali di Scienze Religiose* published at Rome. Its invalidity could be shown simply by stating that it is a mere hypothesis, although we could also add that it is contrary to the most ancient traditions. Finally, we could observe that Romagnosi's supposition proves his profound ignorance of Christian theology, which teaches that the Almighty is not a human being whose limits have been removed, but *being in its essence* with which neither human beings nor any other created thing have anything in common, or any true likeness; their only relationship with God is that which theologians call *analogy*. It is impossible, therefore, to arrive at the concept of the one God of the Christians through abstraction by starting from the concept of human being.

Moreover, the teaching that makes of God a nature having nothing in common with anything we know was already acknowledged by pagans. Plato teaches it expressly. The later

Platonists dealt with it *ex professo* as we can see in Plotinus (*Enneads*, bk. 4, c. 2) who maintained that we can predicate of God nothing that we know, not even the word 'essence' or the word 'being'.

This totally negative idea of God, an idea separate from every knowable thing, was common in Greece before Christ. It was also known in India before its diffusion in Greece. This explains the following extraordinary definition found in the *Oupnekhat*:

He is great and not great; he surrounds and does not surround all things; he is light and not light; he has a face totally covered with veils and not covered; he is and is not the lion that devours all things; he is and is not terrible; he is and is not happiness; he makes light of death and dies; he is venerable and not venerable; he says and does not say, 'I am in everything' (*Oupn.* 50, n. 178). Elsewhere, it says: Those who say 'we have understood him have not understood him; those who have not understood him have understood him; those who have understood him have not understood him' (*Oupn.* 37, n. 147).

Romagnosi, therefore, does not know what constitutes the true system of monotheists and adorers of the one God; his reasoning is based on his own imperfect, false concept of the only God.—

I would add finally that Romagnosi, led by his own systematic way of thought to the strangest absurdities, does not flinch before them. It is in fact absurd, and almost ridiculously so, to maintain as Romagnosi does, that civilisation has advanced further amongst indigenous Americans than in India because Americans adore one God while Indians as a whole are idolatrous. He says:

In some ways, we ought to prefer the ancient inhabitants of Peru and the Society Islands, granted that we know the Peruvians believed in the Great Spirit and that the inhabitants of the Hawaiian and Society Islands acknowledged a supreme Lord of all visible and invisible things.

(*Supplementi ed Illustrazioni alla Seconda Parte delle Ricerche Storiche sull'India antica*, Robertson, art. 3, §1)

7. (326)

[A nation in the last stage as victim of one in the second stage]

Ancient conquests were explained in *The Summary Cause*, etc. (c. 9) by linking them to the various stages at which nations found themselves at the time. Nations at the last stage, the stage of greatest corruption, were unable to withstand those at the second stage, for whom they were an easy prey. This observation could be illustrated with examples taken from the few remaining records of ancient oriental monarchies, and especially by reference to Cyrus' victories over the Medes and Assyrians. Everything leads us to believe that at this time the nation of the Medes and Assyrians had been corrupted by unlimited luxury and uncontrolled debauchery. The Persians however, according to Xenophon, were still living in conditions of simplicity and virtue.

It is worthwhile considering here a fact narrated in book 2 of the *Cyropaedia*. Several Indian ambassadors came to the court of Cyaxares, king of the Medes. He decided to receive them in great splendour and dazzle them with his own magnificence and the sumptuousness of his court. To make the reception more glorious, he sent an order to young Cyrus, his nephew and satrap of the Persian subjects of the Medes, to come to the court wearing extremely expensive clothes that would enable Cyaxares himself to appear in greater splendour. Cyrus, however, lined up all his cohorts in perfect order, dressed them simply in Persian fashion, and appeared at court in all haste with the entire army. Cyaxares wanted to know why they had come dressed so simply. 'What do you think?' said Cyrus. 'Would I have done you more honour by obeying and coming more slowly, dressed in purple and adorned with bracelets and necklaces as you desired? Or by coming, as I have done, swiftly and surrounded by this large, highly qualified army? My haste and my sweat does you honour as I present these men and myself in so devoted a fashion.'

Certainly Cyrus, by acting in this way, drew a veil over his political intentions. Nevertheless, it is clear that the king of the Medes, and the future king of the Persians, had very different ideas. Cyaxares thought only of demonstrating his greatness by

[App., 7]

means of sumptuousness; Cyrus despised luxurious trappings, esteemed military force and almost mocked the lethargy of the Medes and Assyrians as he confronted it with the speed of a military people who had not grown soft.

Clearly, the Persians were still in the first or second stage of power, while the Medes and the Assyrians had arrived at the final stage of sensual desires. It is no surprise that the Assyrians were ripe prey for the Persians. — The same reflections can be made by comparing Persians of a later date with the Greeks who conquered them when Xerxes thought he could invade Greece with impunity.

8. (339)

[Government without written laws in India]

From the report of Megasthenes, who lived for several years at the court of the king of the Prasii about the beginning of 200 BC, we know that written laws were not in use amongst the Prasii, perhaps the least civilised of the Indian kingdoms, and that thefts were limited to small amounts. According to Strabo (bk. 15):

Megasthenes says that during his sojourn at the establishment of Sandracottus, where the population was about four hundred thousand, he never experienced a single day in which anything greater than two hundred drachmas were stolen. This seems to have been accentuated by lack of use of *written laws*. The people are in fact illiterate, and depend for their direction on memory.

Lack of use of written laws is something found even today in India. Ancient treatises of jurisprudence exist, but they have no force in law. Papi, who lived for a long time in India, says:

Indians have numerous ancient treatises on law. Some centuries ago, a certain Raghunandana, called by the English of Calcutta the Indian Trebonius, compiled a kind of digest in twenty-seven volumes. His sources were books of the various Muni or holy men. However, these treatises seem to have been made for the private use of a few Brahmins; they were not promulgated, and the people

[*App.*, 8]

seem ignorant even of their existence. The principal, almost unique rule, of judgment are ancient customs and precedents. If cases occur in which these cannot be applied, and especially in questions of covetousness and theft or some other passion, the law is simply what the Brahmin, the despot or the judge decides.

(*Lettere sulle Indie Orientali*, t. 2, pp. 136–137,
Philadelphia, Klet publishing house, 1802)

Only towards the middle of the 16th century did Akbar VI, a descendant of Tamerlane, compile his compendium of Indian jurisprudence. Two centuries later, the English governor Hastings brought out a new compilation of Indian laws, published in London, 1781. In 1796, Colebrooke published at London in three 4° volumes the translation of the Manu codex which, according to Romagnosi's conjecture, would have been brought from Iran to India in 540 BC. Romagnosi's arguments for his assertion do not, however, seem to have much force. He bases his theory solely on the discovery of certain laws in this codex which do not seem to have been practised in India. This is a difficult point to prove for all times and localities in that vast region. Allow me to mention Indian mythology on this matter. It maintains that Manu and ten other lawmakers were born from Brahma and his wife, Seraswati. Manu populated the earth and provided excellent laws for his children (this is a case, in India, of the immediate origin of civil dominion from paternal dominion, of political society from that of family society). But his children and their descendants did not observe his laws. — This explains the necessity for the origin of other Manus who would lead and rule people wisely.

9. (370)

[A fallen people is not aided by suffering]

It may be helpful here to note an error that I have tried to indicate on several occasions. There is a common belief that suffering has the power to motivate a fallen people to undertake the road to renewed prosperity. Such an affirmation ignores human nature and history. I have already observed that misery

is not a sufficient stimulus to set in motion the use of flaccid intellect either in the case of individuals or nations when they need to find ways of abandoning their unhappy state. Tocqueville has the following comments, which confirm what I say, on the Indians of America.

You see before you peoples whose primitive education is so debased and their present character such a strange mixture of passion, ignorance and mistaken ideas about all things, that they could never discern the causes of their own misery. They succumb to evils of which they know nothing.

I have travelled through vast lands once inhabited by powerful Indian nations who exist no more. I have lived with stricken tribes who see their numbers diminish daily, and the splendour of their savage glory grow dim. I have heard these same Indians foretell the final destiny of their race. There is no one in Europe who cannot see what should be done to save these unhappy peoples from irreparable destruction. They themselves do not see it, however. They experience the evils that accumulate year by year, but reject the remedy and perish to the last man. You would have to use force to make them live.

Tocqueville continues with the following reflections on the nations of South America:

Some people are amazed when they see the new nations of South America engaged for a quarter of a century in unending revolutions, and expect from day to day that these countries will return to what people call their *natural state*. But who can say that the present revolutions are not the natural state of the Spaniards of South America? Society in this area has touched the bottom of the abyss, and it will not climb out by its own power.

The people who live in this beautiful half of the hemisphere seem obstinately desirous of tearing out their own intestines. Nothing can renew them. Exhaustion makes them rest for a moment; rest gives them strength for new frenzies. When I stop to consider these alternating states of misery and bloody crime, I am tempted to believe that they would benefit from despotism.

(*De la Démocratie en Amérique*, t. 2, c. 5)

10. (403)

[Government by people of intelligence]

The same can be said about the culture of India. A discreet use of the intelligence was maintained in one part of the nation while the remainder sank ever more deeply into a state of intellectual inertia. The first part, which grew ever smaller and was finally restricted to the Brahmin caste, sustained the weak, civil life enjoyed amongst the people. We can however make our observation more general and apply it to all the peoples of antiquity.

When States originate, there is very little difference between the culture of the heads of nations and that of the people. Everyone formed the people, and in these conditions the populace could easily enter into discussions concerning government; the nation was administered through the ideas common to the masses, not on the basis of calculations requiring a high degree of reflection. As things progressed, one section came to possess greater means for developing its intelligence and lifting itself much higher than the reason of the masses. These persons engaged in religious and administrative matters. As they realised how their knowledge elevated them above the common people, they used it to restrict government, science, religion and even ownership to themselves. The people, conscious of their own ignorance, looked with extraordinary esteem on these sages (who for their part knew exactly how to maintain and increase this esteem through all kinds of formalities) and assented without difficulty to government by other people of greater foresight. The natural tendencies of the people were more inclined to do this as they approached the final social stage with its inevitable corruption. Thus, the people were excluded from social government partly by the ambition and greed of powerful *individuals*, partly by government's becoming too complicated for them and superior to their capacity, and partly by the people's own retreat from public affairs on the basis of a certain instinct for inertia which developed together with corruption. As a result, the multitude was deprived of the only source of instruction with which it was able to sustain its own intelligence, that is, the practice of public consultation about

[App., 10]

State matters. Other means of education, so abundant in Christian societies, were totally lacking in pagan societies whose masses suffered irreparable corruption on all sides. It has rightly been said:

When I think of the Greek and Roman republics and compare them with the republics of America, I see libraries full of manuscripts and an uneducated populace on the one hand, and innumerable newspapers and educated people on the other. I then go on to consider all the efforts which are nevertheless made to judge one side with the help of the other and to foresee, through what occurred two thousand years ago, what will occur in our own times. I am tempted to burn my books to avoid applying anything other than new ideas to such new social conditions.

(Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, t. 2, c. 9)

11. (633)

[Three systems concerning the value of good and pleasure]

The history of ancient philosophy presents three systems about the value of external good and pleasure. They result from the different partial views taken of this good.

The first system, which commonly takes its name from Epicurus, does not distinguish accurately between *contentment*, which it considers at most as only the effect of external good, and *good* itself. According to this teaching, good and its resultant pleasure is everything. Consequently, this good has great value in the eyes of these philosophers. Wishing to give the best meaning possible to this system, we have to say that the philosophers who formed it considered only the cases where the use of this good contents the human spirit.

The second system is diametrically opposite to the first. It is the system of Crates or that other philosopher who proclaimed, as he threw wealth into the sea, 'I drown you lest I be drowned by you.' For these thinkers, external good is not good at all (as ordinary people believe) but evil.

This system is also founded on insufficient observation,

[*App.*, 11]

which however is more profound than that on which the first system rests: philosophers of this school considered only those cases, frequent though they are, in which external good does not produce contentment of spirit. They pondered not only the abuse of external good, which arouses disordered, disturbing and torturing passions in the spirit, but even more the incompatibility, as it were, between frequent sensual enjoyment and the noblest actions of the understanding. They saw that development or excessive use, or merely great use, of our lower faculties obstructs a corresponding great use and development of our higher faculties. Human beings, in devoting themselves to external things, easily become gross, insensitive and subject to bad habits. The intellect and heart risk losing their freedom. The soul is never so pure, so generous and so sublime as when its only good and hope are founded on the exercise of virtue and on the contemplation of truth to which it adheres. However, although this system was nobler and more philosophical than the first, it was exclusive and its observation incomplete.

The third system, which lies between these two external systems, united the two kinds of facts observed by the others and concluded that 'external good and pleasure, if used well, sometimes produce contentment; if used badly, produce the opposite effect.' This is a philosophy whose only concern is to teach the use of external good in order to produce the first, not the second effect in the human spirit.

Because of the different paths taken by ancient philosophy to teach this *use* of good, we have to form another subordinate classification of philosophical systems concerning good and evil. All of them however agree with the opinion that 'the value of external good cannot be found in this good itself but in its use.' I would add that the use depends on the varying dispositions of our spirit. The general principle of this third system could not be better expressed than in the following fine passage of Horace:

O blessed man, you rightly say,
 Whose goods are few and mean;
 But happier he whose wisdom shows
 WISE use of heavenly gifts;
 Whose skill in bearing poverty,

[*App.*, 11]

The Purpose of Society

Is known and praised and loved;
 FOR WHOM DISGRACE IS DEATH, AND WORSE
 THAN EVERY OTHER FEAR.

(Bk. 4, Od. 9)

12. (806)

[Representatives of literature based on unhappiness]

We could say that the representatives of this kind of literature [centred on unhappiness and criminality] are Foscolo and Alfieri in Italy, Byron in England, and Goethe in Germany. Goethe says of himself:

Even in the most desirable state, lack of activity joined to an intense desire to act can bring on a tremendous need for death and self-annihilation. We require more from life than it can give, and because we can neither go on doing this nor satisfy the immense yearning of our feeling, we seek to rid ourselves of an existence so ill-fitted to the capricious height of our thoughts. I know well enough myself how many spasms such speculations have cost me, and the energy I needed to escape their domination. The effect produced by my Werther showed me that these ideas, although of a sickly man, were not mine personally.

Everything in my life seemed monotonous. I was a prey to ennui and insensitive to love. I no longer heard the sweet voice of nature which now and then invites us to enjoy its wonderful transformations . . . A prisoner of morbid phantasies, I reflected at length on the ways we can rid ourselves of existence. I had a wonderful collection of old weapons, amongst them a very fine dagger. More than once I put the point to my breast but lacked the force to drive it home. I realised that the hunger for death in me was only the vain hope of mournful listlessness. I laughed at myself and was cured at once. Nevertheless, feelings of incurable ennui did not leave me. I needed some poetic creation into which I could pour my sad thoughts. At that time news was circulating about the suicide of young Jerusalem. All of a sudden, I had the story for Werther, which I wrote immediately. In the

[*App.*, 12]

book, the phantasms that disturbed my youth took on a real existence that completed my cure.

The esteemed author of *Saggio di Letteratura tedesca*, in the *Raccoglitore* (July 1837), makes the following acute observation about this passage of the German poet:

Here, and more so in *Werther*, the author seems to depict truthfully the tremendous ennui of modern society, the contrast between immense internal activity and the engrained monotony of the external world, the imaginary sufferings, the complacency in suffering already outlined first by Rousseau and after him by Byron and his whining little school. If this is so, and we have here a poet who writes solely to relieve his own soul with complete disregard for the effect of his writing, we see, I think, another of those characteristics of our age, *egoism*, which was shared by Goethe himself.

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