

FREEDOM AND AUTHORITY

By the nineteenth century the struggles in Europe against those forms of authority which go back to the Middle Ages resulted in giving everyone a standard of freedom perhaps without precedent in history.

The result, however, seemed to be that many people did not know what to do with the freedom they had won. Was it true freedom they had found? In several parts of Europe the meaning of this precious gift seemed to have been lost. It was as though the cost of its victory to earlier generations had been forgotten. Freedom itself became perverted and developed a capricious and arbitrary character. In the end, the question which had to be asked was no longer how to conduct the struggle against authority but how to discover a source of authority, at once genuine and effectual.

But to reconstitute a lost authority is like setting up a stage scenery: no one believes in it. It was in these circumstances that an outrageous event occurred. In certain European states men and parties took it upon themselves to bring to an end the contemporary anarchy by the institution of a totalitarian sovereignty. They overthrew the stage scenery and based their new authority on a brutal tyranny which reached into every home and

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into every corner and, by extending even to the realm of the spirit, paralysed its life. They unhesitatingly and without any qualms of conscience put into practice a plan for the total reorganisation of society. It was this tyranny which was proclaimed as freedom won at last for all. Authority had given way to terror.

Carried away by the novelty of these events, the great mass of men did not even notice that at one blow their freedom had been altogether lost to them. Unsure as they were of themselves and yearning for a man to deify and obey, they deemed it natural to run headlong into slavery, believing it to be liberation. They lived heedlessly, happy in their blind obedience, while at the same time they, too, indulged in the passion of violence, which they experienced both by suffering it themselves and by inflicting it on others.

This double loss of authentic freedom and genuine authority, hitherto evident only in limited areas, has now become a problem which all must face. Under the impact, eventually crushing, of the billions of men inhabiting our globe and their rapidly growing importance, the future must face this fundamental question: how liberty can be saved. To-day this question must be posed thus: How can liberty be safeguarded against violence and terror by a genuine authority?

Contrary to what happened at the time when there was rightly a demand for freedom from the abuses of authority, responsible men to-day invoke authority against the misuse of freedom. They no longer speak with their former confidence of authority and freedom but, with a certain uneasiness, of freedom and authority. We are concerned, therefore, to discover the precise significance which authority has in relation to freedom.

But we know how useless it would be merely to erect coulisses. What can be done?

The subject of this article will be the development at the philosophical level of the relationship between authority and freedom. Only when our thinking on this problem is in clear, can we grasp the real meaning of the question before us: 'What is to be done?'

The concepts of freedom and authority usually are analysed both in sociological and psychological terms. For instance, Max Weber speaks of three sociological types of authority. Legal authority is rationally based on belief in the legality of an established order. Traditional authority depends on belief in the sanctity of traditions which have always held valid. Charismatic authority rests on belief in the uncommon sanctity,

heroism, or exemplary character of a particular person. In the impersonal legal order it is the functional hierarchy which defines the holder of superior authority. In the traditional order tradition itself, with which he is closely linked, designates the overlord. Where authority is charismatic, obedience is given to a single leader because the system of order he reveals and imposes commands assent.

At the psychological level, Sebastian Franck, for instance, explains why 'the world demands its papacy'. Institutions of this kind can be found in all ages, under different forms, set up by men driven by the urge to subject themselves in obedience to a single authority, by their desire to be fettered and coerced.

Such sociological and psychological analyses have their value, but in themselves they are insufficient. Abstract diagrams, particularly those we find in sociology, help to clarify the concepts used. But the knowledge that can be reached by such objective approaches is deficient; it falls short of the essential truth which eludes discovery by this method.

The realisation of any of the power systems described by Max Weber is founded, as Weber himself admits, on belief in each case: belief in a truth that can be revealed by votes and majorities; belief in the validity of tradition and custom; belief in the new form of truth promulgated by the leader. It is this element of belief which is decisive. In the case of majority decision, it is the faith that man is fundamentally rational and good; in the case of tradition, that a particular pattern of history has revealed once and for all a fundamental system of values; in the case of charisma, that it is to be recognised in a certain exceptional man. The sociological form of authority is merely a function of this underlying faith. Majorities can be bedevilled and fall prey to moods of insanity which constitute the proper sphere of study of mass psychology. Tradition can be reduced to dull-witted narrow-mindedness and spiritual death; and the leader may be a Pied Piper of Hamelin. If we are to distinguish truth from falsehood in this respect, we must recognise within each of these sociological forms a content deriving from a source altogether different from the ideas expressed in the terms of sociology or psychology.

Let us try to encircle the concept of authority, even though leaning, wherever necessary, on psychological and sociological terminology.

1. Both the word and the concept of authority derive from Roman thinking. *Auctor* is one who originates, advances, increases something; *auctoritas* is the power of creating, sustaining, raising.

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This concept has two aspects: when a man originates something, he wishes it to last; when he takes action, he wishes it to be of value; when he gives help, at the same time he makes demands.

The basis of authority in its various forms, such as the authority of law and bureaucracy, the authority of the paterfamilias and the matron, the authority of the meritorious teacher or physician, is always constituted by an inherent quality which manifests itself in it and makes it acceptable.

2. What is the origin of this inherent quality? Through historical tradition it is linked to the foundation of all things, to the transcendent.

From its primordial foundation authority thus envelops us as the living present of an historical past, talking to us in images and symbols, hierarchies, laws, and intellectual systems. It is thus impossible to grasp the origin of authority by means of reason alone. We are born into it, and through it we come to find ourselves. When we become aware of its reality, we have already begun to live under its aegis. It faces us in its infinity, impenetrable. Our growth to maturity is marked by a growing clarification of the contents of authority. As children, when authority seemed quite simple to us, we simply obeyed it; it grows with us and proves inexhaustible. Throughout life, it never ceases to acquire an ever deeper significance.

Authority reaches us as a guiding factor from the depth of history. From the depth of history it overcomes us even in its least severe form, even in the form of piety which never hurts unless it be driven to do so. Jacob Grimm, speaking of belief in authority, made the following statement: 'It is an heirloom which parents for uncounted years have carried with them and transmitted to us, which we in our turn preserve as a legacy for our descendants. . . . But if its origin be sought, it recedes ever farther into the past; beyond discovery and shrouded in mystery, it remains concealed in darkness.'

The origin of this all-comprehensive authority thus is to be found in the transcendent. The force of authority rests on the conception which is held of the deity and on the all-pervading, all-embracing practical corollaries of this conception or faith.

The inscrutability of history and the presence of the divine maintain authority through the awareness, on our part, of an order, in which we find our place. To feel centred and, so to speak, at home without any particular end and before taking any action is the one source and substance of authority. It is from this centre alone that we shall feel ourselves directed and guided in everything that we undertake in the world and that all the

particular aims, which are never ends in themselves, derive their orientation.

Genuine authority, which is extrinsic, is thus met by something intrinsic, which accepts it and believes in it. The value and the truth of this intrinsic factor depends upon the ontological content to which it responds. ✓

3. In other words: freedom has no content except in relation to the authority to which it is subject. Authority is genuine only when it calls forth freedom.

Rational thought leads us to separate freedom and authority. They become like two contending parties, each demanding his due. One is thought of without the other. The possibility is envisaged of either party's final victory: freedom as scorning and rejecting authority, authority as overcoming freedom.

However, freedom and authority are interrelated. Each is less true, less pure, and less profound without the other. They are at variance only when freedom becomes arbitrary or when authority becomes coercive. In so far as they are opposed, each forfeits its essential character. The individual by himself, not subject to any authority and at the mercy of caprice, no longer knows where his duty lies. Authority without freedom debases force to the level of terror.

Thus, whoever becomes truly free will submit to authority; and whoever obeys a genuine authority will become free. Freedom receives from authority its essential content.

4. The content of authority takes the aspect of various particular competences. Authority conferred by competence, such as is accorded to-day to experts and specialists, rests upon the experience of genuine competence, not upon the possession of objective knowledge as such. Competence of this kind, while embracing all that can be known and using this knowledge instrumentally, does not become identified with it. But a mere technician has no authority; and purely intellectual superiority exerts a form of coercion which inhibits confidence.

Authority is also linked to real and effectual power which both commands and obtains obedience. It relies in the last resort on physical force.

The power of sheer violence, however, is no adequate basis for belief in authority. An irresistible power can be obeyed without thereby acquiring authority.

Contrariwise, when authority is based upon belief, all violence is excluded. As a pure ideal, authority would have power but without using

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force; it would last without the need to coerce. The more coercion there is, the less authority. The amount of violence it employs is a measure of the weakness of an authority. The ideal of an authority without coercion is the opposite of terror devoid of authority.

That in the world as it is authority is necessarily bound to domination, that is its doom. Our lust for power leads us to abuse authority for our own particular ends and thus to deprive it of validity. An entirely genuine authority renounces altogether the use of force. In the West, this is symbolised by the figure of Jesus upon the Cross: consenting to a complete renunciation of power, to suffering, defeat, and death; renouncing, that is to say, every other form of power but love. But how quickly did the redemptive authority of this defenceless love become a faith confined to the limits of a creed! How quickly did it degenerate into the object of a power struggle which, carried forward on the tide of human passions, demanded at all costs that force should uphold its authority!

We have discussed authority from two points of view. In the first place, we have pointed out the sociological and psychological methods which enable us to define what may be called the trappings of authority, its objective foundations or functions, but not to discover its kernel or essential nature. Then we tried, so to speak, to encircle the concept of authority itself to sense its essence, without being able to reach a complete understanding.

The first approach is that of objective science. It seems to open the way, with the aid of acquired knowledge, to the organisation of any desirable scheme. The second approach is that of philosophical enlightenment. Properly speaking, no knowledge is to be acquired by this method, but where it is successful, we attain greater clarity and assurance. Thought at this level does not provide us with technical aids but serves to awaken and strengthen our awareness of reality at a level at which we have no other means at our disposal.

Both these ways of thinking are involved in all philosophical reflection. We think objectively, and the world of finite things is disclosed to our view; by means of thought we pass beyond objects to the comprehension of unity, and in the very disappearance of the objects being finds its fulfilment. These two activities together constitute thought.

Enlightenment by means of philosophical reflection is an indispensable factor. Purely rational discussion leads us to dissipation in the infinity of the finite. Philosophical thought gives us at once both immeasurable space

and firm ground in the realm of the infinite. But this end is achieved through awareness, not through knowledge. It is we ourselves who are transformed by it, not the sum of knowledge we possess. It can make us clearer and firmer, quieter in the disquiet which nothing can allay. It can give us courage; we become more certain within ourselves while ever lacking certainty as to our knowledge.

This problem involves another one. When we ask what we ought to do, we expect a reply which will indicate to us both the ends to pursue and the means to achieve them. We want to be told what to do or else we abandon ourselves to passive resignation when the appropriate technique or formula for action cannot be shown to us.

There is, however, a third and decisive factor, which comprehends and guides our purposiveness in action as well as our humility in view of our limitations. This is man's responsibility for the inner pattern of his behaviour; he creates his own personality, without acquiring by this means any psychological knowledge, which would always be superficial, but rather achieving a transformation of his being. This is an activity with no given end and a responsibility devoid of objective determination. It is the course of our human self-being, which cannot be observed from a distance as though it were something separate but is consummated in the identification of our own reality which cannot be objectivised.

There are two faults to be avoided: claiming to recognise as a definable object what is in reality all-embracing, and endeavouring to endow with a plan and purpose what in this form would lose its meaning. This twofold mistake leads us to behave as if that which can neither be grasped objectively nor affected directly by our deliberate action simply did not exist.

Whenever awareness of this error leads to an attempt to correct it, the matter is usually discussed at the psychological level. The unconscious, the irrational, the vital forces, the instincts—or whatever one wishes to call them—properly belong to the realm of psychology; and it is believed that the salvation of the soul can be achieved with the help of the appropriate psychological and psychiatric techniques. Let us consider some examples which manifest this serious aberration of philosophical thought: Huizinga, in his *Homo Ludens*, interprets the principal manifestations of culture as play. In the historical examples which he gives he is constantly concerned with essential substance, but despite all the wealth and excellence of his book, he disregards the absolute seriousness of this play, which is more than mere play.

The science of teaching, taking advantage of recent discoveries, is trying

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to transform education into a psychological technique well adapted to its purpose. But the decisive factor in all education is the inner substance in the light of which and within which the education takes place; it is the cultural pattern which derives its whole significance from its foundation on faith; it is man's own image; it is all those things which cannot be taught directly but which are given life, in the course of teaching, by example and the choice of subjects and curriculum. Education is always good when children are initiated into a great faith, when they are filled with ideals capable to inspire their whole life, and when they live with traditional symbols. Even an inadequate psychology is not seriously harmful if this essential matter is taken care of; but the best psychology could never replace this essential foundation of education.

In politics we often speak as if a man endowed with superior knowledge were able, when pursuing policies founded on this knowledge, to arrange things as they ought to be. It is true that he is aided by his knowledge of economics, law, and sociology; of strategy, constitutional law, and many other things besides. But what is decisive in politics is the spirit which must inspire all these forms of knowledge if they are to be used to some purpose. It is the ethos of the community, fulfilled by the great statesmen and renovated, in turn, by them. And when politics is what it should be, this ethos is effectually and unfailingly reflected among the population as well.

It is always the spiritual content which is decisive.

What is the reality underlying the playing of religious cult? what reality, in turn, is re-created by, refashioned in, such playing? what is the cultural content by which education is guided in the choice, founded on disinterestedness, of its specific educational aims? what communal ideal inspires politics in laying down its principles and clarifying its conceptions? and from what source, without interest or purpose, derives its significance?—That is the important thing to know.

In each case the decisive factor is absolute and constitutes a synthesis of freedom and authority. Insofar as these are mere functions, they can be grasped in sociological and psychological terms. But such objectifications do not touch upon their essential character. We must recognise that, properly speaking, for empirical knowledge neither freedom nor authority has any meaning. Their true being is only disclosed to some other element in our nature.

If we wish to understand whence freedom and authority derive their essential reality, we must have recourse to that other mode of thought which in the realm of objective reality approaches that which is never

objective, which enlightens without knowing, makes an appeal but gives no directives, sets forth ends but imposes nothing by force, and makes us aware of a reality without bringing it ever into our reach.

The error, which consists in the rational perversion of essential being into objective and instrumental reality, seems to have been characteristic of human behaviour ever since man began to think. Thus in magic the reality of the symbol becomes a purposive and instrumental technique; community is transformed into society; and the being of the soul into the having of a thing. We transform what originally comprehended our being into something which we ourselves comprehend. Thus a total experience becomes a particular item of knowledge, the organisation of life is reduced to no more than a mechanical product. So, too, is the source of all creation seen as a mere technique of means and ends; the present, pregnant with future, is reduced to a promise of future, and a profound insight to objective knowledge. This is an inevitable error; there is no escape. It must be continually met and overcome always anew.

If there has always been a tendency towards false rationalisation, modern science by its very success tempts us to multiply its errors. Science becomes scientific superstition and bestows on our perversion a new good conscience. It was Descartes who, at the dawn of modern science, initiated this process of perversion. Magnificent though this science is if seen in its proper perspective, he mistook its scope and nature.

But reason, working and building in the realm of all-comprehensiveness, cannot construct the house in which we really exist. Reflective thought reawakens recollection, rescues us from forgetfulness, and restores our awareness.

The matter is very simple and yet infinitely complex. We must free ourselves from the fetters of rationality without sacrificing reason, a transfiguration which will allow our being to find itself, not in renouncing reflective thought, but in reflecting more deeply.

We return to the question with which we began: Where do we stand with regard to authority? What is to be done about it? We know now that the answer to this question cannot be given in terms of an unequivocal diagnosis and a therapeutic prescription.

The diagnosis could perhaps be outlined tentatively as follows:

1. We live in a world of increasingly enlightened rationality. Certainly we are moving along the path which we, as beings endowed with reason, must follow. But the effect of this enlightenment is ambivalent: Awareness

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as discerning knowledge, highly developed in the natural sciences, dispels deceptions and deprives reality of all magic; but in so doing it submerges both the world of myth and the world which is filled with the presence of God. While our knowledge increases, we appear thus to experience an immense loss of consciousness, as if there were nothing left but a residue of technical competence with the knowledge instrumental to it.

In the politically free world, this loss is occasioned by convention, social levelling, and the rule of the mass man; in the general tendency to oversimplify, to reduce everything to facts and techniques.

Under the totalitarian regimes the loss is due to the systematic destruction of the religious, metaphysical, and philosophical tradition. An education which ostensibly transmits to the whole population, along with the techniques of reading and writing, all that can be acquired by learning, tends in reality solely to make people competent in the technical processes of modern production. The schools transmit a sectional, technical increase in enlightenment, while the awareness of being rooted in history is altogether lost.

2. Since Nietzsche it has been said that 'God is dead'. Whatever interpretation we give to this slogan—which for Nietzsche himself was a cry of despair—we are at any rate faced to-day with the fact that millions of men cold-bloodedly affirm their atheism and put it into practice.

But for most men atheism is intolerable. When he is fully conscious and refuses to delude himself, man knows that he is not self-sufficient. He may say that he is, he may want it, he may shout it. In fact, however, he is soon overcome by whatever for him is taking the place of God. The shrine with the body of Lenin, the confessions made at spectacular trials, the surrender to the dictator's unrestrained violence: they all are elementary modes of expressing—once God has been denied—that which man seeks in vain to escape: for something comes to take the place of the absolute.

3. All men all over the world clamour for freedom, and each one declares himself free. But it is as though freedom had entirely lost its content. This void engenders a desire to become dependent and to let oneself be guided. It is as if man did not wish to take the responsibility for his free decisions, but preferred rather to be led by the hand.

It is this that explains a marked characteristic of our time: Everybody covets freedom so much that even despotic systems are obliged to traffic under the banner of liberation; and yet so many people cannot endure it. They feel an inner constraint to go where, in the name of freedom, they will be delivered from freedom.

4. A characteristic of our times is the attempt to set up a purely secular authority. Authority attaches to those of whom it can be claimed that they have competence, knowledge, personal worth, or that they have been elected by majorities rather than by God. Such an authority, which is valid for the unbeliever, can establish itself absolutely, i.e., its validity will cease to depend on any particular conditions. It will then depend on a superstitious reverence for science, on the belief that men are able to organise the world as it suits them, and, finally, on the belief that human nature possesses a self-empowered vitality and rationality.

Now, in essential matters man cannot bring his neighbour any decisive help; he can only become his comrade and share his fate. Thus all purely secular authority necessarily ends by forfeiting the trust which has been placed in it.

A claim to authority not linked to the transcendent calls forth obedience similarly cut off from the transcendent. In that case there is no genuine devotion to authority but only submission, whether reasoned or blind. In an anarchic situation an artificial authority is set up by the institution of a command enforced on the weary and abandoned. The coercion applied in the execution of orders is then confused with the intrinsic force of authority. A wholly mechanical and external subordination, achieved by terror, thus takes the place of the free man's demand that he should find convincing evidence in the authority of its original transcendent source.

All these analyses of the present time go no further, however, than describing particular aspects. They emphasise what is evident today, as though that were all. But our age certainly conceals much more than we know about it, both in opportunities and in dangers. We must not let ourselves be limited to any one of these aspects as if it revealed to us the whole picture of our era.

After the diagnosis, we must suggest the treatment.

When authority, in the course of its historical evolution, becomes torn into a number of conflicting tendencies so that it no longer provides security, how can we recapture our true selves, imprisoned as we are by the finite realities of the present, deafened by the noise of everyday life, and cut off from any understanding of what we are and what we can become in relation to the all-embracing, transcendent reality?

We seek authority because we are convinced that no freedom is self-sufficient but finds its fulfilment only in authority. Many things we may achieve through rational planning, such as the reclaiming of continents by

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cultivation, fertilising perhaps the Sahara, or perhaps inventing one day the space-ship which could begin by taking us to the moon, or framing the laws and constitution of a federal world state. As science and technology present us with continually new possibilities there seems to be no limit to the projects of the human will. Men end up by believing that they can alter human nature itself as they please by arranging appropriate conditions and to produce a new and better species. Some people take it for granted that man is omnipotent, if not yet actually, at least potentially. This is why the question: 'What should I do?' so often resolves itself at once into: 'How should I set about reaching this result?'

But authority cannot be manufactured. We know that we cannot plan its realisation by an act of will. What we do know about authority implies that it cannot be the result of any technical process. The question: 'What is to be done about it?' thus cannot be answered directly. The restitution of authority in its ancient form, without rebirth from its decayed state, is inconceivable. Even in its form to come, authority will rest on a continuation with the past. Nothing, however, of the past will endure without transformation.

The following reflections appear to me important for our attitude towards authority and for its future reign.

All authority is ultimately founded on the transcendent. But if authority is the deity itself, if it can be manifested only in obedience to the deity, there arises the question: where do we hear God speak? Is his language unequivocal?

Men, states, and institutions have always arrogated to themselves the place of God. But no man or human institution has the right to claim for himself, to the exclusion of others, the privilege of being in possession of the divine truth which others can henceforth expect to receive only from this single source. Authority which is itself wielded in a spirit of service and obedience remains receptive to other voices, in a state of reverence and resignation. This is why all convincing authority, in all its historical guises, presents the following basic characteristics.

First, authority moves within the stream of historical movement and transformation. Every time that it becomes embodied in an objective institution, it limits itself and hastens to its decay. It is in a constant state of tension between its present and its potential character. In no guise can it be absolute and eternal; for each of the forms by which it is moulded must in its turn be broken.

Second, there is no single authority, but several. All belong to history. Each of them is in relation to the transcendent, but in none of them is this relationship unique and exclusive.

But where does God himself speak? Where can I hear him? Through my conscience? But my conscience can deceive me. Through my judgment? But it can lead me astray. By means of supernatural voices? But whoever has not heard them himself refuses to believe in them. Through the Holy Scriptures and the truths of revelation? But there are other holy scriptures and other revelations, and we have seen that anything apparently can be justified from the scriptures.

In every case the demands of God are formulated in a way which makes them finally dependent upon a decision: it is man who decides when he is truly confronted with the word of God. Somewhere there is a gap, and there is nothing left to do but to leap across it. No further evidence of a connecting link can be produced; the question remains unanswered; and the unconditional demand is imposed upon us with no reasons vouchsafed. Here we are faced with two possibilities.

Under the first possibility, I attribute definite value to what I apprehend to be true only insofar as I myself can realise it within my personal historical situation. I take myself for granted; I accept the origins and traditions which make me what I am in a given situation. I am answerable for my actions. I follow my avocation, inspired by the idea to which I wish to devote myself and never allow myself to be turned aside. Where there is a conflict of issues I make my decision *hic et nunc*. But I reject all generalisation: while submitting my action to authority, I refuse to make this authority obligatory for everyone. I know that this is what we as human beings have to contend with: the truth which I myself obey unconditionally cannot be expressed in terms which are valid for all men. It acquires historical reality insofar as I identify myself with it and become myself through obedience to it. That truth, on the other hand, which I recognise to have validity for all (as in the sciences) never has an absolute character; it remains relative to different methods and points of view. It has general validity for every reasoning mind.

Under the other possibility, I rally to an authority existing in this world, not as if it had historical validity only for myself, but as if it were an authority absolutely valid for all men. I believe that God speaks unequivocally in this world. There is on earth one jurisdiction for all men. To refuse obedience to it bespeaks stubbornness, rebelliousness, pride, ill will, obstinacy, and perversity.

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This outline speaks for itself. It is obvious which of the two possibilities seems to me the one that is acceptable, if we are to bear all men in mind. The deity does not speak an unequivocal language. To understand it without being mistaken and to abstain from usurping it, in some self-styled guise, we are in need of communication between man and man. All human authority has its limits, and every duty is performed within determinate bounds. God is not in person in this world. This is why I must not commit myself unreservedly to any human being, any institution, any jurisdiction, or any other reality which I may encounter in the world, except from a determination, rooted in *my* particular historical situation, to bind *myself* for better or worse to such a being or institution. I have no right to confer an absolute validity for all men on any earthly reality, even if I bind myself to such a reality by an unconditional historical allegiance. Genuine authority must remain unconfined. It is thus ready to change if deeper understanding of itself or communication with another authority demand such change. False authority cuts the line of communication, is concerned only with itself, and knows itself to be possessed of a unique and exclusive truth. Only in appearance does it communicate with others, preferring to propagate solely its own truth. Others must listen, not criticise. But where communication is disrupted, nothing finally remains but violence and war.

Thus we are faced with two alternatives. On the one side, there is an authority which in its diverse and changing historical forms remains ever ready to communicate without limitation; on the other side, an authority which, believing itself to be an unique and exclusive truth, disrupts any form of communication. In my view, this difference contains in itself another one: that between genuine authority which increases freedom, and false authority which destroys it.

From what we have seen, it is not possible to make plans to institute a new authority; but our present position will allow us, perhaps, to examine some conditions and trends. We can ask ourselves what risks and what possibilities would accompany a manifestation of authority in a world which has lost its magic.

1. The political requirement characteristic of our time, which has become apparent in the face of totalitarian experiments, appears to me to be the dissociation of politics from faith. Politics regards those problems of practical life upon which men can reach an understanding, since it is concerned with questions of objectively common interest, the material

necessities of life. It is not faith, at this level, that engenders separation or opposition. It is the struggle for existence in a limited space, with limited material resources, while procreation is illimited. The consequence is an originally unconditional assertion of life, a propensity to conquest, violence, and cunning.

At this level, order can only be established by the authority of law, which creates the possibility of peaceful co-existence. Such an order cannot tolerate any single faith, which, not satisfied with declaring itself sole legatee of the only truth, claims besides to dominate the world. To succeed in this undertaking, such a faith resorts to politics, i.e., to the methods used by earthly power, and no longer confines itself to purely spiritual advocacy unaccompanied by force. With crusaders there is no arguing. Lust for power can be met only by power; and threats are overcome only by threats.

The very separation of politics from faith is only possible through faith, through that relationship with the transcendent which is inherent in each faith in its historical aspect and which allows all believers to unite, at the practical level, against the nihilism of do-as-you-please.

The legal system which maintains order in the practical sphere represents a very limited authority, inadequate for life in its totality, but nevertheless an authority. For the acceptance of legal methods is founded on an attitude of trust, which enables us to submit even where we disagree. The renouncement of violence for the sake of order is dominated by a kind of reverence, which permeates even the conventionalities of ordinary life. Legal order compels obedience without coercion because its necessity is clearly seen and recognised and because we believe in the possibility of voluntary agreement in the constant course of progress.

If these methods miscarry in a particular case, they provide their own remedies. The method which consists in seeking in common a just solution and in granting under the established order a maximum of freedom and justice may not be infallible in each particular case, but can be relied on over a period of time.

Authority and freedom cannot be safeguarded in our time unless we allow faith and ways of life and spiritual creativity, in all the diverse forms in which they are found, to confront one another in a condition of free communication.

2. I have great hopes in the possible evolution of the modes of thought. The particularistic enlightenment of intelligence through the sciences has stripped the world of its magic. This way of thinking, originally sound,

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has been perverted and has led to obvious errors. It never allows us a clear vision of the whole but only the perception of objects within the whole. By mistaking those ever finite objects for the real being, it replaces the comprehensive presence of being with an object rationality, whether mechanically unilinear or mechanically dialectical. Turning away from the fundamental experience of an all-comprehensive reality it extinguishes the presence of the absolute and the aimless in favour of merely utilitarian technical knowledge.

The enlightenment of our consciousness must be illimited, must free itself from its imprisonment in objectivity, if it is to give us the élan we need. What has been unenlightened, then, will not be destroyed by light but sublimated. Raised into this light, the unconscious is enriched by a new spontaneity. Being is not lost, but apprehended more deeply. It is only when magic has disappeared and illusions are dispelled that the genuine wonder provoked by the miracle of being can be experienced, just as superstition must have been dispelled before faith can become pure.

A world which, through the development of the sciences, has exalted the empirical techniques of the human mind beyond measure, is becoming lost in the pure mechanics of rationality. But this rationality could be mastered and led by reason.

A world which no longer lives in the tangible reality of myths and which is no longer fenced in by mysteries and revelations, is becoming lost in the pseudo-myths of science. It could, however, perceive the old myths, transformed and speaking to it in symbols, stripped of their false reality but conveying, like a code, a true reality.

It seems to me that the restitution of philosophical thought will be decisive for our future. It is a question of knowing whether living philosophy will show us the way, not only towards liberation from the bonds of the objective world, insofar as it represents an outdated truth, but also to the conviction, reached freely and in accordance with our present stage of knowledge, of the reality of eternal values and thus of freedom and authority.

If we do not content ourselves with the sociological and psychological approaches to the manifestations of freedom and authority but seek to throw the light of philosophy on their all-comprehensive essence, our practical action could develop a different character from what it has shown till now. The critical faculty, which represents a deadly threat to freedom and authority when they are false, is their salvation when they are genuine.

It may be asked to what extent it is possible for everyone today to share

in the process of enlightenment, not in the sense of compiling masses of information which could only serve to impoverish thought, but as clarity of reflection, raising thought above the level of school work. We are under no compulsion to suppose that the fundamental misconceptions of which we have spoken, which by confused thinking undermine both the critical faculty and faith at one and the same time, will finally triumph everywhere. Our hope lies in the attempt to restore the methods of thought to their simplest and clearest forms, through public discussion in which they can be displayed and practised.

How illusory all this may seem! But he who has himself experienced the power of philosophical thought and is aware, at the same time, that in this world since the dawn of history it has been reason, time and again, and the thought of the transcendent and the freely accepted sacrifice that has straightened the course of history which otherwise would be devoid of meaning; he cannot but be hopeful. Against the visions of catastrophe there rises the faith in man, who holds in his keeping within himself, despite all aberrations, that which the Bible tells us was created in the image of God.

3. Nevertheless, is not our age different from earlier centuries in apparently excluding all real hope?

One symptom among many others, which is at the same time a symbol of our age, is the phenomenon of those millions of human beings who have been driven from their homes in Europe, China, and Russia. He is a fortunate man who can still discover in his country, his ancestors, his status, his religion an authority rooted in history which allows him not only to find himself but, through this authority and beyond it, the origin of his being. But what is to be done when, as is the case to-day, ever larger numbers of men are uprooted from their soil and see the families which nurtured them broken up? Wherever they attempt to strike new roots, these are cut off again. They are pushed hither and thither; they are sure neither of themselves nor of their universe. Everything seems to shrink to the nothingness of the moment, without past or future, a disconnected present with neither prospect nor horizon. Is it still possible, in these circumstances, to speak of the historical character of humanity as a whole? of the inexhaustible source of sheltering authority? of a root whence new sap rises after one or even many branches have withered away?

For our empirical understanding, the menace to all that our occidental tradition values and cherishes is so enormous that a night of complete pessimism seems to descend on us.

Freedom and Authority

Contrasted with this pessimism we find the fanciful optimism of those who welcome destruction with shouts of joy, because they believe that total annihilation is bound to be followed by a splendid rebirth of mankind.

But these prophecies of pessimism or optimism, thus pushed to the extreme, can be refuted with the help of the knowledge at our disposal. They offend, furthermore, against the humility we ought to feel as finite beings in a world of infinite complexity, in which our task is to perceive the signs to which we may look for guidance and defer to them in our ignorance.

Instead of indulging in fits of a desperate pessimism or forced optimism we must learn to see not only the enormous danger inherent in the unsettled state of our universe but also the opportunities which are still ours. The greatest chance of salvation, the real opportunity before us, lies in man's responsibility, the responsibility of each individual person. What he is going to be rests in his own hands.

Today as always we have the task of realising the possibility with which the present is pregnant. The future, which is beyond our planning, yet is partly determined by our action today. We cannot expect that the future will mature anything, toward the realisation of which we have contributed nothing. What we neglect today is lost for ever.

There is one more task we have to perform: to remain, beyond the bounds of time and history, at every moment of our lives, truly and directly in touch with the deity through living a life of love. We must not commit ourselves entirely to history but partake of the eternity of the present through a genuine experience of the tension between freedom and authority. Even in times of decadence, such an experience is open to each one of us.