rogatory sense. It comprises every thing from book publishing to lecture bureaus, and by adopting the industrial mentality and methods, it produces to a large if not overwhelming extent a "merchandise" of questionable quality. The knowledge industry deals with consumers, not students, it sells according to demand, it counts in billions of dollars, and is proud of its "expansion" in strictly quantitative terms. This industry is largest in the United States, it offers myriad jobs and keeps alive departments with silly subjects, and remunerates a personnel for which it is indifferent whether it sells cars or courses. It has its "czars," its experts, its publicity men, all of it amounting to an immensely inflated empire.

5. This is a universal phenomenon that does not appear in isolation but follows parallel roads. Similar to the mass derailment of intellectuals, there is the mass secularization of the Catholic clergy. Priests and religious abandon the traditional cassock and other garb, they dress like workers or civilian bureaucrats: in business suit, wearing necktie, and carrying their attache case like Wall Street executives. Their language also changes, the religious terminology is practically absent. The mimicry of the extra-ecclesiastical preoccupations and way of life is complete. (See my book, *The Church, Pilgrim of Centuries,* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1990).

Molnar, The Decline of the Intellectual

1

The Emergence of the Intellectual

It is a hard task to put labels on historical periods, and even more risky to put into a meaningful formula the essence of the *Zeitgeist*. The longer the period to be embraced the less adequate is any brief description of it, since so many trends, factors, currents, and exceptions must be taken into consideration. When we come to the problem of defining a stretch of history like the Middle Ages or modern times, the difficulty of the historian or of the historian of culture is truly enormous. In fact, a somewhat acceptable solution may be offered only if we remain within the territory of generalities; yet these generalities are not so vague if we discover the underlying aspirations of peoples, nations, social classes, and elites—for then it will seem to us that history consists of a number of great *élans* toward the realization of certain goals, and that the distance or nearness of these goals at any particular time, as well as the impetus of the *élan,* give us a sufficiently good reading of the period in question.

Let me explain my meaning. What is the most significant feature of modern times, a feature already present in the late Middle Ages and grown truly overwhelming during the first half of the twentieth century? The answer to this question may be anything from the decline of the

religious world view to the rise of science or the conquest of technology. Yet all three answers—and many other plausible ones—must be regarded, rather, as symptoms or instruments of change, not as the underlying, basic human substance. I propose, therefore, to identify this "human substance" as the immemorial aspiration of mankind, but suddenly given new and concrete forms, toward the triple aim of Peace, Unity, and Prosperity, and to *distinguish this age from any previous age by the fact that these goals had come within the sphere of possible achievement.* One might find, perhaps, other phenomena, embedded even deeper in the history of man, and which may be, for this reason, more explanatory of this stretch of history: for example, demographic or climatic changes, widespread epidemics, or the movements and migrations of masses. But on these issues our knowledge is fragmentary; besides, they are situated somewhere outside history (in the sense that they are outside human consciousness); we know that their influence is decisive, but we cannot reduce them to human dimensions.

On the contrary, what is so intriguing about these fundamental aspirations of mankind—whether of individuals or of societies—is that we know that they are always with us, in the minds and working hands of people, in the decisions of governments, the rebellions of masses, etc. This knowledge does not authorize us to expect history to be a so-called constructive enterprise, one impatient thrust in the direction of clearly envisaged goals; even if man did not carry the burden of original sin and thus cause good and evil with the same turn of the hand, mankind would still be faced with the diversity of views as to the best approach and the means to reach the end. What I find so fascinating, however, is that since the late Middle Ages the triple aspiration I have mentioned has received, for the first time in history, such concrete forms that the destiny of men has taken, as a result, a sharp turn toward rationality, predictability, and conscious planning. Only since that historical moment (which we call the Renaissance) have Peace, Unity, and Prosperity become not happy hazards, coincidences of favorable circumstances, fruits of conquest, or gifts of the gods, as in the past, but goals within the grasp of human minds and hands. Mastery over nature, the power of science, and large-scale

organization for improvements of all sorts sprang then into existence, not, of course, as a *deus ex machina*, but nevertheless, in their totality, as a mighty transformation under the very eyes of the contemporaries.

The post-medieval world saw, then, the first conscious, purposeful, and efficient attempt to carry out the dreams of men in the direction indicated. Before examining at some length the conceptual world and the thinking of the representative minds of this period (from the fourteenth century to the end of the eighteenth), we may ask why it happened at that particular time and not earlier. One could, of course, answer this question by referring to the history of important inventions and their practical application at that moment: the invention of the harness, of linen, of gunpowder, of the magnetic needle, of printing, etc. Or one could mention the development of continental commerce, of market places, towns, and maritime leagues. But I prefer to formulate the question in a different way: what was the new factor that redirected the endeavors of men and began to pull together, like an invisible but immensely powerful hand, their manifold activities in view of the above-mentioned goals?

If we examine these goals, we find that all three are complex and partially overlapping notions, the respective elements of which fall under the categories of politics, economics, science, morals, law, religion, etc. For example, *peace* may be domestic or international; it raises problems dealt with by morals, natural and positive law, the churches, and ideologies—or interests determined, in their turn, by geography, history, the progress of military science, etc. And the same is true of the other concepts, *unity* and *prosperity*.

Now, politics, law, economics, and religion are as old as mankind, and they form a heritage common to us all, because the conceptual formulation and enrichment of each has been the work of individuals and communities, philosophers and rulers, sometimes known to us, sometimes anonymous, but at any rate, spread over the whole surface of the globe. No matter how many trends of thought have entered into these formulations and definitions, the important fact is that in their *public existence*, and therefore as history-shaping ideas, the concrete problems of peace, unity, and prosperity were decision-material

only for rulers, governing classes, elites, clergy, and so on.

It is not my task to attempt a detailed analysis of why peace, unity, and prosperity do not seem to have been given more concrete and satisfactory forms during so much of history. Many theories have made an intellectual fortune for themselves by trying to explain the constant wars, fragmentation and enmity, and near-universal misery of most historical periods: Marxism; the British and French schools of political economists of the eighteenth century; the ideas of historians like Toynbee and Spengler; and, naturally, those of philosophers, churchmen, and statesmen. What interests me here is that such *was* the case, that much of political theory, philosophy, and literature (folk literature and other) has been a long cry of despair over the condition of man, the incurable ills of his private and public existence—or more concretely, over the interminable and cruel *wars,* the exactions of marauding troops, the general *insecurity* of peasants, merchants, artisans, and travelers, the *poverty* of pariahs, slaves, serfs, journeymen, and proletarians.

These problems—and these themes—are, of course, still with us; in fact, in the twentieth century they have received a new emphasis through the general preoccupation with the so-called underdeveloped countries, with widespread misery, persecution, deportation and displacement, genocide and ideological tyranny. Nor is it likely that these problems will ever disappear: on the contrary, they will reappear again and again, only under new and unexpected forms, generated by the new turns of progress. What was, however, peculiar to pre-Renaissance times was that these problems were present under their immemorial, ancestral aspects: the poverty of a medieval serf or the insecurity of a late-Roman farmer were of the same nature and degree as men have known practically since prehistoric times. And what was worse, there was no reliable sign on the horizon that conditions would ever change, except, at all times, for the talented or lucky individual.

The mentality that this situation created is reflected, as I have said, in literature and art and the various political theories, especially those that were more directly inspired by popular views. It is also reflected in religions and world views: the general and always latent dissatisfaction sought escape in the past, in a mythical state of

happiness characterized mainly by the more down-to-earth forms of plenty. This does not mean to say that men do not have, at all times, reason to believe in an ideal existence; but it is worthy of note that so much of popular literature, like the medieval fabliaux, for example (whose line of descent is extremely long and can be traced to India), is obsessed by hunger, self-defense against the mighty, and the need to outsmart others because of lack of communal feeling and solidarity. What explains this obsession if not the basic aspiration for prosperity, peace, and unity?

Even when the escape is not in the direction of a mythical past, that is, in the case of a well-established and strong institution, a nation, for example, or the Church itself, we see merely a different way of conceiving an ideal age—in the past. The medieval Church and Empire, from Charlemagne to Pope Boniface VIII and the Habsburgs, looked to the unity of the Roman Empire, the *auctoritas* of the emperors, and to the universalism inherent in the Pax Romana as models of organization for the body politic. The same backward glance was cast by the French Revolution, by the Russian czars (who maintained that Muscovy was the "Third Rome"), and for that matter, by the Marxists themselves in their desire to prove the historical existence of a primitive communist society.

Thus, if not the reality, certainly the *ideal* of a world peaceful, prosperous, and united (that is, secure) existed, no doubt, throughout history, but especially since Roman-Christian times, when the public philosophy (Stoicism) and religion, for the first time emancipated from the tutelage of the body politic, lifted, so to speak, the three notions to a higher level, accessible if not to the ordinary mortal, at least to his consciousness. By recognizing in each human being the *person,* Christian religion and Greek philosophy made implicit the duty of every ruler to extend, henceforward, the concept of the common good to all his subjects, and conversely, they made it clear to these subjects that their freely given collaboration for the common good is one of its essential conditions. Thus the double concept of political duty and responsibility was born.

Now, the immense significance of the post-Renaissance age in this respect is that for the first time, gradually and systematically, science, economic science, and finally, poli-

tics—later religion and morals too—were taken out of the hands of the privileged classes and put into the hands of a wider body, consisting of the bourgeois, the scientists, the lay administrators, civil servants, the scholars and experts. I will indicate on the following pages some of the important landmarks of this new development (the origin of which goes back to the appearance of the first *legists* —experts of Roman law versus ecclesiastical law—of the French kings, and of the University of Bologna), but its tremendous importance may be measured here in a few words.

With the Renaissance, peace, unity, and prosperity ceased to be mere symbols of a never-never land; they became imperative material preconditions of the bourgeois organization of production, transportation, commerce—and hence of public safety, rule of law, guarantees of international exchange. In this task the role of scientists, scholars, career servants, etc., is easy to sketch. If we call them by one collective name, *intellectuals*, we come closer to understanding the nature of their function and importance, and also the nature of their alliance with the merchant, the speculator, the shipowner, the entrepreneur; with some, perhaps excusable, generalization—to be elaborated upon later—we may say then that the intellectual appeared as the man possessing the knowledge, the culture, and the special terminology indispensable for the middle classes in their revolutionary breakthrough of the walls of traditional society and world view. In different domains, both intellectuals and the bourgeois class were working for the enlargement of the political, economic, and intellectual horizon, and against the restrictive authority of feudal society and the Church.

What then was the decisive transformation around 1500, the new factor that redirected the endeavor of men? Again, briefly: the *redistribution of power* among the members of a class larger than ever before, the *application of scientific thinking* and *organizational skill* to problems that had seemed insoluble or subject to empirical methods only, and to the possibility, based on rational foresight and calculation, of bringing the great dreams of mankind within the scope of history.

But this was not all; there was another important requirement, implicit in the other three, which was seen

and understood by the best minds: it is true, as we have said, that peace, unity, and prosperity had never materialized in any part of the world except for short periods, when they benefited only a minority and were, in general, threatened from all sides. Yet, as ideals, they were extraordinarily powerful, and, as ideals, they were built into every social, political, philosophical, and religious system. They were part of the cement that held together any edifice consisting of human beings.

It was thus understood by the post-Renaissance man, indeed by those who had helped prepare the Renaissance, that in the coming world—and world view—the centrifugal forces would, eventually, put such a stress on society, the body politic, the Church, that the traditional and imperfect unity, security, and peace might give way, without anything to replace them. Thus we see the division of the modern mind—and a fascinating division it is!—between *optimism* in building the free community of emancipated individuals, and the *concern* that something new—and better—should be found in lieu of the traditional order; a new cohesion, a new unity, morality, religion, among men. Since this concern was inherited from the Church (its more antique sources were Plato and the Roman Empire), it never managed to get rid of its religious undertone; thus the post-Renaissance—and contemporary—ideologies that are expressions, in their own different ways, of this ultimate concern with the peace, unity, and prosperity of mankind carry in themselves the seeds of the religious preoccupation.

I shall now try to give a working definition of the "intellectual." As the term itself is hardly a century old, we must begin by some contemporary comments. André Malraux defines the intellectual as a man whose life is guided by devotion to an idea; Peter Viereck holds that he is a "full-time servant of the Word, or of the word," that is, a kind of priest either of a lofty ideal, or of literary, artistic, philosophical, pursuits. On the other hand, during the Dreyfus case in France, the right-wing nationalist Maurice Barrès referred with contempt to the "intellectuals," meaning pen pushers and leftist ideologues, in the camp of Dreyfus's partisans. In 1927, again in France, Julien Benda reproached his fellow *clercs* for taking a part

in the commotions of the political community, thus betraying their vocation as guardians of culture. Twenty years later, Jean-Paul Sartre, on the contrary, wanted to involve them in the struggles of politics and the building of a new society. And, finally, Russell Kirk, the philosopher of American neoconservatism, rejects the term "intellectual" as alien to the spirit of the English language (when used as a noun) and to American political tradition, and as having an uncomfortable, ideological connotation.

Among so many authoritative but contradictory interpretations of the meaning and role of the intellectual, we must nevertheless decide in what sense we are going to use the term on these pages.

Is the Socratic demand regarding the necessity of the "examined life" sufficient to characterize the intellectual? If this were the case, the intellectual would simply be the *philosopher,* the lover of wisdom, in the pursuit of which he acquires distinction. Also in this sense, it would be difficult to separate the intellectual from the *scholar,* the *scientist,* the *researcher.* Yet one feels that the intellectual, while he may well be a philosopher, a scientist, or a scholar, or for that matter, a diplomat, a writer, an artist, is not exactly any of these. Rather, it is clear that he puts his mental ability, education, articulateness, and experience to some political or social use, that he is not satisfied, ultimately, with *interpreting* the events—of economic, social, political nature—around himself, but is trying to *influence* and *transform* them. He thus combines theory and praxis, and is likely to formulate an ideology or to adhere to one.

During the Middle Ages there was no scarcity of "intellectuals." From Abélard to Roger Bacon, men of powerful mind set out by themselves, seeking not only new approaches to the truths held by the Church but also roads that led in directions not approved by her. It is not an exaggeration to say that a definite growth in independent thinking—and consequent clashes with orthodoxy—took place when, from about 1350 on, the Church began to freeze in an attitude of intolerance before the threat of the growing power of the cities and of the merchant class. After the fourteenth century the Church had no men to serve her greatness and glory who could compare with a Saint Bernard, a Saint Dominic, a Thomas Aquinas. William of Occam belongs practically to a later age, and the heretics and would-be reformers, the Wycliffs and the Husses are forerunners of forces—social and national—for which the Church had no room in her system.

Yet these men and others like them can be called intellectuals only if we put this term between quotation marks. An intellectual cannot be measured by his mental powers, insights, and creativity alone. It is, rather, the social milieu of which he is a part, and the nature of his relationship to this milieu, that determine his role and status as an intellectual. In order to speak of "intellectuals," therefore, those who belong to this category must possess some degree of common consciousness of their role, their place in society, their relationship to those who are in power and to those who seek it. In short, the intellectuals form a *class* not by virtue of their organization, but to the extent that they have similar aspirations and influence, and a chance to be heard.

Now, in order for the intellectuals to constitute such a "class," they must live in a society that is itself divided into classes. If social cohesion in any given community far outweighs in importance the forces of division, or if society constitutes one monolithic block held together by an all-powerful cadre of leaders regarded as quasi-divine, either the intellectual must vegetate on the fringes of the social body, or else he is compelled to lend his services to the ruling elite.

It is thus evident that unless we risk getting lost semantically in a number of possible meanings, we must define the social significance of the intellectual in terms of his freedom of expression, influence on various segments of society, participation in social change, and the resulting prestige for himself and for the values he holds.

For this reason we may not speak of "intellectuals" in the early Middle Ages (until the twelfth century), and can hardly speak of them in any previous age. As a matter of fact, it is best to restrict the use of the term to about six centuries, that is, from the 1300's until the middle of the present century. It is between these two approximate dates that we may situate the intellectuals as a class constantly gaining in power and influence; before 1300 medieval society was not only strictly organized under the disci-

pline of faith and hierarchy, but—more important still—it was believed to reproduce in the sublunar sphere the eternal order of the universe.• While peasant uprisings, bloody *Jacqueries,* and fierce battles between city proletariat and city fathers were common occurrences, opposition to the established order did not assume philosophical dimensions. Although popular fables and anonymous satires do testify to the deep discontent of the lower classes, only few questioned the very bases of the social order, and even fewer proposed a new one to take its place.••

But if the social order was not questioned as such, fundamental changes were prepared on the level of theoretical politics, grown out of the medieval controversy between papacy and Empire. The conflict itself interests us here only as an issue in consideration of which various political and philosophical concepts received articulate formulation.

The heart of the issue, beyond the dispute over investiture, was the concept of Christian unity. This involved, first of all, the problem of papal supremacy versus condominium with the Emperor as the foremost secular ruler (the doctrine of the two swords); the origin of the latter's authority; the divided allegiance of men as Christians and citizens (vassals); the double function of those who were secular lords and holders of ecclesiastical offices at the same time, etc. Beyond these questions, which were concrete enough to preoccupy medieval public opinion for several centuries, there loomed the momentous issue of the *Respublica Christiana.*

Medieval man was profoundly attached to the idea of unity and believed that it was inscribed in the very nature of things. The commonwealth could function only if its

• "As a whole and in each of its parts the world was the portrait of God; that is, the rank and excellence of every created being was determined by the degree to which it bore within itself the stamp of God's Image. A vast hierarchy of being—the nonliving, the plants and the animals—was formed by the interrelations of the many things found in these realms of essence." Romano Guardni, *The End of the Modern World* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), p. 29.

•• Most of the criticism is not original but goes back for ideas to antiquity. What may be considered medieval contribution is a matter of form: allegory, as in the case of the second part of the *Roman de la Rose,* by Jean de Meung.

normal diversity was pulled together by a unifying principle, on the model of the human body, whose various functions are controlled by the head.[1] The theme of the human body recurs in the writings of almost all theologians and philosophers when they concern themselves with the political community, the common good, the just distribution of social activities, and the hierarchical structure of society. Thus it was not indifferent whether the Christian nations were fragmented to the point of constant hostility, whether they were united with regard to faith and morals, and consequently, whether they recognized the supreme authority of the Pope or the *political* and eventually *moral* independence of the Emperor and kings.

Let us repeat once more: the controversy was relevant to the whole sphere of medieval life because it raised the question of who should organize the *Civitas Terrana* in all its aspects; and whether the latter was an entity in its own right or a preparation for the *Civitas Dei.* If Jesus Christ entrusted Peter with the keys of the Heavenly Kingdom, did this mean also that, since all Christians aspire to enter there, Peter's descendants, the popes, had implicitly the right to judge and depose rulers who endangered their subjects' salvation? Or did Peter's authority stop at the gates of heaven, and was it the ruler's prerogative, inherited from Saul and David, to receive his power directly from God?• But then: did Jesus not add that whatever the Prince of the Apostles joined together or set apart shall be joined together or set apart in heaven also? Did this power or did it not include the temporal sphere too?

In addition to references to Old and New Testament, the heritage of the Roman Empire also complicated the problem. In both theory and practice the Christian teaching accommodated itself quite well to the existence of "two powers," because it was beyond dispute that ultimately both the ecclesiastical and the secular power agreed on the same goal, namely, that of authority established for the

• In the judgment of the Pope's partisans, the Pope possessed both swords, and only the fallen nature of man was incarnated in the imperium (imperial authority). The Emperor's power, they argued, was thus derived from the sacerdotium (papal authority).

rule of morality. This point was made clear as early as 800. Furthermore, it also followed from Catholic doctrine that secular rule, like the existence of the human body, is not an evil (as it is according to Manichaeism) but a reality in its own right, created and blessed by God. Already the Christians of the first centuries "asserted that while the Church must remain entirely distinct from all temporal institutions, its members were obliged to submit to secular [in their case, pagan] authority because it was established by God and was, although unknown to itself, in His service." [2] The fact that the secular authority of the time we are discussing was itself Christian certainly complicated matters, because now the ruler himself was no longer pagan but a Christian, subordinated in his conscience to the Pope's moral authority. Yet the Church's attitude toward secular power *in se* remained that of acceptance. Even Gregory VII, who was most tempted to crush the Emperor's power, limited himself to saying that "the imperial or royal function is very difficult to fulfill . . . [that] it leads naturally to guilty ambitions . . . [and that] kings often forget the principle . . . according to which the goal of temporal power is to serve the Christian cause." •

Now the intervention of legal concepts, inherited from Roman law, had as a clear-cut consequence the upsetting of the medieval Christian political equilibrium. The legists themselves were in the employ of kings, especially of the kings of France, and became instruments of royal policy. Their significance may be stated in a few words: they introduced, or rather, reintroduced, the concept of the Roman *auctoritas*, which, with a series of other titles that Augustus had already assumed—tribune, pontifex maximus, imperator, etc.—guaranteed its holder an absolute

• Marcel Pacaut, *La Théocratie* (Aubier, 1957), pp. 86-7.

It was Saint Thomas who finally settled Church teaching in this matter; the moral order, Thomas maintained, is a human order and can be brought about by the free co-operation of men. The State is not an evil (as Augustine was inclined to hold), and is not merely an institution appointed by God as a remedy for human sinfulness. It originates in the social instinct of man and must be regarded as an instrument for building an order of right and justice.

rule, certainly in the political, but also in the quasi-religious sphere.

The revolutionary innovation of the King's lawyers contributed decisively to a development that had been on the way for some time, that is, the recognition of the imperial (secular) power as depending on God alone, without the intermediary of the Pope. This much was stated already at the end of the twelfth century, by Simon de Bisignano. From then on, Christian unity, in theory and in practice, may be considered as mortally wounded; first, because the Emperor was finally recognized as equal to the Pope, if not in the "essence and dignity" of his office, at least in the autonomy of his power; second, because the imperial power itself declined amidst dynastic troubles in Germany, and the papacy, also considerably weakened by the captivity at Avignon, was now facing the rise of vigorous, and from a religious point of view, quasi-independent nation-states.

This, however, did not take place in one day. The traditional world view was strong enough to resist within the soul and the conceptual universe of the very men who now attacked it. Thus the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were to be the stage of a conflict more decisive and critical than the struggle of the investiture, which had been fought, after all, within the same mental framework and with identical verbal weapons. Now not only was the intellectual background of the participants wider—it was clearly the Renaissance—but the external circumstances too were in a state of growing fermentation. The outstanding men who devoted themselves to the theoretical disquisition of the political problem were accordingly divided in their minds. They were sufficiently "medieval" to advocate that the unity of the human race imposes the need of one government over it; they considered the conflict between Church and State an anomaly, and refused, as Otto Gierke points out, to accept the dualism as final. On the other hand, a Marsilius of Padua and a William of Occam were "modern" thinkers insofar as many of their ideas foreshadowed not only the Reformation, but even the English and French revolutions.

This is, of course, not quite so paradoxical as it seems. These thinkers, while they drew the necessary conclusions

from the events and transformations that took place under their eyes, while they even contributed to these transformations, nevertheless bemoaned the lost unity of Christendom from a religious, moral, and political point of view. Only, there was this difference between them (in the fourteenth century) and the eleventh- and twelfth-century school of thought known as the "Gregorian"; they were quite willing to interpret God's command that there be a universal monarchy as a justification of the secular power in the form of a universal imperial authority. In other words, hardly was the idea of a *Respublica Christiana,* in its papacy-dominated form, irretrievably lost, than these men sought to re-establish it with its gravitational center shifted from the theocratic model to the secular-monarchical one.

Italians were in the forefront of this movement, since they had firsthand experience of the Pope's temporal rule and saw in it the source of the peninsula's political fragmentation. Dante's monarchical preferences are well known, and the already mentioned Simon de Bisignano did not hesitate to proclaim that in the temporal order the Emperor is greater than the Pope. But the most audacious thinker of this period of transition was certainly Marsilius of Padua, in the first half of the fourteenth century. His political treatise, the *Defensor Pacis,* aimed at establishing more than the independence of the State from ecclesiastical rule; it clearly enunciated the State's superiority and even its monopoly of power. Marsilius no longer mentions the moral nature of the State as it had been maintained for centuries; the State comes into existence because people need each other, and on account of the diversity of their interests, they need an arbitrator. Hence not God, but the people is the source of the power exercised by the ruler.

What about religion and spiritual life? Here too, the State has an important role to play, but not as a guide to moral life. Marsilius rejects the concept, drawn from the history of the Jewish kingdom, according to which the monarch is appointed by God to enforce the nation's respect for divine law; in Marsilius's quite modern interpretation, religion is the citizen's private affair, and the State intervenes merely to guarantee public tranquility within which the individual may be free to worship.

But the State must be, after all, more active than that,

for it does not find, facing it, a Church with a divinely constituted hierarchy. The Church, indeed, is only an assembly of the faithful, proposing candidates to priesthood, but accepting that the State should actually induct them into office. Since the Pope has no more authority than any other priest, logically all matters affecting the Church are initiated and discussed by a council. At this point, however, Marsilius realized that if not the papacy, then the council may rise as a dangerous competitor for the State; in order to secure the latter's complete domination, he placed the council too under the control of the State, which would decide its convocation and would execute its decisions.

A number of theories that were to make their fortunes later find in the *Defensor Pacis* their first articulation in Christendom. While the doctrine of conciliar supremacy—so important in the early part of the fifteenth century—found a serious advocate in Marsilius of Padua, the basic ideas of the Reformation, the contract theory of society, royal absolutism, and even the kind of totalitarian democracy we know today are also broached in the book. It is interesting to note that a generation earlier Dante had opposed the temporal ambition of the Popes on the ground (as we read in the *Purgatorio*) that if the two powers are combined, "one no longer fears the other": the healthy dualism of the commonwealth still represented, for Dante, a system we would call today one of "checks and balances." It was different with the fourteenth-century scholar: he was ready, like the later reformers, to deprive the Church not only of temporal power but of any organizational independence as well. But by limiting the religious sphere to the individual conscience, he had to allow the State to invade the domain of public philosophy and even to rule there absolutely. The anticlericals and secularists of later centuries could contribute no really original argument to what Marsilius of Padua had so carefully put forward.

If the political ideas of William of Occam were even more influential, it is because he was, in addition, a great and respected philosopher. Otherwise, he only completed the edifice raised by the Italian. His own popularity may be explained by his insistence on the authority of councils

and by the corresponding view that the ecclesiastical hierarchy, including the Pope, is merely the council's executive organ. All this, within the framework of the Empire—the ruler of which is elected by the hereditary princes—that is, in the view of the age, democratically.

We see, then, that in the arguments expressed by these late-medieval political theories, with every diminution of papal and conciliar power, that of the temporal ruler was growing. The *Pope's* authority was found to be fictitious, usurpatory, or exaggerated; it was left undecided whether the *council* itself should consist of the princes of the Church or include—like a popular assembly—all the faithful on some representational basis; at any rate, its activities would be controlled from the moment of convocation to that when its decisions were applied, by State officials; at the same time, the supremacy of the *temporal ruler* was not only recognized but also found to be rooted in popular will and democratic election. Thus, politically, the Middle Ages came to an end because, as Cassirer put it, "in spite of its great ethical task, the State could never be regarded [in the Middle Ages] as an absolute good." [3]

Is it then surprising that the next step was relatively easy to take? When Machiavelli declared that the Prince is independent not only of the Pope but for the sake of the State's interest, of the rule of Christian morals as well, the last remnant of the medieval equilibrium was shoved aside. "During the Middle Ages," writes Otto Gierke, "we can hardly detect even the beginnings of that opinion which would free the Sovereign (whenever he is acting in the interest of the public weal) from the bonds of the Moral Law and therefore from the bonds of the Law of Nature. Therefore when Machiavelli based his lesson for princes upon the freedom from restraint, this seemed to the men of his time an unheard of innovation and also a monstrous crime." [4]

The significance of Machiavelli's "innovation" (we have seen its first timid roots in Marsilius) was more than what is obvious, namely, the elevation of the *raison d'état* to the pedestal of a jealous, intolerant governing principle. Machiavellism was also the most definitive expression (for the Middle Ages) of the trend toward weakening and abolishing the intermediate bodies between the individual

citizen and the ruler of the State. The two models that helped the medieval theorists visualize society and the body politic were the human body and the macrocosm, that is, the total order of the universe. In a society constructed according to these models all parts are equally necessary, as was demonstrated by the Roman legend of Menenius Agrippa, who persuaded the rebellious plebs to return to Rome. The feudal system itself was a political expression of this concept, the wisdom of which, among other things, consisted in setting up innumerable buffer zones between individual and State power, and between smaller power-focuses. Already in medieval theory there was a trend, however, that, according to Gierke, stressed the "concentration of right and power in the highest group, on the one hand, and in the individual man, on the other, at the cost of all intermediate groups. The Sovereignty of the State and the sovereignty of the Individual . . . [became] the two central axioms." [5]

It is evident that Machiavelli's doctrine was hostile to the medieval theory of communities because such a theory would only obstruct the ruler's policies. On the other hand, the spirit of the late *quattrocento,* which permeates the Florentine's writings, reflected an extraordinarily individualistic, asocial age, partly because age-old institutions exploded under the pressure of religious innovations, geographical discoveries, new techniques, etc. The State emerged as the only power strong enough to afford a costly, artillery-equipped, permanent army, to organize the growing overseas trade, and to enforce religious unity, a condition of loyal citizenship.

In this way, Marsilius of Padua, William of Occam, and Machiavelli were forerunners of a new spirit, and also the heralds of new conditions and a new world view. They were aware, perhaps only dimly, that man's place in the universe was changing, and that this change in the order of realities would necessitate a transformation in the order of values as well. It was, for instance, characteristic of this feeling that in *The Discourses* Machiavelli took it for granted that religion should be subordinated to the purposes of the State, and in order to give this requirement an unequivocal emphasis, recommended that this religion

be chosen not for its supernatural validity but for its power as a myth and for its value as a cohesive force.•

In fact, from the very beginning of modern times, this—the formulation of a new political myth and unifying doctrine—became increasingly important, without, however, assuming the urgency and dynamism of later ideologies. Ernst Cassirer remarks that, as in the Middle Ages, so in the early part of modern times there was a correspondence between theories of cosmology and of politics, the order of the universe and the order of human existence as conceived by theologians, astrologers, philosophers. The medieval version of this thought came to an end with the beginnings of modern astronomical science, prefigured in the teaching of a Giordano Bruno, for example. But Galileo could be more explicit: in his *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences* it is stated that he had discovered new aspects of a "very ancient subject," and "new properties which had not been either observed or demonstrated." The same thing was true in the field of political theory, and Machiavelli applied "Galilean" principles to the study of political movements. But, as I have noted before, although he was no enemy of religion, the Florentine diplomat preferred to adopt, for his State, the religion that was most likely to promote civic virtues. Christianity, with its dual allegiance to God and Caesar, was obviously inadequate; on the contrary, pagan, or rather, the Roman religion served the purpose much better since it glorified the virtue of great commanders and statesmen and was useful in all matters in which the State had to prove its strength in action, deliberation, and maintenance of order.

Machiavelli's exposé of the most efficient methods of

• "It is the duty of princes and heads of republics to uphold the foundations of the religion of their countries, for then it is easy to keep their people religious, and consequently well conducted and united. And therefore everything that tends to favor religion (even though it were believed to be false) should be received and availed of to strengthen it; and this should be done the more, the wiser the rulers are, and the better they understand the natural course of things. Such was, in fact, the practice observed by sagacious men; which has given rise to the belief in the miracles that are celebrated in religions, however false they may be." N. Machiavelli, *The Prince, and The Discourses* (New York: Modern Library, 1940), p. 150.

statecraft was explosive and shocking. But, after all, he only put on paper what had always been, to a greater or lesser extent, the practice of rulers and governments, and his originality consisted, perhaps, in his neglecting, for the first time in Christendom, to affirm the ultimately moral nature of the political phenomenon. But the rapport among nations, people, and institutions did not change with the same speed and irreversibility as the data of physical and astronomical sciences. The Machiavellian revolution did not seem so overwhelming as the Galilean discoveries. The great receptacle within which political and social life was unrolling itself, the State, remained essentially the same, and its constituent bodies, institutions, and the routine of its administrators and citizens were, as is always the case, powerful obstacles in the way of radical change. Even after Machiavelli almost nobody questioned the intimate bond between the Christian religion (religions) and the State, and if, as Cassirer says, "in his [Machiavelli's] theory all the previous theocratic ideas are eradicated root and branch," [6] it is nonetheless true that the absolute monarchs of the seventeenth century were to give new vigor to these ideas.

Thus the post-Renaissance political edifice, that is, the nation-state, inherited most of its concepts from earlier times, and there was no evident and immediate need for a new "public philosophy" to take the place of Christian notions and standards of behavior. This is not to say that such a new public philosophy was not in the making in the minds of certain individuals, political theorists and others, standing at the crossroads of change. But we must wait until social pressure, under the impact of economic realities and humanist-inspired emancipation, fills the just-analyzed political theories with content and supplies them with concrete issues; only then will ideological forces be set into motion and the crisis of modern times appear in its true dimensions.

Inasmuch as we begin the history of modern times with the conventionally accepted triple date of Renaissance, Reformation, and the Voyages of Discovery, we meet, for the first time in the annals of Europe, men whose ideas and ideals could no longer be contained in the traditional receptacles of ecclesiastic and feudal institutions. The man

of ideas found all of a sudden that powerful social and economic forces set themselves up outside and in opposition to the Church and the society it had organized; as a result, previously hidden thoughts were beginning to appear and to be carried by the waves of popularity. It is true that only a few meant to profit by the developing freedom in order to bring down the social order and destroy the religious unity of Europe. Some of the best minds, among them the prince of the humanists, Erasmus, refused to make common cause with the Reformation, much less with free thinking.• But it was impossible for them—the humanists, the printers, the itinerant scholars and students, the political commentators, etc.—not to see that in the future their speculations might have widespread, in fact, incalculable, *social consequences,* and that a new social class was emerging which was interested in, and vitally concerned with, the ideas they propounded.

The intellectuals, then, are products of the Renaissance period. They became a *type* when the bourgeoisie as a class got ready to enter political life actively, and when, conjointly, science became a serious organizing factor of progress. The moment of the intellectuals' appearance thus coincided with the initial stages of the transformation of Utopia into reality; in accomplishing this transformation, their role was as decisive as that of the middle classes themselves.

Only when medieval society began to disintegrate, and the nobility to receive the first blows as the result of a serious dip in land values and of the shift from rural to money economy, do we see a corresponding increase in the importance of the intellectual class.

"Classes," Professor Georges Gurvitch explains, "are

• This is how Huizinga characterizes Erasmus and his fellow humanists living in this critical period: "As an intellectual type Erasmus was one of a rather small group: the absolute idealists who, at the same time, are thoroughly moderate. They cannot bear the world's imperfections; they feel constrained to oppose. But extremes are uncongenial to them; they shrink back from action, because they know it pulls down as much as it erects, and so they withdraw themselves and keep calling that everything should be different; but when the crisis comes, they reluctantly side with tradition and conservatism." *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York: Phaidon Publishers, 1952), p. 190.

particular groups of vast dimension. . . . Their resistance to penetration by the rest of society, their mutual incompatibility with other classes, and their highly developed structuralization imply a collective consciousness and specific cultural achievements." [7] This description of a social class indicates two important features: first, that classes are powerful particularistic groups, existing as parts of the global society, yet in many respects independent of it; and second, that the ideology they develop is a partial truth, a subjective interpretation, or, as Professor Gurvitch writes, "an essentially political way of apprehending reality, the most partisan of any type of knowledge." •

The appearance of strongly organized classes—and the phenomenal growth of one of them, the bourgeoisie—represented nothing less than a scandal in the midst of the *Respublica Christiana.* For one thing, the Church's long-standing suspicion of the commercial-industrial classes, its repeated warnings against profit and usury, received a dramatic justification in retrospect. For another thing, the concept according to which the new spirit intended to organize society was in deep contradiction with the Platonic ideal of social justice, expressed in *The Republic,* and accepted by Catholic philosophy. No matter what the real situation had been, was medieval society not conceived, in theory and in essence, as a family, or, as we have seen, as the human body in which all parts, equally dear in the eyes of God, labored for His glory as the hands, the feet, and the head of a corporate being?

This situation, and the feeling of unity it had produced, was now vanishing. Many writers date the so-called atomization of society from the Renaissance: the isolation of the individual from the smaller groups of which he may be an active member, and his sudden facing of the terrifying countenance of the State machine, with which he has no existential bond, but which dominates him nevertheless. Also, to use Romano Guardini's expressions, from a "servant of Creation"—as medieval man used to be—he be-

• "An ideology is not a scientific theory. . . . It is the expression of hopes, wishes, fears, ideals, not a hypothesis about events." James Burnham, *Managerial Revolution,* p. 25. "Une idéologie est une croyance populaire orientée vers un idéal socio-politique." Jean Furstenberg, *Dialectique du vingtième siècle.*

came, with every new discovery and invention, a "master of nature," yet divided between the exaltation that surged up in him before the increasing awareness of his power, and his anguish before the abyss of infinity that this same power made suddenly visible. Moreover, both Protestantism and post-Tridentine Catholicism distorted to some extent man's original view of himself in relationship to God, because they made him conscious of the burden of faith. Did not even the greatest religious genius of the "Catholic" century (the seventeenth) propose a wager on God's existence as a sort of last argument to accept this burden?

One may say that for three centuries, between the Reformation and the French Revolution, the most important thinkers sought to solve the problems opened by the *spiritual and social fragmentation* of Christendom. It began to dawn upon the best of them that there was a rapport between the two, that, first, the individual is not an entirely self-sustaining and self-protecting unit, but needs organization and protection; and second, that society and the body politic must be more than a meeting point of interests if membership in them is to have a meaning.• These issues were brought into evidence by the fact that there were now two focuses of power, no longer the Pope and the Emperor, but the *monarch* and the *middle class,* that is, the representative of the principle of State and the representatives of the principle of individualism. Their struggle filled the history of three centuries, and since it was such a protracted one and fought in broad daylight, it was believed by almost everybody that the victory of the middle class—complete victory or some compromise—would solve the deeper issues mentioned above. Did the bourgeoisie not have the interests of the individual, that is, of the ultimate human reality, at heart?

An additional factor must be mentioned, one that further sharpened the opposition between king and bourgeoisie, or at least, the most dynamic elements of the latter. The

• This was, of course, the pivotal point of Plato's theory of the State too, namely, that private and public life cannot develop separately, and that the ethical life of men is dependent on the right political order. The latter constitutes the "soul" of the State, its basic principle, which cannot be left to chance but must be sought through rational thinking.

Reformation, which in Germany contributed to strengthen the local power of kings and princes, in France resulted in a bitter civil war foreshadowing the Thirty Years' War fought on German soil. The French Protestants, alienated from their king, began to look at royal power as usurpatory, and to proclaim that sovereignty belonged to the people (Languet and Duplessis-Mornay, *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*). However, as a result of national reconciliation effected by Henry IV, these early democratic ideas had no further sequels in France. But, as G. P. Gooch pointed out in his well-known study, in England—imported via the Netherlands, where the Huguenots had spread them—they were at the origin of such parties as the Levellers, the Communists, and other utopians. The members of all these sects insisted, in one form or another, on refuting the monarchical doctrine and on placing the government "under Christ," that is, in their interpretation, under the democratic rule of all believers. As one of them, Rutherford, wrote in *Lex Rex,* all jurisdiction of man over man is artificial; the king is merely party to a contract and remains subordinated to the people.

What was the ambition of the bourgeoisie, and in what situation did it find itself at the beginning of modern times? The nobility as a powerful and influential class was irreversibly declining. In their financial and political transactions the kings were dealing with the bourgeois, thereby allowing the latter to enter the life of the State through a back door. The bourgeoisie, however, except for such short periods as the Cromwellian Protectorate, did not aspire to political rule; it was too busy expanding its commerce, securing its trade routes, accumulating and investing its capital. It expected the monarch to rule, to organize justice and the police, to hold in check the still voracious appetites of feudal lords, but otherwise not to interfere with business activity. Thus the new class and its economic interests exerted a powerful pressure in favor of modifying the whole concept of the State, of legislation, and of the respective positions of king and subjects. In the second half of the sixteenth century Jean Bodin conceived of royal power as almost tyrannical when dealing with legislation abolishing the medieval obstacles rooted in tradition, privileges, and custom, but severely circum-

scribed and controlled by law when the issue was interference with the rights of private property.

In the next two centuries this trend gained immense momentum, until it transformed, from within, the conceptual framework of society and the very meaning of the body politic. The arena of political life was slowly evacuated, until only the two champions, king and middle class, remained face to face. "There was no middle ground between humanity as a sandheap of separate organisms and the State as an outside power holding them precariously together. . . . All the rich variety of associations disappeared." [8] The par excellence philosopher of this "sandheap of separate organisms" was Hobbes. It has been pointed out by various scholars that in order to understand the *Leviathan* correctly one must read it backwards, so to speak: although Hobbes begins with a philosophical-psychological description of man, and pretends to deduce from it the nature of the State, in reality it is the latter that interested him, and he characterized the individual so as to fit his political analysis.

What these individuals, natural enemies of each other, seek is a state of security. They find it under the absolute power of the State: "If a covenant be made wherein neither of the parties perform presently, but trust one another, in the condition of mere nature . . . it is void; but if there be a common power set over them both with right and force sufficient to compel performance, it is not void." [9] That this "compelling" State is tyrannical, Hobbes did not deny, for he equated tyranny with sovereignty.

Hannah Arendt has called Hobbes the "true philosopher of the bourgeoisie," who understood that "the acquisition of wealth [which defines that class] conceived as a never-ending process can be guaranteed only by the seizure of political power." [10] In this, Hobbes proved to be more farseeing than the members of the bourgeoisie who, until the eighteenth century, were far more interested in the pursuit of private enrichment than in laying their hands on the mechanism of the State. In fact, this individualism, raised to the level of a virtue, contrasted well with the coercive machine of the State and the collectively voiced complaints of the nobles over their loss of privileges. It became the paramount feature of the ideal man as painted

by the seventeenth-century moralists and by the eighteenth-century *philosophes*.

The situation mirrored and dramatized in the *Leviathan* represented a kind of equilibrium, expressed, for example, in the English Restoration, in the French "classical age," in the Cartesian spirit, in Jesuit influence. It came to a crashing end with the death of Louis XIV, in 1715, which opened the door wide to bourgeois ambitions, this time in their unlimited form. The truth is that the absolutism of monarchical administration (which was a centralizing trend under bourgeois pressure and royal interest) was only acceptable to the middle class until its own economic power became unassailable. Around 1700 the philosophers and other spokesmen of the bourgeoisie denounced the equilibrium between royal power and commercial interest as precarious; later in the century Turgot, one of Louis XVI's finance ministers in the period of crisis, treated as an "illusion" the view that it was possible to protect simultaneously the country's economic interests and the cause of the monarchy.

It is thus the middle class that first abandoned the traditional alliance with the king. Threatened from all sides, the French administration attempted to introduce, at the middle of the eighteenth century, a general direct taxation. But the middle class understood that this desperate, although completely fair and logical, measure would enable the State to tax property and capital; rather than contribute its share, the bourgeoisie as a class "managed to divert the blow by directing it against the clergy." [11]

That this diversionary move was successful, and that it paralyzed financial reform until it was too late, was, no doubt, due to the tremendous economic power accumulated in the hands of manufacturers, shipowners, and landed proprietors. But the fact that it was so easy to point at the clergy as the scapegoat, and thereby to block any step in the right direction, was the work of the intellectuals. For decades, then, Voltaire had been attacking the Church and the principle of ecclesiastical ownership not only by showing, through historical references, the invalidity of donations that had benefited the Church, but also by questioning the dogmas themselves. Voltaire's writings, Charles Morazé remarks, "represent the battle of a

class." There is no doubt that these writings contributed to the crystallization of public opinion, which saw the confiscation of church property as a salutary measure because it would safeguard the property of the bourgeoisie.

From the middle of the eighteenth century the intellectuals supported the middle class without any reservations and in proportion to the prestige and influence they gained by their heavy artillery attacks on the monarchy, the Church, and the totality of the traditional institutions. This prestige was such that the court, the ministers, the police, and the censors were collectively powerless against it, against the international reputation and support enjoyed by the Voltaires, the Rousseaus, the Diderots. As a matter of fact, not only did the latter have friends and protectors among the most highly placed at court, but the government itself, half agreeing with its relentless critics, encouraged the writers by suggesting ways of eluding censorship. Their works were thus printed on the other side of the border, mainly in tolerant Holland, and were then smuggled in, practically with the connivance of the French authorities. Although there was very little risk involved in these operations, the writers and philosophers easily acquired the popularity of martyrs and the glory bestowed by the opinion-shaping salons. When, for example, in 1759 the sophisticated society of Paris was excitedly watching the quarrel that set Rousseau against Diderot, the Marquis de Castries indignantly remarked: "It is incredible. People do not talk of anything but of those fellows. Persons without an establishment, who do not have a house, who are lodged in a garret. One just cannot get used to all that."

Indeed, it seems that everything favored the development and flowering of the middle classes. Science in the first place. The discoveries of Kepler, Galileo, Newton, the mathematical calculations that assisted engineering, had, of course, their primary, scientific, importance. But two remarks must be made about their political and social significance in general.

The first is that the scientists themselves, like the humanists, their predecessors, possessed an exalted notion of their activity as helping the deeper penetration of nature and thereby of the secret of creation and of God.

For the medieval mind, the study of nature had been "the repetition of the sin of Adam, a compact with the devil";[12] in the seventeenth century, Sir Thomas Browne calls nature a second Scripture: "There are two Books," he says, "from whence I collect my Divinity: that written by God, and another of His servant Nature." This religious commitment of the scientist and the scholar made them the equals of clerics, and it must be added that God's special blessing seemed to render their explorations more successful, influential, and prestige laden than the rather stagnant speculations of contemporary theology.

The second remark concerns the socially symbolic value that science acquired in the seventeenth century. As the scientist and the philosopher were knocking at doors that would open the secrets of the universe, very soon it became obvious that amidst protestations of their orthodoxy, they were nevertheless elaborating an entirely new world image, in opposition to the one the Church had claimed the exclusive right to carve for Christians. Behind this scientific world view the outlines of a new society were clearly visible. The issue was not lost on either the Church or her antagonists; when Galileo's conflict with the Jesuits became a long-drawn-out process, one of the old physicist's friends, the monk Campanella, joyously exclaimed in a letter that he saw "a new world" arising, and a new society. He understood that his own ideas, recorded in his utopian novel, *Civitas Solis* ("City of the Sun"), had no chance of materializing without science first blazing the way for experimentation, in the laboratory as well as in society.•

In the eighteenth century, the alliance between science and the ideals of a new society reached a hitherto unimaginable solidity. The expansion of the middle class flowed in two main channels: industry and commerce. With the decline of the Netherlands, two huge empires, Britain and France, remained the contestants for the

• The so-called utopian literature was itself perhaps a more complex phenomenon than has been realized. Some scholars think that Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* presents a caricature of the "ideal" society, not an advocacy of it; on the other hand, Campanella is so exuberantly naïve as to foresee that his Solarians would be exempt of "gout, rheumatism, colds, sciatica, and colic."

domination of the oceans and overseas trade. Both placed their military might and diplomatic skill at the disposal of their industrialists, investors, stockholders, and colonizers. In England especially, but also in France, the nobleman stood shoulder to shoulder with the commoner, nay, with his own lackey, waiting anxiously for news of successfully accomplished commercial ventures on the seven seas, ventures in which they all had invested, some a fortune, others a few bank notes earned, perhaps, on a previous speculation.

Science and technical inventions aroused the greatest enthusiasm everywhere. They were now the guarantees of economic expansion and prosperity. The scientist himself became more and more interested in the application of his knowledge, which he saw rapidly harnessed to the needs of industry. The most significant literary venture of the century, the French *Encyclopédie,* proudly advertised in its title that it summarized everything that man knew, but at the same time conformed to the spirit of the age by devoting to theology and religion an infinitesimal place in comparison with the space taken up by the subjects of positive knowledge. "Divine Science," remarks Professor A. M. Wilson, "bulked just about as large spatially as 'The Manufacture and Uses of Iron' "; and he adds: "Such were the *Encyclopédie*'s unacknowledged ways of waging psychological warfare." [13]

Diderot, D'Alembert, Voltaire, Helvétius, Turgot, were in the forefront of this warfare, psychological, political, and philosophical all in one. Professor Wilson has this to say about the over-all significance and impact of the *Encyclopédie,* and his remarks are valid for a very large part of the eighteenth-century enlightened literature: "The *Encyclopédie* was a great reference book, a great repository of knowledge. But it was more than that, by far. The *Encyclopédie* conveyed to its readers a stimulus that was frequently as much emotional as it was intellectual. . . . It was a detergent, a tool with a cutting edge, a window opener. It was something that one could learn to use for the performance of tasks one was insufficiently equipped to do before." [14]

Almost all eighteenth-century political thinkers may be called controversial. It is a commonplace to say that it

was a transition period, the beginning of which was described by Paul Hazard as the "crisis of European consciousness." This crisis was real and deep; it can be detected in the personalities, the lives, the thinking, of the French *philosophes,* all of whom were innerly divided between old and new, and who, therefore, may be quoted alternately as favoring tradition or progress, monarchy or republic, religion or atheism.

The term *"philosophe"* itself is intellectually uncomfortable because it is imprecise, vague, having all sorts of connotations. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholars, especially scientists like Galileo and Newton, called themselves philosophers (from natural philosophy); this indicates that philosophy was considered as the knowledge of exact phenomena, but also as reflection upon these phenomena. On the other hand, philosophy also meant a certain way of looking at the world and the destiny of men, as is demonstrated in the "philosophical tales" of Voltaire. Finally, the *philosophe* was also the man who tried to make use of all existing knowledge for changing things in the spirit of the truth thus discovered. Voltaire and Condorcet, for example, displayed impatience with Montesquieu, who studied the causes of historical and sociological phenomena instead of seeking what *ought to be.* This will to change the world, more often than not of a utopian nature, is what justifies Carl Becker when he speaks of the "heavenly city" of the eighteenth-century philosophers.

Behind the activity of the *philosophes* there was the optimism of the age, an optimism fed, first of all, by what they took to be the near-final shape of the new, scientific world view. Even the cautious Montesquieu expressed faith in the triumph of universal science; in his eyes, writes his biographer, Jean Starobinski, "universal science appears possible and near. The quasi-total exploration of nature was a matter of a very short period: the time to establish the law of universal gravitation of which only the details remained to be studied. Since Galileo and Newton, the spectacle of the universe became all of a sudden visible." [15] Montesquieu had indeed compared nature to a maiden who had for a long time reserved her virginity and who yielded all of a sudden.

The author of *L'Esprit des lois* was the point of inter-

section of too many traditions, French and foreign (among the latter, Hobbes, Grotius, Locke), to be a representative *philosophe*. He was certainly an individualist in the bourgeois sense, and favored a happy equilibrium among the interests, the institutions, and the classes of society so as to guarantee the security of individuals. The latter would thus be free to look after their own private interests; the difference with Hobbes is, however, that the authority above them will not be tyrannical: the Versailles court and the *douceur de vivre* it spread in French society had, by then, created a sufficiently civilized atmosphere for a tolerant public morality, and Montesquieu was able to trust the spirit of the age to preach an intellectual, moral, and commercial laissez-faire philosophy.

But Montesquieu did not have the *philosophes'* naïve faith in man's goodness, and while hoping to free the individual from his worry about the commonweal, he also counseled vigilance against any return of abuses and violence. The true children of the age of Enlightenment were differently inclined: for a Rousseau, liberty as conceived by Montesquieu was far from sufficient because it made no place for the passionate commitment following from the vision of *good man* versus *evil society*.

We come here to a pivotal concept, around which the whole history of modern times may be said to have turned. Indeed, from Marsilius and Machiavelli the tendency had been to shift away from the religious-moral orientation of the State to at least an adumbration of the contract theory of society, already suggested by the *Defensor Pacis*, and to the concept according to which the Prince may govern without needing the Christian precepts of good and evil. We have seen how the economic pressure of the bourgeoisie forced upon the ruler an increasing authority, which he was supposed to use—according to Machiavelli and Hobbes—in a despotic way if the *raison d'état* so dictated. But it was fatal that this authority should, as often as not, be used against the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the latent conflict between the two depositories of power and wealth became sharper as their power and wealth increased. The result was that royal absolutism and bourgeois individualism did not long remain in equilibrium; finally, the eighteenth century understood that the State could not contain these two antagonistic forces, although

the very men who contributed most to the weakening of the monarchical institution and its auxiliaries were also and simultaneously trying to bolster the King's position and work out a compromise formula.• Hence the great admiration of the *philosophes* for the so-called enlightened despots, who seemed to embody their ideal, hence also their dislike of England, where, as Holbach said, any beneficial reform may be blocked by the dissent of one party. Voltaire himself, although he envied his British confreres—Swift, Pope, Newton, Bolingbroke, etc.—for their freedom of discussing the tenets of skeptical philosophy, disliked the climate of political liberty as leading to anarchy.

Once royal power had to yield, on what foundations were the new State, the new society, to be erected? This was the basic question asked by the Enlightenment philosophers, many of whom were economists, statesmen, bankers, or civil servants, in other words, informed about political realities. The question implied the admission that the traditional Christian principles no longer sufficed, that a new consensus, a new public philosophy, had to be secured, and that this public philosophy was to take into consideration two modern phenomena: science and democracy.

This was not yet enough. The motor power of these reflections was supplied by certain ideological tenets, elaborated with passion and reminiscent of various heresies from Church history. Their best expression can, of course, be found in Rousseau, but his thoughts on the matter were by no means exceptional: he only lent the subject passion, a peculiar eloquence, and a deep understanding of his contemporaries' sensibility.••

• "They were sufficiently pessimistic about human nature to doubt the feasibility of popular self-government, and tried to compromise between their rational values and their traditional faith in aristocracy by recommending some form of enlightened despotism or constitutional monarchy." E. Barber, *Bourgeoisie in Eighteenth Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 69-70.

•• "There is little in Rousseau that was not in Locke," remarks G. P. Gooch in his *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1954; third edition), p. 302. Harold Laski, who edited the second edition,

The constituting elements of this sensibility were the following: belief in man's goodness when in a state of natural freedom; the indictment of society, its institutions and magistrates, for all the evil that ever befell mankind;• the conviction that, although one cannot return to the primeval perfection, a compromise may be found in view of establishing a free, well-governed society based on popular sovereignty.••

As I have said before, the *philosophes* were equivocal, confused thinkers. They were representatives of bourgeois interests and progress, yet they condemned excessive freedom, luxury, and artificiality in society. Like the Bolshevik intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century, they were at once revolutionary and puritanical. Their peculiar em-

finds this statement "too strong"; "the organic State of Rousseau," he writes, "is essential to his thesis, and it is not in Locke."

• "Is there any vicious habit, any crime . . . whose origin cannot be traced back to the legislation, the institutions, the prejudices?" Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1955), p. 193.

•• These ideas were, at least partly, reintroduced from England, where, around 1648, various utopian systems enjoyed a great popularity. For example, the *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1648) emphasizes that by the grant of God all men are free and no individual was intended to rule over his fellow men. "But man, following his sensuality, became an encloser, so that all the land was enclosed in a few mercenary hands and all the rest made their slaves." Of these robbers the most desperate was made king, in order to protect the misdoings of the rest. (See Gooch, op. cit., p. 181.) As Gooch remarks, the events of 1648-59 were hardly noticed at the time in France. "But the Revolution of 1688 met a very different temper. The bitter memories of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes were still fresh in the minds of French Huguenots; and the victory of William III inspired them to hope that he might prove their savior." (Appendix C, p. 312.) Books and pamphlets appearing in France attacked the despotism of Louis XIV and pointed to English freedom as a model worthy of imitation. "It is not unfair to say," concludes Gooch, "that the [English] Revolution persuaded the French Huguenots to recover the contract theory of the State which had been their mainstay in the civil wars of the sixteenth century." Let us bear in mind that Rousseau was a Calvinist, born in Geneva.

phasis on *virtue*, a combination of humanitarianism and Roman sternness, was best expressed in what was the substratum of their entire political thought: unanimity. Professor Talmon, who also calls attention to this all-encompassing feature of the eighteenth-century dream, paraphrases "unanimity" by saying that Rousseau and his confreres found a common substance in man, called by him "citizenry," which each individual would attain if he were stripped of his particular interests.

Now this unanimity is not that of Hobbes, that is, the fear of being devoured by "one wolf or another." In a little-known essay, "L'Etat de guerre," Rousseau attacked the author of the *Leviathan:* "A certain superficial philosopher," he wrote, "observes people who have been a hundred times reshaped and remolded in the melting pot of society, and then he declares to have observed man." For Rousseau, the units of the social consensus, of unanimity, were not beastly but, on the contrary, virtuous men. "Primitive man," he wrote in the *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754), "has a natural piety; but once he becomes sophisticated [*réfléchi*], he turns selfish." This same denial of the Hobbesian view is forcefully put forward by Chastellus (in *De la Félicité publique*), who based his social optimism on the hope of discovering *man* as he had been "before history," that is, before the "series of abuses and crimes" that history was. Incidentally, we may now explain the *philosophes'* predilection for the *savages*, who were the only human specimens, at least according to the *philosophes'* poor knowledge of ethnology, of man as he was supposed to have been "before history." •

A religion, as a dynamic movement, always asserts itself against a rival creed. For the thinkers of the Enlightenment this rival was, of course, Christianity. Hence, the first requirement in the process of disengaging man as he is *in naturam* from the sediments of history and civilization had to be the fight against the clergy. This was expected to be a long fight because, as Grimm wrote in one of his

• "The savages enabled people to say so much foolishness and became the constant reference for J. J. Rousseau, one of the most dangerous sophists of the century . . . who took them for the primitive men." Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (Librairie Garnier), p. 59.

letters, "it took centuries to subdue the human race to the tyrannical yoke of the priests."[16] The subsequent stages of this emancipation were described by Condorcet in his *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind,* written as an outline for a larger work during the Revolution, shortly before the author died in prison.•

The religion of progress Condorcet presented had its prophet in Rousseau. From the age of fourteen the boy from Geneva had conceived the project of investigating "what is the nature of the government which would form the most virtuous, enlightened, wise and best citizens." [17] As I have shown, in the concept (or rather, the emotion-ridden ideal) of unanimity, Rousseau found a substitute for the Divine Will of Christian political philosophy, a substitute from which everything else could be deduced. As he wrote in the *Contrat social* (Chapter vi), he wanted "to find a form of association which would defend and protect with all its common strength the person and the goods of each member, and by which each member, joining the others, might, nevertheless, obey only himself, remaining as free as before." The General Will thus constituted must, of course, be guaranteed against any encroachment by partial interests; "whoever refuses to obey the General Will, shall be compelled to do so by the whole body; this only means that he will be compelled to be free" (Chapter vii).••

It is a commonplace to state today that Rousseau is the father of the contemporary totalitarian movements and, in Professor Talmon's words, of "totalitarian democracy" as well. But in the eighteenth century, mass movements and mobs, the indispensable material and instrument of totalitarianism, were nonexistent, and the philosophy of the General Will served the interests of the bourgeoisie. First, by creating, or rather, consecrating, the climate of enthusiastic fervor that accompanies all movements seeking a

• We do not have to devote space here to Condorcet's book; we shall consider it later (in Chapter Two), when we appraise his influence on nineteenth-century thought.

•• "It is said that terrorism is the resort of despotic government. Is our government then like despotism? . . . The government of the Revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny." Robespierre to the National Convention, Feb. 5, 1794.

place under the sun; second, by preaching distrust of the magistrates of the Old Regime, issuing from a hypothetical usurpation of power and perpetuating its abuses;• and third, by guaranteeing that the unified will of the nation (*peuple*) ultimately becomes fundamental law and that the executive magistrates use their power strictly according to the intentions of the citizens. The second and third points, taken from the *Discours* of 1754, read like a program of the bourgeoisie, and, indeed, many *cahiers des doléances* drawn up in 1788 for presentation before the States-General seem mere elaborations of the themes supplied by Rousseau's text.

The same cross-influence is evident between Rousseau and the *philosophes* on the one hand, and Rousseau and the middle classes on the other. In their enthusiasm to bring the "people" as close as possible to the "ruler," that is, in fact, to melt the two into one, the *philosophes* completely ignored the intermediate bodies of society, which at all times formed the shield of individuals against despotism. In their view, the laws that the citizenry would unanimously enact would be so perfect that, as Condorcet wrote, "the identification of the interests of each with the interests of all" would naturally follow. Hence, in the language of the National Assembly during the French Revolution, "the abolition of every kind of corporation formed among citizens of the same State is a fundamental basis of the French constitution. . . . The National Assembly abolishes irrevocably all institutions which have been injurious to liberty and equality of rights. . . . There are no longer any guilds, or corporations of professions, of arts, or of trades. . . . The law will no longer recognize monastic vows," and so on.

The French Revolution was the combined work of the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals. In spite of the wisdom of some moderate elements on all sides—the monarchy, the nobility, the clergy, and the third estate—there could be no question of reconciliation of interests. The middle class was aware of its own power and of the winds of history blowing in its direction. The Abbé Sieyès, one of the

• "Any institution that does not lay down as a premise the goodness of the people and the corruptibility of the magistrates, is vicious." Robespierre, *Lettre à ses commettants,* 1793.

motor forces of the Revolution, warned his more moderate colleagues not to accept any compromise offer by the first two estates. The nobility and the clergy, said Sieyès, assessing the forces of the parties concerned, will now be willing to pay a high price for peace, for the maintenance of the status quo as much as is possible. But there can be no reconciliation between oppressor and oppressed, no bargaining between classes with contrary interests.

The Revolution brought to France what the Industrial Revolution, reinforced ideologically by the philosophy of Locke, had brought to England, namely, the liberal view of the State as guardian of moneyed interests and protector against foreign economic competition. The successive regimes, constitutions, and bourgeois political philosophies assert, in various ways, the importance of noninterference by the State with the private domain, which included, naturally, the economic interests of the propertied classes. The prevailing concept was, from Turgot to John Stuart Mill, that the State must concern itself with public safety, and should be called out—in the form of its armed forces —only to restrain the disorderly and crush the rebellious.

What was the gain of the intellectuals? In a way it can be said that the intellectuals had joined the middle-class camp at the beginning of modern times because that was the camp of progress, to which their own cause too could be meaningfully and profitably attached. Yet, almost from the beginning, the intellectual also realized that unless a new principle of cohesion could be found, the world prepared by the bourgeoisie would be an anarchical one in which man would fight man. One may say that for three centuries the existence of classes, based not so much on hierarchical differences as, increasingly, on financial ones, was considered by many thinkers an anomaly. They were trying to find ways of terminating it, if not through a restoration of a purely Christian political philosophy, then by means of new and ingenious systems and Utopias, by contractual agreements, or by the absolute power of the sovereign. In their different ways, Hobbes and Rousseau made the same attempt: to bring back the unity of the Greek *polis* and the virtue of the Roman *civitas*—Hobbes by appealing to the fear of the social atomization he saw

coming, which nothing less than a tyrant would be able to check; Rousseau in the name of the State as the expression of the General Will, tolerating no particularistic groups within it and demanding total consent from each citizen.• However, because of their bias, and their infatuation with antique examples, both ignored the contribution of Christian thinking to political philosophy: Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, the medieval thinkers, and above all, Saint Thomas.

In this way we witness an interesting phenomenon. Philosophers whose ambition is to re-create a unified society not torn by political and social strife, assist, by the very criticism they level against existing conditions, that class which is primarily responsible for the disintegration of the previous social unity. The same thing will reoccur in the nineteenth century, only this time to the advantage not of the bourgeoisie but of the proletariat. While Hegel recognizes the role of conflicts in history and the permanence of alienation in the human condition, Marx's chief ambition is to re-establish the lost unity of the individual and society (lost, allegedly, through the economic exploitation of class by class) by the abolition of the capitalist system. The last class, the proletariat, will thus rise up not for selfish reasons, not to impose its own rule on newly subjected groups of men, but in order to bring forth the universal society and the brotherhood of all.••

At the outbreak of the French Revolution, the intellectuals could look back to the distance covered and say proudly with Condorcet: "The philosopher feels delight that he has done some lasting good which fate can never destroy by calling back the reign of slavery and prejudice." "The path of virtue will no longer be arduous." [18] On the road to Unity, Prosperity, and Peace much lasting good had indeed been achieved, and in this work the contribu-

• It is interesting to see Rousseau use the analogy of the human body: "The sovereign [that is, the General Will] . . . cannot have contrary interests to those of private citizens. . . . It is impossible that the body would want to harm its limbs. . . . The sovereign, by the mere fact that it exists, is always what it must be." *Contrat social* (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre), Chap. vii.

•• This will be discussed in Chapter Three.

tions of the middle class and the intellectuals were inextricably intermingled. But we are here at the beginning phases of a great misunderstanding. The intellectuals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were of middle-class origin, and through their scientific accomplishments, historical researches, and political analyses they spearheaded the bourgeois movement, which needed this ideological foundation to bring down the mighty medieval edifice. But the middle class itself was more sensitive to economic obstacles and social humiliations than to the battles between theology and profane philosophy; it was interested in liberalizing production and trade, in doing away with such anomalies as taxing merchandise some thirty times on its way down the Rhine; it was bent upon freeing itself from the surviving and now anachronistic fetters of feudal exactions, and upon acquiring political rights that would put an end to an inequality no longer corresponding to the actual power relationship between itself and the nobility.•

At a superficial glance one may say that the intellectuals were suffering from similar evils. As we have seen, their prestige and actual influence was considerable; yet this only poured oil on the fire of their pride and sensitivity: after all, their books were subject to the censorship of clumsy officials and the whim of courtiers, even to burning by the executioner; their travels were curtailed, their persons threatened with exile, their outspokenness punished with jail (as in the case of Diderot), or with the rod (Voltaire's famous *bastonnade* by the Duc de Rohan's men). The abuse of authority weighed on mind and conscience, vexing the intellectuals' love of free expression. Under these circumstances it was difficult to see at the time that intellectual freedom might not be commensurate with the enjoyment of the material and psychological advantages after which the bourgeoisie was yearning.

These misgivings, if envisaged at all, were not voiced. On the contrary, the century ended on a note of optimism, which, incidentally, measured the distance between the quasi-clandestine character of the seventeenth-century

• Even as late as 1781, the nontitled bourgeois (*roturier*) in France was barred from obtaining a commission in the army and was unofficially excluded from high ecclesiastical offices.

libertines (a socially and scientifically explosive lot), or Descartes's extreme prudence,• and the celebrating ideologues: "In the new society," Benjamin Constant, novelist, political writer, and statesman, harangued his friends in 1797, "in the new society where the prestige of rank is destroyed, we, thinkers, writers and philosophers should be honored as the first among all citizens."

• See Descartes's letter to Père Mersenne: "Je ne suis point si amoureux de mes pensées que de me vouloir servir de telles exceptions [reference to the fact that Rome had not formally condemned Galileo as a heretic and that the latter was thus exceptionally treated] pour avoir moyen de les maintenir; et le désir que j'ai de vivre au repos et de continuer la vie que j'ai commencée en prenant pour ma devise 'bene vixit qui bene latuit' fait que je suis plus aise d'être délivré de la crainte que j'avais d'acquérir plus de connaissances que je ne désire, par le moyen de mon écrit, que je ne suis fâché d'avoir perdu le temps et la peine que j'ai employée à le composer." Jan. 10, 1634.