The Human Condition

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is capable of it,[1] and only action is entirely dependent upon the constant presence of others.

This special relationship between action and being together seems fully to justify the early translation of Aristotle's *zōon politikon* by *animal socialis*, already found in Seneca, which then became the standard translation through Thomas Aquinas: *homo est naturaliter politicus, id est, socialis* ("man is by nature political, that is, social").[2] More than any elaborate theory, this unconscious substitution of the social for the political betrays the extent to which the original Greek understanding of politics had been lost. For this, it is significant but not decisive that the word "social" is Roman in origin and has no equivalent in Greek language or thought. Yet the Latin usage of the word *societas* also originally had a clear, though limited, political meaning; it indicated an alliance between people for a specific purpose, as when men organize in order to rule others or to commit a crime.[3] It is only with the later

1. It seems quite striking that the Homeric gods act only with respect to men, ruling them from afar or interfering in their affairs. Conflicts and strife between the gods also seem to arise chiefly from their part in human affairs or their conflicting partiality with respect to mortals. What then appears is a story in which men and gods act together, but the scene is set by the mortals, even when the decision is arrived at in the assembly of gods on Olympus. I think such a "co-operation" is indicated in the Homeric *erg' andrōn te theōn te* (*Odyssey* i. 338): the bard sings the deeds of gods and men, not stories of the gods and stories of men. Similarly, Hesiod's *Theogony* deals not with the deeds of gods but with the genesis of the world (116); it therefore tells how things came into being through begetting and giving birth (constantly recurring). The singer, servant of the Muses, sings "the glorious deeds of men of old and the blessed gods" (97 ff.), but nowhere, as far as I can see, the glorious deeds of the gods.

2. The quotation is from the Index Rerum to the Taurinian edition of Aquinas (1922). The word "politicus" does not occur in the text, but the Index summarizes Thomas' meaning correctly, as can be seen from *Summa theologica* i. 96. 4; ii. 2. 109. 3.

3. *Societas regni* in Livius, *societas sceleris* in Cornelius Nepos. Such an alliance could also be concluded for business purposes, and Aquinas still holds that a "true *societas*" between businessmen exists only "where the investor himself shares in the risk," that is, where the partnership is truly an alliance (see W. J. Ashley, *An Introduction to English Economic History and Theory* [1931], p. 419).

concept of a *societas generis humani*, a "society of man-kind,"[4] that the term "social" begins to acquire the general meaning of a fundamental human condition. It is not that Plato or Aristotle was ignorant of, or unconcerned with, the fact that man cannot live outside the company of men, but they did not count this condition among the specifically human characteristics; on the contrary, it was something human life had in common with animal life, and for this reason alone it could not be fundamentally human. The natural, merely social companionship of the human species was considered to be a limitation imposed upon us by the needs of biological life, which are the same for the human animal as for other forms of animal life.

According to Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is not only different from but stands in direct opposition to that natural association whose center is the home (*oikia*) and the family. The rise of the city-state meant that man received "besides his private life a sort of second life, his *bios politikos*. Now every citizen belongs to two orders of existence; and there is a sharp distinction in his life between what is his own (*idion*) and what is communal (*koinon*)."[5] It was not just an opinion or theory of Aristotle but a simple historical fact that the foundation of the *polis* was preceded by the destruction of all organized units resting on kinship, such as the *phratria* and the *phylē*.[6] Of all the activities

4. I use here and in the following the word "man-kind" to designate the human species, as distinguished from "mankind," which indicates the sum total of human beings.

5. Werner Jaeger, *Paideia* (1945), III, 111.

6. ~~See *Politics* iii. 2. 11~~. Although Fustel de Coulanges' chief thesis, according to the Introduction to *The Ancient City* (Anchor ed.; 1956), consists of demonstrating that "the same religion" formed the ancient family organization and the ancient city-state, he brings numerous references to the fact that the regime of the *gens* based on the religion of the family and the regime of the city "were in reality two antagonistic forms of government. . . . Either the city could not last, or it must in the course of time break up the family" (p. 252). The reason for the contradiction in this great book seems to me to be in Coulanges' attempt to treat Rome and the Greek city-states together; for his evidence and categories he relies chiefly on Roman institutional and political sentiment, although he recognizes that the Vesta cult "became weakened in Greece at a very early date . . . but it never became enfeebled at Rome" (p. 146). Not only was the gulf between household and city much deeper in Greece than in

necessary and present in human communities, only two were deemed to be political and to constitute what Aristotle called the *bios politikos*, namely action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*), out of which rises the realm of human affairs (*ta tōn anthrōpōn pragmata*, as Plato used to call it) from which everything merely necessary or useful is strictly excluded.

However, while certainly only the foundation of the city-state enabled men to spend their whole lives in the political realm, in action and speech, the conviction that these two human capacities belonged together and are the highest of all seems to have preceded the *polis* and was already present in pre-Socratic thought. The stature of the Homeric Achilles can be understood only if one sees him as "the doer of great deeds and the speaker of great words."[7] In distinction from modern understanding, such words were not considered to be great because they expressed great thoughts; on the contrary, as we know from the last lines of *Antigone*, it may be the capacity for "great words" (*megaloi logoi*) with which to reply to ~~the~~ striking blows ~~of the gods~~ that will eventually teach thought in old age.[8] Thought was secondary to speech, but

Rome, but only in Greece was the Olympian religion, the religion of Homer and the city-state, separate from and superior to the older religion of family and household. While Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, became the protectress of a "city hearth" and part of the official, political cult after the unification and second foundation of Rome, her Greek colleague, Hestia, is mentioned for the first time by Hesiod, the only Greek poet who, in conscious opposition to Homer, praises the life of the hearth and the household; in the official religion of the *polis*, she had to cede her place in the assembly of the twelve Olympian gods to Dionysos (see Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte* [5th ed.], Book I, ch. 12, and Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* [1955], 27. k).

7. The passage occurs in Phoenix' speech, *Iliad* ix. 443. It clearly refers to education for war and *agora*, the public meeting, in which men can distinguish themselves. The literal translation is: "[your father] charged me to teach you all this, to be a speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (*mythōn te rhētēr' emenai prēktēra te ergōn*).

8. The literal translation of the last lines of *Antigone* (1350–54) is as follows: "But great words, counteracting [or paying back] the great ~~strokes~~ of the ~~high-shouldered [gods]~~, teach understanding in old age." The content of these lines is so puzzling to modern understanding that one rarely finds a translator who dares to give the bare sense. An exception is Hölderlin's translation: "Grosse Blicke aber, / Grosse Streiche der hohen Schultern / Vergeltend, / Sie haben im Alter

and changed its location entirely. It has been rightly remarked that after the downfall of the Roman Empire, it was the Catholic Church that offered men a substitute for the citizenship which had formerly been the prerogative of municipal government.[25] The medieval tension between the darkness of everyday life and the grandiose splendor attending everything sacred, with the concomitant rise from the secular to the religious, corresponds in many respects to the rise from the private to the public in antiquity. The difference is of course very marked, for no matter how "worldly" the Church became, it was always essentially an otherworldly concern which kept the community of believers together. While one can equate the public with the religious only with some difficulty, the secular realm under the rule of feudalism was indeed in its entirety what the private realm had been in antiquity. Its hallmark was the absorption of all activities into the household sphere, where they had only private significance, and consequently the very absence of a public realm.[26]

It is characteristic of this growth of the private realm, and incidentally of the difference between the ancient household head and the feudal lord, that the feudal lord could render justice within the limits of his rule, whereas the ancient household head, while he might exert a milder or harsher rule, knew neither of laws nor justice outside the political realm.[27] The bringing of all human

25. R. H. Barrow, *The Romans* (1953), p. 194.

26. The characteristics which E. Levasseur (*Histoire des classes ouvrières et le de l'industrie en France avant 1789* [1900]) finds for the feudal organization of labor are true for the whole of feudal communities: "Chacun vivait chez soi et vivait de soi-même, le noble sur sa seigneurie, le vilain sur sa culture, le citadin dans sa ville" (p. 229).

27. The fair treatment of slaves which Plato recommends in the *Laws* (777) has little to do with justice and is not recommended "out of regard for the [slaves], but more out of respect to ourselves." For the coexistence of two laws, the political law of justice and the household law of rule, see Wallon, *op. cit.*, II, 200: "La loi, pendant bien longtemps, donc . ... s'abstenait de pénétrer dans la famille, où elle reconnaissait l'empire d'une autre loi." Ancient, especially Roman, jurisdiction with respect to household matters, treatment of slaves, family relationships, etc., was essentially designed to restrain the otherwise unrestricted power of the household head; that there could be a rule of justice within the entirely "private" society of the slaves themselves was unthink-

activities into the private realm and the modeling of all human relationships upon the example of the household reached far into the specifically medieval professional organizations in the cities themselves, the guilds, *confrèries*, and *compagnons*, and even into the early business companies, where "the original joint household would seem to be indicated by the very word 'company' (*companis*) . . . [and] such phrases as 'men who eat one bread,' 'men who have one bread and one wine.' "[28] The medieval concept of the "common good," far from indicating the existence of a political realm, recognizes only that private individuals have interests in common, material and spiritual, and that they can retain their privacy and attend to their own business only if one of them takes it upon himself to look out for this common interest. What distinguishes this essentially Christian attitude toward politics from the modern reality is not so much the recognition of a "common good" as the exclusivity of the private sphere and the absence of that curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance that we call "society."

It is therefore not surprising that medieval political thought, concerned exclusively with the secular realm, remained unaware of the gulf between the sheltered life in the household and the merciless exposure of the *polis* and, consequently, of the virtue of courage as one of the most elemental political attitudes. What remains surprising is that the only postclassical political theorist who, in an extraordinary effort to restore its old dignity to politics, perceived the gulf and understood something of the courage needed to cross it was Machiavelli, who described it in the rise "of the Condottiere from low condition to high rank," from privacy to princedom, that is, from circumstances common to all men to the shining glory of great deeds.[29]

able—they were by definition outside the realm of the law and subject to the rule of their master. Only the master himself, in so far as he was also a citizen, was subject to the rules of laws, which for the sake of the city eventually even curtailed his powers in the household.

28. W. J. Ashley, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

29. This "rise" from one realm or rank to a higher is a recurrent theme in Machiavelli (see esp. *Prince*, ch. 6 about Hiero of Syracuse and ch. 7; and *Discourses*, Book II, ch. 13).

attained such excellence as in the revolutionary transformation of laboring, and this to the point where the verbal significance of the word itself (which always had been connected with hardly bearable "toil and trouble," with effort and pain and, consequently, with a deformation of the human body, so that only extreme misery and poverty could be its source), has begun to lose its meaning for us.[39] While dire necessity made labor indispensable to sustain life, excellence would have been the last thing to expect from it. Excellence and painful, laborious effort were mutually exclusive. "Who could achieve well if with labor?" (*ei de syn ponō tis eu prassoi?*).[40]

divided by "an invisible hand" among its members. The same holds true, *mutatis mutandis*, for the odd notion of a division of labor between the sexes, which is even considered by some writers to be the most original one. It presumes as its single subject man-kind, the human species, which has divided its labors among men and women. Where the same argument is used in antiquity (see, for instance, Xenophon *Oeconomicus* vii. 22), emphasis and meaning are quite different. The main division is between a life spent indoors, in the household, and a life spent outside, in the world. Only the latter is a life fully worthy of man, and the notion of equality between man and woman, which is a necessary assumption for the idea of division of labor, is of course entirely absent (cf. n. 81). Antiquity seems to have known only professional specialization, which assumedly was predetermined by natural qualities and gifts. Thus work in the gold mines, which occupied several thousand workers, was distributed according to strength and skill. See J.-P. Vernant, "Travail et nature dans la Grèce ancienne," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, Vol. LII, No. 1 (January–March, 1955).

39. All the European words for "labor," the Latin and English *labor*, the Greek *ponos*, the French *travail*, the German *Arbeit*, signify pain and effort and are also used for the pangs of birth. *Labor* has the same etymological root as *labare* ("to stumble under a burden"); *ponos* and *Arbeit* have the same etymological roots as "poverty" (*penia* in Greek and *Armut* in German). Even Hesiod, currently counted among the few defenders of labor in antiquity, put *ponon alginoenta* ("painful labor") as first of the evils plaguing man (*Theogony* 226). For the Greek usage, see G. Herzog-Hauser, "*Ponos*," in Pauly-Wissowa. The German *Arbeit* and *arm* are both derived from the Germanic *arbma-*, meaning lonely and neglected, abandoned. See Kluge/Götze, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1951). In medieval German, the word is used to translate *labor*, *tribulatio*, *persecutio*, *adversitas*, *malum* (see Klara Vontobel, *Das Arbeitsethos des deutschen Protestantismus* [Dissertation, Bern, 1946]).

40. Pindar *Carmina Olympica* xi. 4.

Excellence itself, *aretē* as the Greeks, *virtus* as the Romans would have called it, has always been assigned to the public realm where one could excel, could distinguish oneself from all others. Every activity performed in public can attain an excellence never matched in privacy; for excellence, by definition, the presence of others is always required, and this presence needs the formality of the public, constituted by one's peers, it cannot be the casual, familiar presence of one's equals or inferiors.[41] Not even the social realm—though it made excellence anonymous, emphasized the progress of mankind rather than the achievements of men, and changed the content of the public realm beyond recognition—has been able altogether to annihilate the connection between public performance and excellence. While we have become excellent in the laboring we perform in public, our capacity for action and speech has lost much of its former quality since the rise of the social realm banished these into the sphere of the intimate and the private. This curious discrepancy has not escaped public notice, where it is usually blamed upon an assumed time lag between our technical capacities and our general humanistic development or between the physical sciences, which change and control nature, and the social sciences, which do not yet know how to change and control society. Quite apart from other fallacies of the argument which have been pointed out so frequently that we need not repeat them, this criticism concerns only a possible change in the psychology of human beings—their so-called behavior patterns—not a change of the world they move in. And this psychological interpretation, for which the absence or presence of a public realm is as irrelevant as any tangible, worldly reality, seems rather doubtful in view of the fact that no activity can become excellent if the world does not provide a proper space for its exercise. Neither education nor ingenuity nor talent can replace the constituent elements of the public realm, which make it the proper place for human excellence.

41. Homer's much quoted thought that Zeus takes away half of a man's excellence (*aretē*) when the day of slavery catches him (*Odyssey* xvii. 320 ff.) is put into the mouth of Eumaios, a slave himself, and meant as an objective statement, not a criticism or a moral judgment. The slave lost excellence because he lost admission to the public realm, where excellence can show.

ever, this permanence is of a different nature; it is the permanence of a process rather than the permanence of a stable structure. Without the process of accumulation, wealth would at once fall back into the opposite process of disintegration through use and consumption.

Common wealth, therefore, can never become common in the sense we speak of a common world; it remained, or rather was intended to remain, strictly private. Only the government, appointed to shield the private owners from each other in the competitive struggle for more wealth, was common. The obvious contradiction in this modern concept of government, where the only thing people have in common is their private interests, need no longer bother us as it still bothered Marx, since we know that the contradiction between private and public, typical of the initial stages of the modern age, has been a temporary phenomenon which introduced the utter extinction of the very difference between the private and public realms, the submersion of both in the sphere of the social. By the same token, we are in a far better position to realize the consequences for human existence when both the public and private spheres of life are gone, the public because it has become a function of the private and the private because it has become the only common concern left.

Seen from this viewpoint, the modern discovery of intimacy seems a flight from the whole outer world into the inner subjectivity of the individual, which formerly had been sheltered and protected by the private realm. The dissolution of this realm into the social may most conveniently be watched in the progressing transformation of immobile into mobile property until eventually the distinction between property and wealth, between the *consumptibiles* and the *fungibiles* of Roman law, loses all significance because every tangible, "fungible" thing has become an object of "consumption"; it lost its private use value which was determined by its location and acquired an exclusively social value determined through its ever-changing exchangeability whose fluctuation could itself be fixed only temporarily by relating it to the common denominator of money.[76] Closely connected with this social evapora-

76. Medieval economic theory did not yet conceive of money as a common denominator and yardstick but counted it among the *consumptibiles*.

of an activity, and not the much more frequent one of beholding passively a revealed truth, manifests itself within the world itself; this, like all other activities, does not leave the world, but must be performed within it. But this manifestation, though it appears in the space where other activities are performed and depends upon it, is of an actively negative nature; fleeing the world and hiding from its inhabitants, it negates the space the world offers to men, and most of all that public part of it where everything and everybody are seen and heard by others.

Goodness, therefore, as a consistent way of life, is not only impossible within the confines of the public realm, it is even destructive of it. Nobody perhaps has been more sharply aware of this ruinous quality of doing good than Machiavelli, who, in a famous passage, dared to teach men "how not to be good."[87] Needless to add, he did not say and did not mean that men must be taught how to be bad; the criminal act, though for other reasons, must also flee being seen and heard by others. Machiavelli's criterion for political action was glory, the same as in classical antiquity, and badness can no more shine in glory than goodness. Therefore all methods by which "one may indeed gain power, but not glory" are bad.[88] Badness that comes out of hiding is impudent and directly destroys the common world; goodness that comes out of hiding and assumes a public role is no longer good, but corrupt in its own terms and will carry its own corruption wherever it goes. Thus, for Machiavelli, the reason for the Church's becoming a corrupting influence in Italian politics was her participation in secular affairs as such and not the individual corruptness of bishops and prelates. To him, the alternative posed by the problem of religious rule over the secular realm was inescapably this: either the public realm corrupted the religious body and thereby became itself corrupt, or the religious body remained uncorrupt and destroyed the public realm altogether. A reformed Church therefore was even more dangerous in Machiavelli's eyes, and he looked with great respect but greater apprehension upon the religious revival of his time, the "new orders" which, by "saving religion from being destroyed by the licentious-

87. *Prince*, ch. 15.

88. *Ibid.*, ch. 8.

body is most deteriorated." Although he refused to admit *banausoi* to citizenship, he would have accepted shepherds and painters (but neither peasants nor sculptors).[7]

We shall see later that, quite apart from their contempt for labor, the Greeks had reasons of their own to mistrust the craftsman, or rather, the *homo faber* mentality. This mistrust, however, is true only of certain periods, whereas all ancient estimates of human activities, including those which, like Hesiod, supposedly praise

7. *Politics* 1258b35 ff. For Aristotle's discussion about admission of *banausoi* to citizenship see *Politics* iii. 5. His theory corresponds closely to reality: it is estimated that up to 80 per cent of free labor, work, and commerce consisted of non-citizens, either "strangers" (*katoikountes* and *metoikoi*) or emancipated slaves who advanced into these classes (see Fritz Heichelheim, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Altertums* [1938], I, 398 ff.). Jacob Burckhardt, who in his *Griechische Kulturgeschichte* (Vol. II, secs. 6 and 8) relates Greek current opinion of who does and who does not belong to the class of *banausoi*, also notices that we do not know of any treatise about sculpture. In view of the many essays on music and poetry, this probably is no more an accident of tradition than the fact that we know so many stories about the great feeling of superiority and even arrogance among the famous painters which are not matched by anecdotes about sculptors. This estimate of painters and sculptors survived many centuries. It is still found in the Renaissance, where sculpturing is counted among the servile arts whereas painting takes up a middle position between liberal and servile arts (see Otto Neurath, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Opera Servilia," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Vol. XLI, No. 2 [1915]).

That Greek public opinion in the city-states judged occupations according to the effort required and the time consumed is supported by a remark of Aristotle about the life of shepherds: "There are great differences in human ways of life. The laziest are shepherds; for they get their food without labor [*ponos*] from tame animals and have leisure [*skholazousin*]" (*Politics* 1256a30 ff.). It is interesting that Aristotle, probably following current opinion, here mentions laziness (*aergia*) together with, and somehow as a condition for, *skholē*, abstention from certain activities which is the condition for a political life. Generally, the modern reader must be aware that *aergia* and *skholē* are not the same. Laziness had the same connotations it has for us, and a life of *skholē* was not considered to be a lazy life. The equation, however, of *skholē* and idleness is characteristic of a development within the *polis*. Thus Xenophon reports that Socrates was accused of having quoted Hesiod's line: "Work is no disgrace, but laziness [*aergia*] is a disgrace." The accusation meant that Socrates had instilled in his pupils a slavish spirit (*Memorabilia* i. 2*ϕ*. 56). Historically, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between the contempt of the Greek city-states for all non-political occupations which arose out of the enormous demands upon the time and energy of the citizens, and the earlier, more original, and more general contempt for

duction, whom all ages prior to the modern had in mind when they identified the laboring condition with slavery. What they left behind them in return for their consumption was nothing more or less than their masters' freedom or, in modern language, their masters' potential productivity.

In other words, the distinction between productive and unproductive labor contains, albeit in a prejudicial manner, the more fundamental distinction between labor and work.[16] It is indeed the mark of all laboring that it leaves nothing behind, that the result of its effort is almost as quickly consumed as the effort is spent. And yet this effort, despite its futility, is born of a great urgency and motivated by a more powerful drive than anything else, because life itself depends upon it. The modern age in general and Karl Marx in particular, overwhelmed, as it were, by the unprecedented actual productivity of Western mankind, had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon all labor as work and to speak of the *animal laborans* in terms much more fitting for *homo faber*, hoping all the time that only one more step was needed to eliminate labor and necessity altogether.[17]

No doubt the actual historical development that brought labor out of hiding and into the public realm, where it could be organized

16. The distinction between productive and unproductive labor is due to the physiocrats, who distinguished between producing, property-owning, and sterile classes. Since they held that the original source of all productivity lies in the natural forces of the earth, their standard for productivity was related to the creation of new objects and not to the needs and wants of men. Thus, the Marquis de Mirabeau, father of the famous orator, calls sterile "la classe d'ouvriers dont les travaux, quoique nécessaires aux besoins des hommes et utiles à la société, ne sont pas néanmoins productifs" and illustrates his distinction between sterile and productive work by comparing it to the difference between cutting a stone and producing it (see Jean Dautry, "La notion de travail chez Saint-Simon et Fourier," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, Vol. LII, No. 1 [January–March, 1955]).

17. This hope accompanied Marx from beginning to end. We find it already in the *Deutsche Ideologie:* "Es handelt sich nicht darum die Arbeit zu befreien, sondern sie aufzuheben" (*Gesamtausgabe*, Part I, Vol. 3, p. 185) and many decades later in the third volume of *Das Kapital*, ch. 48: "Das Reich der Freiheit beginnt in der Tat erst da, wo das Arbeiten . . . aufhört" (*Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part II [Zürich, 1933], p. 873).

and "divided,"[18] constituted a powerful argument in the development of these theories. Yet an even more significant fact in this respect, already sensed by the classical economists and clearly discovered and articulated by Karl Marx, is that the laboring activity itself, regardless of historical circumstances and independent of its location in the private or the public realm, possesses indeed a "productivity" of its own, no matter how futile and non-durable its products may be. This productivity does not lie in any of labor's products but in the human "power," whose strength is not exhausted when it has produced the means of its own subsistence and survival but is capable of producing a "surplus," that is, more than is necessary for its own "reproduction." It is because not labor itself but the surplus of human "labor *power*" (*Arbeits*kraft) explains labor's productivity that Marx's introduction of this term, as Engels rightly remarked, constituted the most original and revolutionary element of his whole system.[19] Unlike the productivity of work, which adds new objects to the human artifice, the productivity of labor power produces objects only incidentally and is primarily concerned with the means of its own reproduction; since its power is not exhausted when its own reproduction has been secured, it can be used for the reproduction of more than one life process, but it never "produces" anything but life.[20] Through violent oppression in a slave society or exploitation in the capitalist society of Marx's own time, it can be channeled in such a way that the labor of some suffices for the life of all.

From this purely social viewpoint, which is the viewpoint of the whole modern age but which received its most coherent and great-

18. In his Introduction to the second book of the *Wealth of Nations* (Everyman's ed., I, 241 ff.), Adam Smith emphasizes that productivity is due to the division of labor rather than to labor itself.

19. See Engels' Introduction to Marx's "Wage, Labour and Capital" (in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* [London, 1950], I, 384), where Marx had introduced the new term with a certain emphasis.

20. Marx stressed always, and especially in his youth, that the chief function of labor was the "production of life" and therefore saw labor together with procreation (see *Deutsche Ideologie*, p. 19; also "Wage, Labour and Capital," p. 77).

est expression in Marx's work, all laboring is "productive," and the earlier distinction between the performance of "menial tasks" that leave no trace and the production of things durable enough to be accumulated loses its validity. The social viewpoint is identical, as we saw before, with an interpretation that takes nothing into account but the life process of mankind, and within its frame of reference all things become objects of consumption. Within a completely "socialized mankind," whose sole purpose would be the entertaining of the life process—and this is the unfortunately quite unutopian ideal that guides Marx's theories[21]—the distinction between labor and work would have completely disappeared; all work would have become labor because all things would be understood, not in their worldly, objective quality, but as results of living labor power and functions of the life process.[22]

It is interesting to note that the distinctions between skilled and unskilled and between intellectual and manual work play no role in either classical political economy or in Marx's work. Compared

21. The terms *vergesellschafteter Mensch* or *gesellschaftliche Menschheit* were frequently used by Marx to indicate the goal of socialism (see, for instance, the third volume of *Das Kapital*, p. 873, and the tenth of the "Theses on Feuerbach": "The standpoint of the old materialism is 'civil' society; the standpoint of the new is *human* society, or socialized humanity" [*Selected Works*, II, 367]). It consisted in the elimination of the gap between the individual and social existence of man, so that man "in his most individual being would be at the same time a social being [a *Gemeinwesen*]" (*Jugendschriften*, p. 113). Marx frequently calls this social nature of man his *Gattungswesen*, his being a member of the species, and the famous Marxian "self-alienation" is first of all man's alienation from being a *Gattungswesen* (*ibid.*, p. 89: "Eine unmittelbare Konsequenz davon, dass der Mensch dem Produkt seiner Arbeit, seiner Lebenstätigkeit, seinem Gattungswesen entfremdet ist, ist die Entfremdung des Menschen von *dem* Menschen"). The ideal society is a state of affairs where all human activities derive as naturally from human "nature" as the secretion of wax by bees for making the honeycomb; to live and to labor for life will have become one and the same, and life will no longer "begin for [the laborer] where [the activity of laboring] ceases" ("Wage, Labour and Capital," p. 77).

22. Marx's original charge against capitalist society was not merely its transformation of all objects into commodities, but that "the laborer behaves toward the product of his labor as to an alien object" ("dass der Arbeiter zum Produkt seiner Arbeit als einem fremden Gegenstand sich verhält" [*Jugendschriften*, p. 83])—in other words, that the things of the world, once they have been produced by men, are to an extent independent of, "alien" to, human life.

its most immaterial stage. The work itself then always requires some material upon which it will be performed and which through fabrication, the activity of *homo faber*, will be transformed into a worldly object. The specific work quality of intellectual work is no less due to the "work of our hands" than any other kind of work.

It seems plausible and is indeed quite common to connect and justify the modern distinction between intellectual and manual labor with the ancient distinction between "liberal" and "servile arts." Yet the distinguishing mark between liberal and servile arts is not at all "a higher degree of intelligence," or that the "liberal artist" works with his brain and the "sordid tradesman" with his hands. The ancient criterion is primarily political. Occupations involving *prudentia*, the capacity for prudent judgment which is the virtue of statesmen, and professions of public relevance (*ad hominum utilitatem*)[23] such as architecture, medicine, and agriculture,[24] are liberal. All trades, the trade of a scribe no less than that of a carpenter, are "sordid," unbecoming for a full-fledged citizen, and the worst are those we would deem most useful, such as "fishmongers, butchers, cooks, poulterers and fishermen."[25] But not even these are necessarily sheer laboring. There is still a third category where the toil and effort itself (the *operae* as distinguished from the *opus*, the mere activity as distinguished from the

23. For convenience' sake, I shall follow Cicero's discussion of liberal and servile occupations in *De officiis* i. ~~42, 43~~. The criteria of *prudentia* and *utilitas* or *utilitas hominum* are stated in pars. 151 and 155. (The translation of *prudentia* as "a higher degree of intelligence" by Walter Miller in the Loeb Classical Library edition seems to me to be misleading.) 150-154

24. The classification of agriculture among the liberal arts is, of course, specifically Roman. It is not due to any special "usefulness" of farming as we would understand it, but much rather related to the Roman idea of *patria*, according to which the *ager Romanus* and not only the city of Rome is the place occupied by the public realm.

25. It is this usefulness for sheer living which Cicero calls *mediocris utilitas* (par. 151) and eliminates from liberal arts. The translation again seems to me to miss the point; these are not "professions . . . from which no small benefit to society is derived," but occupations which, in clear opposition to those mentioned before, transcend the vulgar usefulness of consumer goods.

work) is paid, and in these cases "the very wage is a pledge of slavery."[26]

The distinction between manual and intellectual work, though its origin can be traced back to the Middle Ages,[27] is modern and has two quite different causes, both of which, however, are equally characteristic of the general climate of the modern age. Since under modern conditions every occupation had to prove its "usefulness" for society at large, and since the usefulness of the intellectual occupations had become more than doubtful because of the modern glorification of labor, it was only natural that intellectuals, too, should desire to be counted among the working population. At the same time, however, and only in seeming contradiction to this development, the need and esteem of this society for certain "intellectual" performances rose to a degree unprecedented in our history except in the centuries of the decline of the Roman Empire. It may be well to remember in this context that throughout ancient history the "intellectual" services of the scribes, whether they served the needs of the public or the private realm, were performed by slaves and rated accordingly. Only the bureaucratization of the Roman Empire and the concomitant social and political rise of the Emperors brought a re-evaluation of "intellectual" services.[28] In so

26. The Romans deemed the difference between *opus* and *operae* to be so decisive that they had two different forms of contract, the *locatio conductio operis* and the *locatio conductio operarum*, of which the latter played an insignificant role because most laboring was done by slaves (see Edgar Loening, in *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* [1890], I, 742 ff.).

27. The *opera liberalia* were identified with intellectual or rather spiritual work in the Middle Ages (see Otto Neurath, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Opera Servilia," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Vol. XLI [1915], No. 2).

28. H. Wallon describes this process under the rule of Diocletian: "... les fonctions jadis serviles se trouvèrent anoblies, élevées au premier rang de l'État. Cette haute considération qui de l'empereur se répandait sur les premiers serviteurs du palais, sur les plus hauts dignitaires de l'empire, descendait à tous les degrés des fonctions publiques ... ; le service public devint un office public." "Les charges les plus serviles, ... les noms que nous avons cités aux fonctions de l'esclavage, sont revêtus de l'éclat qui rejaillit de la personne du prince" (*Histoire de l'esclavage dans l'antiquité* [1847], III, 126 and 131). Before this elevation of the services, the scribes had been classified with the watchmen of public buildings or even with the men who led the prize fighters down to the arena

generalization and therefore all reification, can be conveyed only through an imitation of their acting. This is also why the theater is the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art. By the same token, it is the only art whose sole subject is man in his relationship to others.

26

THE FRAILTY OF HUMAN AFFAIRS

Action, as distinguished from fabrication, is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act. Action and speech need the surrounding presence of others no less than fabrication needs the surrounding presence of nature for its material, and of a world in which to place the finished product. Fabrication is surrounded by and in constant contact with the world: action and speech are surrounded by and in constant contact with the web of the acts and words of other men. The popular belief in a "strong man" who, isolated against others, owes his strength to his being alone is either sheer superstition, based on the delusion that we can "make" something in the realm of human affairs—"make" institutions or laws, for instance, as we make tables and chairs, or make men "better" or "worse"[14]—or it is conscious despair of all action, political and non-political, coupled with the utopian hope that it may be possible to treat men as one treats other "material."[15] The strength the individual needs for every process of production becomes altogether worthless when action is at stake, regardless of whether this strength is intellectual or a matter of purely material force. History is full of ex-

14. Plato already reproached Pericles because he did not "make the citizens better" and because the Athenians were even worse at the end of his career than before (*Gorgias* 515).

15. Recent political history is full of examples indicating that the term "human material" is no harmless metaphor, and the same is true for a whole host of modern scientific experiments in social engineering, biochemistry, brain surgery, etc., all of which tend to treat and change human material like other matter. This mechanistic approach is typical of the modern age; antiquity, when it pursued similar aims, was inclined to think of men in terms of savage animals who need be tamed and domesticated. The only possible achievement in either case is to kill man, not indeed necessarily as a living organism, but *qua* man.

that the distinction between labor and work, which our theorists have so obstinately neglected and our languages so stubbornly preserved, indeed becomes merely a difference in degree if the worldly character of the produced thing—its location, function, and length of stay in the world—is not taken into account. The distinction between a bread, whose "life expectancy" in the world is hardly more than a day, and a table, which may easily survive generations of men, is certainly much more obvious and decisive than the difference between a baker and a carpenter.

The curious discrepancy between language and theory which we noted at the outset therefore turns out to be a discrepancy between the world-oriented, "objective" language we speak and the man-oriented, subjective theories we use in our attempts at understanding. It is language, and the fundamental human experiences underlying it, rather than theory, that teaches us that the things of the world, among which the *vita activa* spends itself, are of a very different nature and produced by quite different kinds of activities. Viewed as part of the world, the products of work—and not the products of labor—guarantee the permanence and durability without which a world would not be possible at all. It is within this world of durable things that we find the consumer goods through which life assures the means of its own survival. Needed by our bodies and produced by its laboring, but without stability of their own, these things for incessant consumption appear and disappear in an environment of things that are not consumed but used, and to which, as we use them, we become used and accustomed. As such, they give rise to the familiarity of the world, its customs and habits of intercourse between men and things as well as between men and men. What consumer goods are for the life of man, use objects are for his world. From them, consumer goods derive their thing-character; and language, which does not permit the laboring activity to form anything so solid and non-verbal as a noun, hints at the strong probability that we would not even know what a thing is without having before us "the work of our hands."

Distinguished from both, consumer goods and use objects, there

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ited to make one forget all trouble and sorrow; whoever had not seen it had lived in vain, etc.

by growth and decay; only if we consider nature's products, this tree or this dog, as individual things, thereby already removing them from their "natural" surroundings and putting them into our world, do they begin to grow and to decay. While nature manifests itself in human existence through the circular movement of our bodily functions, she makes her presence felt in the man-made world through the constant threat of overgrowing or decaying it. The common characteristic of both, the biological process in man and the process of growth and decay in the world, is that they are part of the cyclical movement of nature and therefore endlessly repetitive; all human activities which arise out of the necessity to cope with them are bound to the recurring cycles of nature and have in themselves no beginning and no end, properly speaking; unlike *working*, whose end has come when the object is finished, ready to be added to the common world of things, *laboring* always moves in the same circle, which is prescribed by the biological process of the living organism and the end of its "toil and trouble" comes only with the death of this organism.[33]

When Marx defined labor as "man's metabolism with nature,"

33. In the earlier literature on labor up to the last third of the nineteenth century, it was not uncommon to insist on the connection between labor and the cyclical movement of the life process. Thus, Schulze-Delitzsch, in a lecture *Die Arbeit* (Leipzig, 1863), begins with a description of the cycle of desire-effort-satisfaction—"Beim letzten Bissen fängt schon die Verdauung an." However, in the huge post-Marxian literature on the labor problem, the only author who emphasizes and theorizes about this most elementary aspect of the laboring activity is Pierre Naville, whose *La vie de travail et ses problèmes* (1954) is one of the most interesting and perhaps the most original recent contribution. Discussing the particular traits of the workday as distinguished from other measurement of labor time, he says as follows: "Le trait principal est son caractère cyclique ou rythmique. Ce caractère est lié à la fois à l'esprit naturel et cosmologique de la journée . . . et au caractère des fonctions physiologiques de l'être humain, qu'il a en commun avec les espèces animales supérieures. . . . Il est évident que le travail devait être de prime abord lié à des rythmes et fonctions naturels." From this follows the cyclical character in the expenditure and reproduction of labor power that determines the time unit of the workday. Naville's most important insight is that the time character of human life, inasmuch as it is not merely part of the life of the species, stands in stark contrast to the cyclical time character of the workday. "Les limites naturelles supérieures de la vie . . . ne sont pas dictées, comme celle de la journée, par la nécessité et la possibilité de se reproduire, mais au contraire, par l'impossibilité de se renouveler,

in whose process "nature's material [is] adapted by a change of form to the wants of man," so that "labour has incorporated itself with its subject," he indicated clearly that he was "speaking physiologically" and that labor and consumption are but two stages of the ever-recurring cycle of biological life.[34] This cycle needs to be sustained through consumption, and the activity which provides the means of consumption is laboring.[35] Whatever labor produces is meant to be fed into the human life process almost immediately, and this consumption, regenerating the life process, produces—or rather, reproduces—new "labor power," needed for the further sustenance of the body.[36] From the viewpoint of the exigencies of

sinon à l'échelle de l'espèce. Le cycle s'accomplit en une fois, et ne se renouvelle pas" (pp. 19–24).

34. *Capital* (Modern Library ed.), p. 201. This formula is frequent in Marx's work and always repeated almost *verbatim:* Labor is the eternal natural necessity to effect the metabolism between man and nature. (See, for instance, *Das Kapital*, Vol. I, Part 1, ch. 1, sec. 2, and Part 3, ch. 5. The standard English translation, Modern Library ed., pp. 50, 205, falls short of Marx's precision.) We find almost the same formulation in Vol. III of *Das Kapital*, p. 872. Obviously, when Marx speaks as he frequently does of the "life process of society," he is not thinking in metaphors.

35. Marx called labor "productive consumption" (*Capital* [Modern Library ed.], p. 204) and never lost sight of its being a physiological condition ~~(*ibid.*, p. 34)~~.

36. Marx's whole theory hinges on the early insight that the laborer first of all reproduces his own life by producing his means of subsistence. In his early writings he thought "that men begin to distinguish themselves from animals when they begin to produce their means of subsistence" (*Deutsche Ideologie*, p. 10). This indeed is the very content of the definition of man as *animal laborans*. It is all the more noteworthy that in other passages Marx is not satisfied with this definition because it does not distinguish man sharply enough from animals. "A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement" (*Capital* [Modern Library ed.], p. 198). Obviously, Marx no longer speaks of labor, but of work—with which he is not concerned; and the best proof of this is that the apparently all-important element of "imagination" plays no role whatsoever in his labor theory. In the third volume of *Das Kapital* he repeats that surplus labor beyond immediate needs serves the "progressive extension of the reproduction process" (pp. 872, 278). Despite occasional hesi-

The money to be kept without spoiling is here the surplus of labor power.

the most obvious solution of these contradictions, or rather the most obvious reason why these great authors should have remained unaware of them is their equation of work with labor, so that labor is endowed by them with certain faculties which only work possesses. This equation always leads into patent absurdities, though they usually are not so neatly manifest as in the following sentence of Veblen: "The lasting evidence of productive labor is its material product—commonly some article of consumption,"[40] where the "lasting evidence" with which he begins, because he needs it for the alleged productivity of labor, is immediately destroyed by the "consumption" of the product with which he ends, forced, as it were, by the factual evidence of the phenomenon itself.

Thus Locke, in order to save labor from its manifest disgrace of producing only "things of short duration," had to introduce money —a "lasting thing which men may keep without spoiling"—a kind of *deus ex machina* without which the laboring body, in its obedience to the life process, could never have become the origin of anything so permanent and lasting as property, because there are no "durable things" to be kept to survive the activity of the laboring process. And even Marx, who actually defined man as an *animal laborans*, had to admit that productivity of labor, properly speaking, begins only with reification (*Vergegenständlichung*), with "the erection of an objective world of things" (*Erzeugung einer gegenständlichen Welt*).[41] But the effort of labor never frees the labor-

40. The curious formulation occurs in Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1917), p. 44.

41. The term *vergegenständlichen* occurs not very frequently in Marx, but always in a crucial context. Cf. *Jugendschriften*, p. 88: "Das praktische Erzeugen einer gegenständlichen Welt, die Bearbeitung der unorganischen Natur ist die Bewährung des Menschen als eines bewussten Gattungswesens. . . . [Das Tier] produziert unter der Herrschaft des unmittelbaren Bedürfnisses, während der Mensch selbst frei vom physischen Bedürfnis produziert und erst wahrhaft produziert in der Freiheit von demselben." Here, as in the passage from *Capital* quoted in note 36, Marx obviously introduces an altogether different concept of labor, that is, speaks about work and fabrication. The same reification is mentioned in *Das Kapital* (Vol. I, Part 3, ch. 5), though somewhat equivocally: "[Die Arbeit] ist vergegenständlicht und der Gegenstand ist verarbeitet." The play on words with the term *Gegenstand* obscures what actually happens in the process: through reification, a new thing has been produced, but the "object" that this process transformed into a thing is, from the viewpoint of the process,

in second-rate writers; in the work of the great authors they lead into the very center of their work. In the case of Marx, whose loyalty and integrity in describing phenomena as they presented themselves to his view cannot be doubted, the important discrepancies in his work, noted by all Marx scholars, can neither be blamed upon the difference "between the scientific point of view of the historian and the moral point of view of the prophet"[50] nor on a dialectical movement which needs the negative, or evil, to produce the positive, or good. The fact remains that in all stages of his work he defines man as an *animal laborans* and then leads him into a society in which this greatest and most human power is no longer necessary. We are left with the rather distressing alternative between productive slavery and unproductive freedom.

Thus, the question arises why Locke and all his successors, their own insights notwithstanding, clung so obstinately to labor as the origin of property, of wealth, of all values and, finally, of the very humanity of man. Or, to put it another way, what were the experiences inherent in the laboring activity that proved of such great importance to the modern age?

Historically, political theorists from the seventeenth century onward were confronted with a hitherto unheard-of process of growing wealth, growing property, growing acquisition. In the attempt to account for this steady growth, their attention was naturally drawn to the phenomenon of a progressing process itself, so that, for reasons we shall have to discuss later,[51] the concept of process became the very key term of the new age as well as the sciences, historical and natural, developed by it. From its beginning, this process, because of its apparent endlessness, was understood as a natural process and more specifically in the image of the life process itself. The crudest superstition of the modern age—that "money begets money"—as well as its sharpest political insight—that power generates power—owes its plausibility to the underlying metaphor of the natural fertility of life. Of all human activities, only labor, and neither action nor work, is unending,

50. The formulation is Edmund Wilson's in *To the Finland Station* (Anchor ed., 1953), but this criticism is familiar in Marxian literature.

51. See ch. vi, § 42, below.

The reward of toil and trouble lies in nature's fertility, in the quiet confidence that he who in "toil and trouble" has done his part, remains a part of nature in the future of his children and his children's children. The Old Testament, which, unlike classical antiquity, held life to be sacred and therefore neither death nor labor to be an evil (and least of all an argument against life),[53] shows in the stories of the patriarchs how unconcerned about death their lives were, how they needed neither an individual, earthly immortality nor an assurance of the eternity of their souls, how death came to them in the familiar shape of night and quiet and eternal rest "in a good old age and full of years."

The blessing of life as a whole, inherent in labor, can never be found in work and should not be mistaken for the inevitably brief spell of relief and joy which follows accomplishment and attends achievement. The blessing of labor is that effort and gratification follow each other as closely as producing and consuming the means

53. Nowhere in the Old Testament is death "the wage of sin." Nor did the curse by which man was expelled from paradise punish him with labor and birth; it only made labor harsh and birth full of sorrow. According to Genesis, man (*adam*) had been created to take care and watch over the soil (*adamah*), as even his name, the masculine form of "soil," indicates (see Gen. 2:5—7[15]). "And *Adam* was not to till *adamah* . . . and He, God, created Adam of the dust of *adamah*. . . . He, God, took Adam and put him into the garden of Eden to till and to watch it" (I follow the translation of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift* [Berlin, n.d.]). The word for "tilling" which later became the word for laboring in Hebrew, *leawod*, has the connotation of "to serve." The curse (3:17–19) does not mention this word, but the meaning is clear: the service for which man was created now became servitude. The current popular misunderstanding of the curse is due to an unconscious interpretation of the Old Testament in the light of Greek thinking. The misunderstanding is usually avoided by Catholic writers. See, for instance, Jacques Leclercq, *Leçons de droit naturel*, Vol. IV, Part 2, "Travail, Propriété," (1946), p. 31: "La peine du travail est le résultat du péché original. . . . L'homme non déchu eût travaillé dans la joie, mais il eût travaillé"; or J. Chr. Nattermann, *Die moderne Arbeit, soziologisch und theologisch betrachtet* (1953), p. 9. It is interesting in this context to compare the curse of the Old Testament with the seemingly similar explanation of the harshness of labor in Hesiod. Hesiod reports that the gods, in order to punish man, hid life from him (see n. 8) so that he had to search for it, while before, he apparently did not have to do anything but pluck the fruits of the earth from fields and trees. Here the curse consists not only in the harshness of labor but in labor itself.

CHAPTER IV

Work

18

THE DURABILITY OF THE WORLD

The work of our hands, as distinguished from the labor of our bodies—*homo faber* who makes and literally "works upon"[1] as distinguished from the *animal laborans* which labors and "mixes with"—fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice. They are mostly, but not exclusively, objects for use and they possess the durability Locke needed for the establishment of property, the "value" Adam Smith needed for the exchange market, and they bear testimony to productivity, which Marx believed to be the test of human nature. Their proper use does not cause them to disappear and they give the human artifice the stability and solidity without which it could not be relied upon to house the unstable and mortal creature which is man.

The durability of the human artifice is not absolute; the use we make of it, even though we do not consume it, uses it up. The life process which permeates our whole being invades it, too, and if we do not use the things of the world, they also will eventually decay, return into the over-all natural process from which they were

1. The Latin word ~~for~~ *faber*, probably related to *facere* ("to make something" in the sense of production), originally designated the fabricator and artist who works upon hard material, such as stone or wood; it also was used as translation for the Greek *tektōn*, which has the same connotation. The word *fabri*, often followed by *tignarii*, especially designates construction workers and carpenters. I have been unable to ascertain when and where the expression *homo faber*, certainly of modern, postmedieval origin, first appeared. Jean Leclercq ("Vers la société basée sur le travail," *Revue du travail*, Vol. LI, No. 3 [March, 1950]) suggests that only Bergson "threw the concept of *homo faber* into the circulation of ideas."

drawn and against which they were erected. If left to itself or discarded from the human world, the chair will again become wood, and the wood will decay and return to the soil from which the tree sprang before it was cut off to become the material upon which to work and with which to build. But though this may be the unavoidable end of all single things in the world, the sign of their being products of a mortal maker, it is not so certainly the eventual fate of the human artifice itself, where all single things can be constantly replaced with the change of generations which come and inhabit the man-made world and go away. Moreover, while usage is bound to use up these objects, this end is not their destiny in the same way as destruction is the inherent end of all things for consumption. What usage wears out is durability.

It is this durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced and use them, their "objectivity" which makes them withstand, "stand against"[2] and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users. From this viewpoint, the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that—in contradiction to the Heraclitean saying that the same man can never enter the same stream—men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature, whose overwhelming elementary force, on the contrary, will compel them to swing relentlessly in the circle of their own biological movement, which fits so closely into the over-all cyclical movement of nature's household. Only we who have erected the objectivity of a world of our own from what nature gives us, who have built it into the environment of nature so that we are protected from her, can look upon nature as something "objective." Without a world between men and nature, there is eternal movement, but no objectivity.

Although use and consumption, like work and labor, are not the

2. This is implied in the Latin verb *obicere*, from which our "object" is a late derivation, and in the German word for object, *Gegenstand*. "Object" means, literally, "something thrown" or "put against."

always find where *homo faber* rules the standards of society. The reason is, of course, that Kant did not mean to formulate or conceptualize the tenets of the utilitarianism of his time, but on the contrary wanted first of all to relegate the means-end category to its proper place and prevent its use in the field of political action. His formula, however, can no more deny its origin in utilitarian thinking than his other famous and also inherently paradoxical interpretation of man's attitude toward the only objects that are not "for use," namely works of art, in which he said we take "pleasure without any interest."[20] For the same operation which establishes man as the "supreme end" permits him "if he can [to] subject the whole of nature to it,"[21] that is, to degrade nature and the world into mere means, robbing both of their independent dignity. Not even Kant could solve the perplexity or enlighten the blindness of *homo faber* with respect to the problem of meaning without turning to the paradoxical "end in itself," and this perplexity lies in the fact that while only fabrication with its instrumentality is capable of building a world, this same world becomes as worthless as the employed material, a mere means for further ends, if the standards which governed its coming into being are permitted to rule it after its establishment.

Man, in so far as he is *homo faber*, instrumentalizes, and his instrumentalization implies a degradation of all things into means, their loss of intrinsic and independent value, so that eventually not only the objects of fabrication but also "the earth in general and all forces of nature," which clearly came into being without the help of man and have an existence independent of the human world, lose their "value because [they] do not present the reification which comes from work."[22] It was for no other reason than this attitude of *homo faber* to the world that the Greeks in their classical period declared the whole field of the arts and crafts, where men work with instruments and do something not for its own sake but

20. Kant's term is "ein Wohlgefallen ohne alles Interesse" (*Kritik der Urteilskraft* [Cassirer ed.], V, ~~215~~).

21. *Ibid.*, pp. ~~448–49~~.

22. "Der Wasserfall, wie die Erde überhaupt, wie alle Naturkraft hat keinen Wert, weil er keine in ihm vergegenständlichte Arbeit darstellt" (*Das Kapital*, III [*Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. II, Zürich, 1933], 698).

selves are always produced in isolation. The privacy which the early modern age demanded as the supreme right of each member of society was actually the guaranty of isolation, without which no work can be produced. Not the onlookers and spectators on the medieval market places, where the craftsman in his isolation was exposed to the light of the public, but only the rise of the social realm, where the others are not content with beholding, judging, and admiring but wish to be admitted to the company of the craftsman and to participate as equals in the work process, threatened the "splendid isolation" of the worker and eventually undermined the very notions of competence and excellence. This isolation from others is the necessary life condition for every mastership which consists in being alone with the "idea," the mental image of the thing to be. This mastership, unlike political forms of domination, is primarily a mastery of things and material and not of people. The latter, in fact, is quite secondary to the activity of craftsmanship, and the words "worker" and "master"—*ouvrier* and *maître*—were originally used synonymously.[28]

The only company that grows out of workmanship directly is in the need of the master for assistants or in his wish to educate others in his craft. But the distinction between his skill and the unskilled help is temporary, like the distinction between adults and children. There can be hardly anything more alien or even more destructive to workmanship than teamwork, which actually is only a variety of the division of labor and presupposes the "breakdown of operations into their simple constituent motions."[29] The team, the multi-

28. E. Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières et de l'industrie en France avant 1789* (1900): "Les mots maître et ouvrier étaient encore pris comme synonymes au 14e siècle" (p. 564, n. 2), whereas "au 15e siècle .. la maîtrise est devenue un titre auquel il n'est permis à tous d'aspirer" (p. 572). Originally, "le mot ouvrier s'appliquait d'ordinaire à quiconque ouvrait, faisait ouvrage, maître ou valet" (p. 309). In the workshops themselves and outside them in social life, there was no great distinction between the master or the owner of the shop and the workers (p. 313). (See also Pierre Brizon, *Histoire du travail et des travailleurs* [4th ed.; 1926], pp. 39 ff.)

29. Charles R. Walker and Robert H. Guest, *The Man on the Assembly Line* (1952), p. 10. Adam Smith's famous description of this principle in pin-making (*op. cit.*, I, 4 ff.) shows clearly how machine work was preceded by the division of labor and derives its principle from it.

legitimation for rulership, until, finally, the element of beginning disappeared altogether from the concept of rulership. With it the most elementary and authentic understanding of human freedom disappeared from political philosophy.

The Platonic separation of knowing and doing has remained at the root of all theories of domination which are not mere justifications of an irreducible and irresponsible will to power. By sheer force of conceptualization and philosophical clarification, the Platonic identification of knowledge with command and rulership and of action with obedience and execution overruled all earlier experiences and articulations in the political realm and became authoritative for the whole tradition of political thought, even after the roots of experience from which Plato derived his concepts had long been forgotten. Apart from the unique Platonic mixture of depth and beauty, whose weight was bound to carry his thoughts through the centuries, the reason for the longevity of this particular part of his work is that he strengthened his substitution of rulership for action through an even more plausible interpretation in terms of making and fabrication. It is indeed true—and Plato, who had taken the key word of his philosophy, the term "idea," from experiences in the realm of fabrication, must have been the first to notice it—that the division between knowing and doing, so alien to the realm of action, whose validity and meaningfulness are destroyed the moment thought and action part company, is an everyday experience in fabrication, whose processes obviously fall into two parts: first, perceiving the image or shape (*eidos*) of the product-to-be, and then organizing the means and starting the execution.

The Platonic wish to substitute making for acting in order to bestow upon the realm of human affairs the solidity inherent in work and fabrication becomes most apparent where it touches the very center of his philosophy, the doctrine of ideas. When Plato was not concerned with political philosophy (as in the *Symposium* and elsewhere), he describes the ideas as what "shines forth most" (*ekphanestaton*) and therefore as variations of the beautiful. Only in the *Republic* were the ideas transformed into standards, measurements, and rules of behavior, all of which are variations or derivations of the idea of the "good" in the Greek sense of the word, that

is, of the "good for" or of fitness.[65] This transformation was necessary to apply the doctrine of ideas to politics, and it is essentially for a political purpose, the purpose of eliminating the character of frailty from human affairs, that Plato found it necessary to declare the good, and not the beautiful, to be the highest idea. But this idea of the good is not the highest idea of the philosopher, who wishes to contemplate the true essence of Being and therefore leaves the dark cave of human affairs for the bright sky of ideas; even in the *Republic*, the philosopher is still defined as a lover of beauty, not of goodness. The good is the highest idea of the philosopher-*king*, who wishes to be the ruler of human affairs because he must spend his life among men and cannot dwell forever under the sky of ideas. It is only when he returns to the dark cave of human affairs to live once more with his fellow men that he needs the ideas for guidance as standards and rules by which to measure and under which to subsume the varied multitude of human deeds and words with the same absolute, "objective" certainty with which the craftsman can be guided in making and the layman in judging individual beds by using the unwavering ever-present model, the "idea" of bed in general.[66]

Technically, the greatest advantage of this transformation and application of the doctrine of ideas to the political realm lay in the elimination of the personal element in the Platonic notion of ideal

65. The word *ekphanestaton* occurs in the *Phaedrus* (250) as the chief quality of the beautiful. In the *Republic* (518) a similar quality is claimed for the idea of the good, which is called *phanotaton*. Both words derive from *phainesthai* ("to appear" and "shine forth"), and in both cases the superlative is used. Obviously, the quality of shining brightness applies to the beautiful much more than to the good.

66. Werner Jaeger's statement (*Paideia* [1945], II, 416 n.), "The idea that there is a supreme art of measurement and that the philosopher's knowledge of value (*phronēsis*) is the ability to measure, runs through all Plato's work right down to the end," is true only for Plato's political philosophy, where the idea of the good replaces the idea of the beautiful. The parable of the Cave, as told in the *Republic*, is the very center of Plato's political philosophy, but the doctrine of ideas as presented there must be understood as its application to politics, not as the original, purely philosophical development, which we cannot discuss here. Jaeger's characterization of the "philosopher's knowledge of values" as *phronēsis* indicates, in fact, the political and non-philosophical nature of this knowledge; for the very word *phronēsis* characterizes in Plato and Aristotle the insight of the statesman rather than the vision of the philosopher.

dictable whether they are let loose in the human or the natural realm.

In this aspect of action—all-important to the modern age, to its enormous enlargement of human capabilities as well as to its unprecedented concept and consciousness of history—processes are started whose outcome is unpredictable, so that uncertainty rather than frailty becomes the decisive character of human affairs. This property of action had escaped the attention of antiquity, by and large, and had, to say the least, hardly found adequate articulation in ancient philosophy, to which the very concept of history as we know it is altogether alien. The central concept of the two entirely new sciences of the modern age, natural science no less than historical, is the concept of process, and the actual human experience underlying it is action. Only because we are capable of acting, of starting processes of our own, can we conceive of both nature and history as systems of processes. It is true that this character of modern thinking first came to the fore in the science of history, which, since Vico, has been consciously presented as a "new science," while the natural sciences needed several centuries before they were forced by the very results of their triumphal achievements to exchange an obsolete conceptual framework for a vocabulary that is strikingly similar to the one used in the historical sciences.

However that may be, only under certain historical circumstances does frailty appear to be the chief characteristic of human affairs. The Greeks measured them against the ever-presence or eternal recurrence of all natural things, and the chief Greek concern was to measure up to and become worthy of an immortality which surrounds men but which mortals do not possess. To people who are not possessed by this concern with immortality, the realm of human affairs is bound to show an altogether different, even somehow contradictory aspect, namely, an extraordinary resiliency whose force of persistence and continuity in time is far superior to the stable durability of the solid world of things. Whereas men have always been capable of destroying whatever was the product of human hands and have become capable today even of the potential destruction of what man did not make—the earth and earthly nature—men never have been and never will be able to undo

against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."[78] Crime and willed evil are rare, even rarer perhaps than good deeds; according to Jesus, they will be taken care of by God in the Last Judgment, which plays no role whatsoever in life on earth, and the Last Judgment is not characterized by forgiveness but by just retribution (*apodōsis*).[79] But trespassing is an everyday occurrence which is in the very nature of action's constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relations, and it needs forgiving, dismissing, in order to make it possible for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly.[80] Only through this constant mutual release from what they do can men remain free agents, only by constant willingness to change their minds and start again can they be trusted with so great a power as that to begin something new.

In this respect, forgiveness is the exact opposite of vengeance, which acts in the form of re-acting against an original trespassing, whereby far from putting an end to the consequences of the first misdeed, everybody remains bound to the process, permitting the chain reaction contained in every action to take its unhindered

78. Luke 17:3–4. It is important to keep in mind that the three key words of the text—*aphienai*, *metanoein*, and *hamartanein*—carry certain connotations even in New Testament Greek which the translations fail to render fully. The original meaning of *aphienai* is "dismiss" and "release" rather than "forgive"; *metanoein* means "change of mind" and—since it serves also to render the Hebrew *shuv*—"return," "trace back one's steps," rather than "repentance" with its psychological emotional overtones; what is required is: change your mind and "sin no more," which is almost the opposite of doing penance. *Hamartanein*, finally, is indeed very well rendered by "trespassing" in so far as it means rather "to miss," "fail and go astray," than "to sin" (see Heinrich Ebeling, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testamente* [1923]). The verse which I quote in the standard translation could also be rendered as follows: "And if he trespass against thee . . and . . turn again to thee, saying, *I changed my mind;* thou shalt *release* him."

79. Matt. ~~18:30–37~~ 16:27.

80. This interpretation seems justified by the context (Luke 17:1–5): Jesus introduces his words by pointing to the inevitability of "offenses" (*skandala*) which are unforgivable, at least on earth; for "woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea"; and then continues by teaching forgiveness for "trespassing" (*hamartanein*).

audible motor which has moved all thought, the invisible axis around which all thinking has been centered. Just as from Plato and Aristotle to the modern age conceptual philosophy, in its greatest and most authentic representatives, had been the articulation of wonder, so modern philosophy since Descartes has consisted in the articulations and ramifications of doubting.

Cartesian doubt, in its radical and universal significance, was originally the response to a new reality, a reality no less real for its being restricted for centuries to the small and politically insignificant circle of scholars and learned men. The philosophers understood at once that Galileo's discoveries implied no mere challenge to the testimony of the senses and that it was no longer reason, as in Aristarchus and Copernicus, that had "committed such a rape on their senses," in which case men indeed would have needed only to choose between their faculties and to let innate reason become "the mistress of their credulity."[31] It was not reason but a man-made instrument, the telescope, which actually changed the physical world view; it was not contemplation, observation, and speculation which led to the new knowledge, but the active stepping in of *homo faber*, of making and fabricating. In other words, man had been deceived so long as he trusted that reality and truth would reveal themselves to his senses and to his reason if only he remained true to what he saw with the eyes of body and mind. The old opposition of sensual and rational truth, of the inferior truth capacity of the senses and the superior truth capacity of reason, paled beside this challenge, beside the obvious implication that neither truth nor reality is given, that neither of them appears as it is, and that only interference with appearance, doing away with appearances, can hold out a hope for true knowledge.

The extent to which reason and faith in reason depends not upon single sense perceptions, each of which may be an illusion, but upon the unquestioned assumption that the senses as a whole—kept together and ruled over by common sense, the sixth and the highest sense—fit man into the reality which surrounds him, was only now

31. In these words, Galileo expresses his admiration for Copernicus and Aristarchus, whose reason "was able . . to commit such a rape on their senses, as in despite thereof to make herself mistress of their credulity" (*Dialogues concerning the Two Great Systems of the World*, trans. Salusbury [1661], p. 301).

discovered. If the human eye can betray man to the extent that so many generations of men were deceived into believing that the sun turns around the earth, then the metaphor of the eyes of the mind cannot possibly hold any longer; it was based, albeit implicitly and even when it was used in opposition to the senses, on an ultimate trust in bodily vision. If Being and Appearance part company forever, and this—as Marx once remarked—is indeed the basic assumption of all modern science, then there is nothing left to be taken upon faith; everything must be doubted. It was as though Democritus' early prediction that a victory of the mind over the senses could end only in the mind's defeat had come true, except that now the ~~phenomena themselves~~ seemed to have won a victory over both the mind and the senses.[31a]

The outstanding characteristic of Cartesian doubt is its universality, that nothing, no thought and no experience, can escape it. No one perhaps explored its true dimensions more honestly than Kierkegaard when he leaped—not from reason, as he thought, but from doubt—into belief, thereby carrying doubt into the very heart of modern religion.[32] Its universality spreads from the testimony of the senses to the testimony of reason to the testimony of faith because this doubt resides ultimately in the loss of self-evidence, and all thought had always started from what is evident in and by itself—evident not only for the thinker but for everybody. Cartesian doubt did not simply doubt that human understanding may not be open to every truth or that human vision may not be able to see everything, but that intelligibility to human understanding does not at all constitute a demonstration of truth, just as visibility did not at all constitute proof of reality. This doubt doubts

31a. Democritus, after having stated that "in reality there is no white, or black, or bitter, or sweet," added: "Poor mind, from the senses you take your arguments, and then want to defeat them? Your victory is your defeat" (Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* [4th ed., 1922], frag. B125).

32. See *Johannes Climacus oder De omnibus dubitandum est*, one of the earliest manuscripts of Kierkegaard and perhaps still the deepest interpretation of Descartes' doubt. It tells in the form of a spiritual autobiography how he learned about Descartes from Hegel and then regretted not having started his philosophical studies with his works. This little treatise, in the Danish edition of the *Collected Works* (Copenhagen, 1909), Vol. IV, is available in a German translation (Darmstadt, 1948).

tion which eventually will lead into the infinite. This faculty the modern age calls common-sense reasoning; it is the playing of the mind with itself, which comes to pass when the mind is shut off from all reality and "senses" only itself. The results of this play are compelling "truths" because the structure of one man's mind is supposed to differ no more from that of another than the shape of his body. Whatever difference there may be is a difference of mental power, which can be tested and measured like horsepower Here the old definition of man as an *animal rationale* acquires a terrible precision: deprived of the sense through which man's five animal senses are fitted into a world common to all men, human beings are indeed no more than animals who are able to reason, "to reckon with consequences."

The perplexity inherent in the discovery of the Archimedean point was and still is that the point outside the earth was found by an earth-bound creature, who found that he himself lived not only in a different but in a topsy-turvy world the moment he tried to apply his universal world view to his actual surroundings. The Cartesian solution of this perplexity was to move the Archimedean point into man himself,[45] to choose as ultimate point of reference the pattern of the human mind itself, which assures itself of reality and certainty within a framework of mathematical formulas which are its own products. Here the famous *reductio scientiae ad mathematicam* permits replacement of what is sensuously given by a system of mathematical equations where all real relationships are dissolved into logical relations between man-made symbols. It is this replacement which permits modern science to fulfil its "task of *producing*" the phenomena and objects it wishes to observe.[46] And the assumption is that neither God nor an evil spirit can change the fact that two and two equal four.

45. This removal of the Archimedean point into man himself was a conscious operation of Descartes: "Car à partir de ce doute universel, comme à partir d'un point fixe et immobile, je me suis proposé de faire dériver la connaissance de Dieu, de vous-mêmes et de toutes les choses qui existent dans le monde" (*Recherche de la vérité*, p. 680).

46. Frank, *op. cit.*, defines science by its "task of producing desired observable phenomena."

human mind has constructed, then man may indeed, for a moment, rejoice in a reassertion of the "pre-established harmony between pure mathematics and physics,"[49] between mind and matter, between man and the universe. But it will be difficult to ward off the suspicion that this mathematically preconceived world may be a dream world where every dreamed vision man himself produces has the character of reality only as long as the dream lasts. And his suspicions will be enforced when he must discover that the events and occurrences in the infinitely small, the atom, follow the same laws and regularities as in the infinitely large, the planetary systems.[50] What this seems to indicate is that if we inquire into nature from the standpoint of astrology we receive planetary systems, while if we carry out our astrological inquiries from the standpoint of the earth we receive geocentric, terrestrial systems.

In any event, wherever we try to transcend appearance beyond all sensual experience, even instrument-aided, in order to catch the ultimate secrets of Being, which according to our physical world view is so secretive that it never appears and still so tremendously powerful that it produces all appearance, we find that the same patterns rule the macrocosm and the microcosm alike, that we receive the same instrument readings. Here again, we may for a moment rejoice in a refound unity of the universe, only to fall prey to the suspicion that what we have found may have nothing to do with either the macrocosmos or the microcosmos, that we deal only with the patterns of our own mind, the mind which designed the instruments and put nature under its conditions in the experiment—prescribed its laws to nature, in Kant's phrase—in which case it is really as though we were in the hands of an evil spirit who

49. Hermann Minkowski, "Raum und Zeit," in Lorentz, Einstein, and Minkowski, *Das Relativitätsprinzip* (1913); quoted from Cassirer, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

50. And this doubt is not assuaged if another coincidence is added, the coincidence between logic and reality. Logically, it seems evident indeed that "the electrons if they were to explain the sensory qualities of matter could not very well possess these sensory qualities, since in that case the question for the cause of these qualities would simply have been removed one step farther, but not solved" (Heisenberg, *Wandlungen in den Grundlagen der Naturwissenschaft*, p. 66). The reason why we become suspicious is that only when "in the course of time" the scientists became aware of this logical necessity did they discover that "matter" had no qualities and therefore could no longer be called matter.

what seeming nonsense may not to-morrow be demonstrated truth."[55]

Actually, the change that took place in the seventeenth century was more radical than what a simple reversal of the established traditional order between contemplation and doing is apt to indicate. The reversal, strictly speaking, concerned only the relationship between thinking and doing, whereas contemplation, in the original sense of beholding the truth, was altogether eliminated. For thought and contemplation are not the same. Traditionally, thought was conceived as the most direct and important way to lead to the contemplation of truth. Since Plato, and probably since Socrates, thinking was understood as the inner dialogue in which one speaks with himself (*eme emautō*, to recall the idiom current in Plato's dialogues); and although this dialogue lacks all outward manifestation and even requires a more or less complete cessation of all other activities, it constitutes in itself a highly active state. Its outward inactivity is clearly separated from the passivity, the complete stillness, in which truth is finally revealed to man. If medieval scholasticism looked upon philosophy as the handmaiden of theology, it could very well have appealed to Plato and Aristotle themselves; both, albeit in a very different context, considered this dialogical thought process to be the way to prepare the soul and lead the mind to a beholding of truth beyond thought and beyond speech—a truth that is *arrhēton*, incapable of being communicated through words, as Plato put it,[56] or beyond speech, as in Aristotle.[57]

The reversal of the modern age consisted then not in raising doing to the rank of contemplating as the highest state of which human beings are capable, as though henceforth doing was the ultimate meaning for the sake of which contemplation was to be performed, just as, up to that time, all activities of the *vita activa* had been judged and justified to the extent that they made the *vita con-*

55. *Science and the Modern World*, p. 116.

56. In the *Seventh Letter* 341C: *rhēton gar oudamōs estin hōs alla mathēmata* ("for it is never to be expressed by words like other things we learn").

57 See esp. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1142a25 ff. and 1143a36 ff. The current English translation distorts the meaning because it renders *logos* as "reason" or "argument."

urges of his body which he mistook for passion and which he deemed to be "unreasonable" because he found he could not "reason," that is, not reckon with them. The only thing that could now be potentially immortal, as immortal as the body politic in antiquity and as individual life during the Middle Ages, was life itself, that is, the possibly everlasting life process of the species mankind.

We saw before that in the rise of society it was ultimately the life of the species which asserted itself. Theoretically, the turning point from the earlier modern age's insistence on the "egoistic" life of the individual to its later emphasis on "social" life and "socialized man" (Marx) came when Marx transformed the cruder notion of classical economy—that all men, in so far as they act at all, act for reasons of self-interest—into forces of interest which inform, move, and direct the classes of society, and through their conflicts direct society as a whole. Socialized mankind is that state of society where only one interest rules, and the subject of this interest is either classes or man-kind, but neither man nor men. The point is that now even the last trace of action in what men were doing, the motive implied in self-interest, disappeared. What was left was a "natural force," the force of the life process itself, to which all men and all human activities were equally submitted ("the thought process itself is a natural process")[86] and whose only aim, if it had an aim at all, was survival of the animal species man. None of the higher capacities of man was any longer necessary to connect individual life with the life of the species; individual life became part of the life process, and to labor, to assure the continuity of one's own life and the life of his family, was all that was needed. What was not needed, not necessitated by life's metabolism with nature, was either superfluous or could be justified only in terms of a peculiarity of human as distinguished from other animal life—so that Milton was considered to have written his *Paradise Lost* for the same reasons and out of similar urges that compel the silkworm to produce silk.

If we compare the modern world with that of the past, the loss of human experience involved in this development is extraordinarily striking. It is not only and not even primarily contemplation which

86. In a letter Marx wrote to Kugelmann in July, 1868.

for the future of man. For if no other test but the experience of being active, no other measure but the extent of sheer activity were to be applied to the various activities within the *vita activa*, it might well be that thinking as such would surpass them all. Whoever has any experience in this matter will know how right Cato was when he said: *Numquam se plus agere quam nihil cum ageret, numquam minus solum esse quam cum solus esset*—"Never is he more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself."

printing errors

Add to p. 218
Chiaramonte and Caffi

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