

A NEW APPROACH TO GOD¹

I F civilisation is to survive, if the emergent civilisation is to achieve the fulfilment of its potentialities, the coming age must be an age of spiritual as well as social integration.

Today the human mind is torn and divided between positivism and irrationalism. The endeavours of pragmatism succeeded in making important discoveries concerning a number of basic attitudes in thought and morality, and in what might be called the sociology of knowledge. As a universal system of knowledge and life, as a philosophy, however, pragmatism has been a failure.

What is essentially needed is a renewal of metaphysics. The conceptions of modern science—the unification of matter and energy, physical indeterminism, the notion of space-time, the new reality recognised both as to quality and duration—are invaluable means of deciphering material phenomena. A cosmos of electrons and stars in which the stars are the heavenly laboratories of elements, subjected everywhere to genesis and transmutation, a universe which is finite but whose limits cannot be attained because of the curvation of space, and which dynamically evolves in a definite direction, namely toward the highest forms of individuation and concentration and toward a simultaneous degradation of the quality of its total energy—all this is external description and scientific imagery rather than ontological insight. Such knowledge can never directly serve the purpose of any philosophical or metaphysical extrapolations. Yet all this constitutes at the same time a basic representation of the world incomparably more favourable to the edification of a philosophy of nature and more open to the deepening labour of metaphysical reason than the old Newtonian physics. The opportunity is now given for that reconciliation between science and wisdom for which the human mind thirsts. What the emergent civilisation is anticipating, nay, presenting to the world as a tangible possibility and necessity, is a rediscovery of Being, and by the same token, a rediscovery of Love.

This means axiomatically a rediscovery of God. The *existential* philosophies which are today in fashion are but a sign of a certain deep want, an inability to find again the sense of Being. This want is now unfulfilled, for these philosophies are now enslaved by irrationalism and seek for the revelation of existence, for ontological ecstasy, in the breaking of reason, in the experience of Despair and

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Nothingness, of Anguish or Absurdity. True existentialism is the work of reason. The act, by virtue of which I exist and things exist, transcends concepts and ideas; it is a mystery for the intellect. But the intellect lives on this mystery. In its most natural activity it is as ordinary, daily and vulgar as eating or drinking. The act of existing is indeed the very object of every achieved act of the intellect, that is, of judgment. It is perceived by that intellectual intuition, immersed in sense experience, which is the common treasure (all the more precious since it is natural and imbues the depths of our thought) of all our assertions, of all this mysterious activity by means of which we declare either *ita est* or *fiat!* in the face of the world or at the moment of making a decision. Now, when the intellect passes the threshold of philosophy, it does so by becoming aware of this intellectual intuition, freeing its genuine power, and making it the peculiar weapon of a knowledge whose subject matter is Being itself. I do not here refer to Platonic essences. I refer to the act of existing in so far as it establishes and centres the intelligible structure of reality, as it expands into activity in every being; and as, at its supreme plenitude, it activates and attracts to itself the entire dynamism of nature. At their ontological peak, in the transcendence of the Pure Act and the Absolute Being, reason and God are one and the same reality. In the created realm Reason confronts Being and labours to conquer it, both to transfer Being into its own immaterial life and immaterially to be or become Being. In perceiving Being Reason knows God, in an enigmatic but inescapable manner.

Yet my thesis does not deal only with philosophers and philosophy, but with the mental behaviour of the common man. Werner Sombart used to say that the 'bourgeois', the man of the 'capitalistic' era, was *neither 'ontological' nor 'erotic'*, had lost the sense of Being and the sense of Love. Torture and death have made us aware of the meaning of ontology. Hate has awakened an awareness of the meaning of *eros*. Let us emerge from sleep, cease to live in the dream or magic of images and formulas, well-systematised words, practical symbols and world-festering kabbala! Once a man is awakened to the reality of existence and the true life of Reason, to the intelligible value of Being, once he has really perceived this tremendous fact, sometimes exhilarating, sometimes disgusting and maddening in the knowledge that *I exist*, he is henceforth taken hold of by the intuition of Being and the implications it involves.

Precisely speaking, this prime intuition is both the intuition of *my* existence and of the existence of things; but first and foremost of the existence of things. When it takes place I suddenly realise

that a given entity, man, mountain or tree, exists and exercises that sovereign activity, *to be* in its own way, totally self-assertive and totally implacable, completely independent from *me*. And at the same time I realise that I also exist but as thrown back into my loneliness and frailty by such affirmation of existence in which I have positively no part, to which I am exactly as naught. So the prime intuition of Being is the intuition of the solidity and inexorability of existence; and, secondly, of the death and nothingness to which *my* existence is liable. And thirdly, in the same flash of intuition, which is but my becoming aware of the intelligible value of Being, I realise that the solid and inexorable existence perceived in anything whatsoever implies—I don't know in what way, perhaps in things themselves, perhaps separately from them—some absolute, irrefragable existence, completely free from nothingness and death. These three intellectual leaps—to actual existence as asserting itself independently from me; this sheer objective existence to my own threatened existence; and from my existence spoiled with nothingness to absolute existence—are achieved within that same and unique intuition which philosophers would explain as the intuitive perception of the essentially analogical content of the first concept, the concept of Being.

Then a quick, spontaneous reasoning, as natural as this intuition (and, as a matter of fact, more or less involved in it) immediately springs forth, as the necessary fruit of such primordial apperception and as enforced by and under its light. I see that my Being, first, is liable to death; and, second, that it depends on the totality of nature, on the universal whole whose part I am; and that Being-with-nothingness, as my own being is, implies, in order to be, Being-without-nothingness. It implies that absolute existence which I confusedly perceive as involved in my primordial intuition of existence. The universal whole, whose part I am, is Being-with-nothingness from the very fact that I am part of it; so that finally, since the universal whole does not exist by itself, there is another, separate whole, another Being, transcendent and self-sufficient and unknown in itself and activating all beings, which is Being-without-nothingness, that is, Being by itself.

Thus the inner dynamism of the intuition of existence, or of the intelligible value of Being, causes me to see that absolute existence or Being-without-nothingness transcends the totality of nature, and compels me to face the existence of God.

This is not a new approach to God. It is the eternal approach of man's reason to God. What is new is the manner in which the modern mind has become aware of the simplicity and liberating

power, the natural and somehow intuitive characteristics of this eternal approach. The science of the ancients was steeped in philosophy. Their scientific imagery was a pseudo-ontological imagery. Consequently there was a kind of *continuum* between their knowledge of the physical world and their knowledge of God. The latter appeared as the summit of the former, a summit which was to be climbed through the manifold paths of the causal connections at play in the sublunar world and the celestial spheres. The sense of Being that ruled their universal thought was for them a too usual atmosphere to be felt as a surprising gift. At the same time the natural intuition of existence was so strong in them that their proofs of God could take the form of the most conceptualised and rationalised scientific demonstrations, and be offered as an unrolling of logical necessities, without losing the inner energy of that intuition. Such logical machinery was quickened instinctively by the basic intuition of Being.

We are in a quite different position now. In order to solve the enigma of physical reality and to conquer the world of phenomena, our science has become a kind of Maya—a maya which succeeds and makes us masters of nature. But the sense of Being is absent from it. Thus when we happen to experience the impact of Being upon the mind it appears to us as a kind of intellectual revelation, and we realise clearly both its liberating and its awakening power and the fact that it involves a knowledge which is separated from that sphere of knowledge peculiar to our science. At the same time we realise that the knowledge of God, before being developed into logical and perfectly conceptualised demonstrations, is first and foremost a natural fruit of the intuition of existence, and forces itself upon our mind in the imperative virtue of this intuition.

In other words, we have become aware of the fact that human reason's approach to God, in its primordial vitality, is neither a mere intuition, which would be suprahuman, nor is it that art-like philosophical reasoning by which it is expressed in its achieved form, each step of which is pregnant with involved issues and problems. Human reason's approach to God in its primordial vitality is a *natural* reasoning, that is, intuitive-like or irresistibly vitalised by and maintained within the intellectual flash of, in the intuition of, existence. Then the intuition of existence, grasping in some existing reality Being-with-nothingness, makes the mind grasp by the same stroke the necessity of Being-without-nothingness. And nowhere is there any problem involved, because the illuminating power of this intuition takes hold of the mind and obliges it to see. Thus it naturally proceeds, in a primary intuitive flash, from imperative

certainty to imperative certainty. I believe that from Descartes to Kierkegaard, the effort of modern thought—to the extent that it has not completely repudiated metaphysics, and if it is cleansed of the irrationalism which has gradually corrupted it—tends to such an awareness of the specific *naturality* of man's knowledge of God, definitely deeper than any logical process scientifically developed. It tends to the awareness of man's knowledge of God, and of the primordial and simple intuitivity in which it originates. Availing itself of any true progress achieved by the critique of knowledge, and realising its own existential requirements, philosophy must enforce this new awareness and make clear in this way the manner in which the eternal approach of man, of the common man, to God, proceeds.

On the other hand, becoming aware of the subconscious life of the spirit, and considering not only our theoretical but also our practical approach to God, philosophy must lay stress on the following fact. When a man experiences in a primary act of freedom, the impact of the moral good and is thus awakened to moral life, and directs his life towards the good for the sake of the good, then he directs his life, even without knowing it, towards the absolute Good, and in this way knows God vitally, by virtue of the inner dynamism of his choice of the good, even if he does not know God in any conscious fashion and by means of any conceptual knowledge. Thus Conscience, with its practical intuition of the moral good, and with a practical and preconscious knowledge of the supreme existing Good, has its own approach to God, just as Reason has its own approach with its speculative intuition of existence and with the theoretical and conscious knowledge of the supreme existing Being.

Finally the rediscovery of the rule of existence not only means the rediscovery of God. It also means the rediscovery of Love. For when the intuition of Being and Existence takes place in me, it normally carries along with itself another intuition, the intuition of my own existence or my Self, the intuition of Subjectivity as subjectivity. Now Subjectivity in so far as it is subjectivity, is not an object presented to thought but rather the very well-spring of thought—a deep, unknown and living centre which superabounds in knowledge and superabounds in love, attaining only through love its supreme level of existence, existence as giving itself.

This is what I mean: Self-knowledge as a mere psychological analysis of phenomena more or less superficial, a wandering through images and memories, is but an egotistical awareness, however valuable it may be. But when it becomes ontological then Knowledge of the Self is transfigured, implying intuition of Being and the dis-

covery of the basic generosity of existence. Subjectivity, this essentially dynamic, living and open centre, both receives and gives. It receives through the intellect, by superexisting in knowledge. It gives through the will, by superexisting in love; that is, by having within itself other beings as inner attractions directed toward them and giving oneself to them, and by spiritually existing in the manner of a gift. And 'it is better to give than to receive'. The Spiritual existence of love is the supreme revelation of existence for the Self. The Self, being not only a material individual but also a spiritual personality, possesses itself and holds itself in hand in so far as it is spiritual and in so far as it is free. And to what purpose does it possess itself and dispose of itself if not for what *is better* in actual existence and absolutely speaking, or to give of itself? Thus it is that when a man has been really awakened to the sense of being or existence, and grasps intuitively the obscure, living depth of the Self and subjectivity, he discovers by the same token the basic generosity of existence and realises, by virtue of the inner dynamism of this intuition, that love is not a passing pleasure or emotion, but the very meaning of his being alive. He becomes both an 'ontological' and 'erotic' man, he is a man renewed.

And not only does he know, by virtue of his primordial intellectual grasping of existence, that God exists and is absolute Being, is self-subsisting *Esse*. He also knows that because of this very fact God is absolute ontological generosity, self-subsisting Love; and that such transcendent Love inherently causes, permeates and activates every creature, which in answer loves God more than itself. Thus love for God, the natural and universal *eros*, is the very virtue and innermost vitality in which all beings desire and love, act and strive.

II

In the preceding pages I have emphasised our new awareness of the eternal approach to God. Summing up what I have often tried to point out, I should like now to outline what may be called, properly speaking, a new approach to God, not in the field of knowledge but in the field of culture and in the historical life of man.

Every great age of culture receives its deepest meaning and direction from a particular constellation of spiritual factors or dominating ideas; let us say, from a particular historical heaven. And the most significant factor to be considered in such moving appearances of the Zodiac of history is the peculiar approach to God characterising a given period of culture. What are, from this point of view, the main characteristics of the human approach to God, or of the human attitude toward God, in the new age of civilisation that is emerging?

The Medieval Age was a humble and magnanimous period of history. I would say that at the end of the *sacral* era man experienced not humility but humiliation. Whereas new forces awakened in history, he felt distressed and crushed by the old structures of a civilisation which had considered itself as God's stronghold built up on earth. From the Renaissance on he endeavoured to become aware of and establish his own dignity by the sole effort of his own reason liberating itself both from the old structures of the world and from all sorts of disciplines and authorities which were in the name of God the keystone of these structures. He isolated himself progressively from God. God, the heavenly God of Christianity, or the immanent and evolving God of pantheism, was but the supreme assurance of his own greatness and power. He expected progress and happiness from the effort of man centred upon himself and set apart from God. He realised his dignity; he became the master of nature. But he was alone. The age was an age of anthropocentric humanism. It ended in human devastation.

If civilisation is to be saved the new age must be an age of theocentric humanism. Today human dignity is everywhere trampled down. Still more, it crumbles from within, for in the mere perspective of science and technology we are at a loss to discover the rational foundations of the dignity of the human person and to believe in it. The task of the emergent civilisation consists in re-finding and re-founding the sense of that dignity, in rehabilitating man in God and through God, not apart from God. This means a complete spiritual revolution. Then all the conquests of the preceding epoch will be both purified and saved, redeemed from the errors of this epoch and transfigured, brought to a new flowering. The age will be an age of dignification of the creature, in its living relation with the Creator, as vivified by him and as having in him the justification of its very existence, its labour on earth, its essential claims and its trend towards freedom. It will be again, at least for those capable of understanding, an age of humility and magnanimity, but with a new awareness of human potentialities and of the depth, magnitude and universality of human problems. The new approach to God will be a new approach to the true God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the true God of the Gospel, whose grace perfects nature and does not destroy it, transcending reason in order to strengthen, not to blind or annihilate it; making moral conscience progress in the course of time and leading human history, that is, the ceaseless and ceaselessly thwarted effort of mankind towards emancipation, in the direction of its supratemporal accomplishment. This new approach will proceed neither in the adoration of the creatures,

which was the foolishness of our time, nor in that bitter contempt which too many Christians mistake for the divine madness of the saints. It will manifest itself in a deeper respect for and understanding of the creature and a greater attention will be given to the discovery in man of every vestige of God.

Hence there are a number of consequences which I should like merely to enumerate. Doubtless metaphysical anguish, the great anguish of Augustine and Pascal, will always play its part in the human search for God. Yet it seems that in the present situation of mankind it is rather through the practical effort to rediscover man, through the actual experience of the basic conditions of personality, justice, freedom, respect and love for our fellow men, that we shall be led to the rediscovery of God. On the other hand, it appears that the controversial emphasis of religious thought has now shifted from humbling to promoting reason. Religious thought will have to defend itself not so much against philosophical (critical) reason, as at the time of the Enlightenment, as it will have to defend philosophical (ontological) reason against sheer irrationalism and a metaphysics of despair and also against such ultimate fruits of rationalism as old pseudo-scientific positivism and dialectical materialism. It will have to defend the existence of supernatural reality less against naturalistic exaltation than against naturalistic destruction of nature. In the structure of human knowledge theology occupies and will always occupy the highest position. Yet with regard to the role played by it, in fact, in the inner stimulations of culture, it is through Christian philosophy, in addition to the irrefragable ontological truth promulgated by every great religion, that the new civilisation will be spurred, at least to the extent that it will be inspired by the spirit of Truth. The momentous question will be more than ever: What is man? I mean not only essentially, but existentially. In the very perspective of religious thought there must be developed a philosophical ethics, as distinguished from moral theology, and as encompassing anthropology as well as sociology. The notion of natural law, cleansed of the spurious interpretations that preyed upon it, will be re-examined and restored. Whereas for centuries the most crucial issues for religious thought were the great theological controversies centred on the dogmas of faith, these most crucial issues will now deal with political theology and political philosophy. Yet, since the preaching of the gospel, what has had, in the supreme regions of knowledge, and will always have, a characteristic and all-pervading significance for a given period of civilisation is the peculiar way in which the mind is able to grasp the mystery of human freedom and divine grace. I think that the emergent civilis-

ation will not fail to have its say in the matter. At the same time the reverse of the mystery, which displays the power of refusal and nothingness, the problem of evil, will be scrutinised anew in its metaphysical and psychological recesses and implications.

Finally we are searching for the deepest characterisation, from the spiritual point of view, of the new age we are considering. It is necessary to make clear that the spiritual dynamism at work in human culture implies a twofold movement. First, there is the movement of descent, the movement by which the divine plenitude, the prime source of existence, descends into human reality to permeate and vivify it. For God infuses in every creature goodness and lovability together with being and has the *first* initiative in every good activity. Then there is the movement of ascent, which is the answer of man, by which human reality takes the *second* initiative, activates itself toward the unfolding of its energies and toward God. From the point of view of the Absolute, the first movement is obviously what matters most; to receive from God is of greater moment for man than to give to God, and man can only give what he has received.

Thus we shall observe that the great error of modern times, from the Renaissance on, has been to believe that the second movement matters more than the first, or to expect from man the *first* initiative; let us say to forget that the word of God precedes man's answer, and perversely to consider the answer to be the first utterance.

And we shall conclude that the emergent civilisation will realise again that the descent of divine plenitude into man matters more than the ascent of man toward self-perfection. In this new age the movement by which the human being answers God's movement of effusion will not take place, as in the Middle Ages, in a child-like, ignorant-of-itself humanity. Its new simplicity will be a mature and experienced, self-awakened simplicity enlightened by what might be called a free and evangelical introspection.

Such will be the new approach to God peculiar to this age, the age of the spiritual revolution. Man will understand that he ascends toward his own fullness and toward God all the better because he himself espouses the movement of descent of the uncreated Love and in doing so reveals all that he is and possesses. He will understand that he must edify himself in order to receive such an effusion. Gospel generosity, by accustoming human life to the divine ways, appears at the same time as a manifestation of the 'philanthropy of God', as St Paul puts it, and corresponds to that rehabilitation and dignification of the creature in God of which I spoke above. Man will find anew his internal unity by definitely preferring the

evangelical loss of himself which is produced by love—that readiness to give everything, the mantle and the tunic and the skin—to the rationalist self-achievement which is the conquest of illusion and delusion, and to the irrationalist self-achievement which is dissolution in the sea of despair and absurdity.

III

The dialectics of anthropocentric humanism developed within three centuries. Man's approach to God changed accordingly. For the notion of God—to the extent that it ceases to be encompassed and kept pure by revelation—is linked to culture and its fate is conformable to that of culture. At the first moment of humanistic dialectics, God, as we noted above, became the assurance of man's domination over matter. He was a transcendent God, but closed up in his transcendence and forbidden to interfere in human affairs. He became a decorative God, the God of the classical bourgeois world. At the second moment, with romanticist philosophy and the great idealist metaphysicians, God became an idea. He was an immanent God, engulfed in the dialectical progress of the self-asserting Idea and the evolving world. This God of pantheism and of the romanticist bourgeois world was but the ideal borderline of the development of mankind. This God was also the absolute, basic and unbending justification of good and evil, of all crimes, oppressions, iniquities as well as of conquests and the money-making progress of history.

At a third moment, Feuerbach was to discover that God—such a God—alienates man from himself. Marx was to declare that he is but an ideological mirror of the alienation of man accomplished by private property. And Nietzsche was exhilarated by the mission with which he felt himself endowed, namely to proclaim the death of God. How could God still live in a world from which his image, that is, the free and spiritual personality of man, seems definitely destined to vanish away? God as dead, God in the grave, was the God of the final agony and self-destruction of an age of civilisation which is now at its end. Atheism is the final end of the inner dialectics of anthropocentric humanism.

Thus we are confronted with the problem of atheism, the significance of which for culture and for the emergent civilisation must be scrutinised. There are many kinds of atheism. There are pseudo atheists who believe that they do not believe in God and who in reality unconsciously believe in him, because the God whose existence they deny is not God but something else. There are practical atheists who believe that they believe in God but who in reality deny his existence by each one of their deeds. Out of the living God

they have made an idol. There are absolute atheists who actually deny the existence of the very God in whom the believers believe and who are bound to change their entire scale of values and to destroy in themselves everything that connotes his name.

Practical atheism does not pose any special problem for the philosopher except the problem of the possibility of cleavage between the intellect and the will, theoretical belief and actual behaviour, or in theological terms, between faith (dead faith) and charity. Dead faith is faith without love. The practical atheist accepts the fact that God exists—and forgets it on all occasions. His case is a case of voluntary, stubborn forgetting.

Quite different is the case of the absolute atheist. He does not forget God, he steadily thinks of him—in order to free himself from him. When he has acquired the intellectual persuasion that God does not exist his task and endeavour is not finished; this very negation delivers him over to an inner dialectic which obliges him ceaselessly to destroy any resurgence in himself of what he has buried. For in denying God he has explicitly denied Transcendence. But in actual fact the good which everyone desires, even without knowing it, is finally self-subsisting Good; and thus, in actual fact, the dynamism of human life, because it tends toward good and happiness, even if their true countenance is not recognised, tends implicitly towards Transcendence. Doubtless the absolute atheist may ascribe to superstition or human stupidity or human 'alienation' every vestige or trace of Transcendence he contemplates in the common behaviour and beliefs, individual or social life, of men. Yet within himself is the real drama. In proportion as the dialectic of atheism develops in his mind—each time he is confronted with the natural notion of and natural tendency to an ultimate End, or with the natural notion of and natural attention to absolute values or unconditioned standards, or with any metaphysical anxiety—he will discover in himself vestiges of Transcendence which have not yet been abolished. He must get rid of them. God is a perpetual threat to him. His case is not a case of practical forgetting, but a case of deeper and deeper commitment to refusal and fight.

What is the meaning of this absolute atheism? It is in no way a mere absence of belief in God. It is rather a refusal of God, a fight against God, a challenge to God. And when it achieves victory it innerly changes man, it gives man a kind of stolid solidity, as if the spirit of man had been stuffed with dead substance, and his organic tissues turned into stone. Atheism begins with a kind of new start in moral activity, a determination to confront good and evil in an absolutely free experience by casting aside any ultimate end—a

determination which is mistaken for moral maturity and boils down in reality to the complete giving of self to some human, concrete 'Great Being'. For Auguste Comte it was Mankind: for others a Work to be done or a Party to serve. At the same time the relation to the absolute Good which the moral good essentially implies is abolished, and as a result the very nature of the moral good vanishes away. In the true atheist, duty or virtue necessarily become a requirement of his own perfection accepted as a supreme cult, or as a hopeless rite of his own greatness, or as an attribute of his deified will. The thunderlike appearance of absolute atheism in human history has been the conclusion of a progressive degradation of the idea of God and has meant the beginning of a new age in which the process of death and the process of resurrection will develop together, confronting each other and struggling with each other.

With regard to culture, atheism is a mirror, a true and faithful mirror, of the state to which the human being has been reduced. For man being the image of God, he naturally thinks of him according to the state in which the image presents itself at a given moment of culture. Absolute atheism means that the personality of man is definitely endangered; and that all the masks, the words, the façades, the palliatives, the plasters and cosmetics with which human conscience tries to deceive itself and to give us the appearance of man are henceforth useless and will be cast away. Picasso's art in its present character is the true art of atheism; I mean of that thorough defacement of contemporary man, which is mirrored in atheism. We are no more persons than the distorted, imbecile faces of those ferocious females. We no longer possess true, human faces.

Absolute atheism is also a translation into crude and inescapable terms, a ruthless counterpart, an avenging mirror, of the practical atheism of too many believers who do not actually believe—Christians who keep in their minds the stage-set of religion, especially because of the class or family advantages that religion seems to them to protect. But they deny the gospel and despise the poor. They pass through the tragedy of their time only with resentment for the loss of their social and political privileges and fear for their own prestige or possessions. They contemplate without flinching every kind of injustice or atrocity if it does not threaten their own way of life. They scorn their neighbour, scorn the Jew, scorn the negro, scorn their own nation if it ceases to be the 'good nation' of their old dreams, worship force and brand as 'subhuman' the peoples, races or classes they fear or do not understand. They have a clear conscience and live and act as if God did not exist. Such men and women invoke the name of God and do not really believe in

him. They live on empty formulas and stereotyped phrases, on mental clichés. They cherish every kind of sham that will soothe and deceive them. They await the deceivers. They are famished for deception.

In their own existence absolute atheists have dehumanised life and the claims of the soul. They have replaced human receptivity to transcendence and the vital, unsatisfied needs of personality by the cosmic dynamism of nature. They present the appearance of corpses. In some of them, moreover, the process of death is not achieved; there still remains a hidden germ of life, a living thirst. And this subsisting germ, thwarted, denuded, stripped of every rational support, becomes all the more genuine and alive as it resists the destruction and havoc which atheism has brought on all sides into the spiritual substance of man. Such atheists, if they receive the grace of faith, will become men for whom nothing is of account except God and the gospel. For them atheism has been a sort of hellish purification.

Practical atheists also have dehumanised life and the claims of the soul in their own existence. They nurture nothingness. But they have the appearance and colours of life although they are dead within. They are whited sepulchres. They are perfumed with all the fragrance of self-righteousness; there is no substance in them. It would be too optimistic to pretend that their time has passed. Yet it seems probable that they will be of no use in the new age of civilisation, in the emergent civilisation of revolution and change that is already upon us.

Atheists and believers will live together in this new age. They will walk a long way, each asserting his own position against the other, each endeavouring to have the human mind and civilisation inspired by his respective philosophy. Under penalty of spiritual death civilisation will have to overcome atheism and free itself of its inspiration. This cannot be done by machine guns, police forces and dictators. If it is true that absolute atheism is primarily the fruit and condemnation of practical atheism and is its reflected image in the mirror of divine wrath, then it must be said that the only way of getting rid of absolute atheism is to get rid of practical atheism. Decorative Christianity is nowadays not enough. Living Christianity is necessary to the world. Faith must be actual, practical, existential faith. To believe in God must mean to live in such a manner that life cannot be lived if God does not exist. Gospel justice, gospel attentiveness to everything human must inspire not only the deeds of the saints, but the structures and institutions of

common life, must penetrate to the depths of social, terrestrial existence.

This is not possible, even in the imperfect ways of humanity and among the hard conflicts of the coming age, if in those who believe in God the true sources are not alive, and if the life they must give to the world does not flow down into them from the heights of God-given wisdom. A great deal of wisdom, a great deal of contemplation will be required in order to render the immense technological developments of the emergent civilisation truly human and liberating. At this point one should recall Henri Bergson's observations on the mutual need which 'mystics' and 'mechanics' have of each other, and on the *supplément d'âme* that must vivify the body, now become too large, of our civilisation. Contemplative life, perhaps in new forms, and made available not only to the chosen few but to the common man if he actually believes in God, will be the prerequisite of that very activity which tries to spread the gospel leaven all over the world.

As I have endeavoured to emphasise for many years, the deepest requirement of a new age of civilisation will be the sanctification of the secular life. For pagan antiquity, *holy* was synonymous with *sacred*; that is, with what had been set apart to be physically, visibly, socially at the service of God. And it was only to the extent that sacred rites and symbols ruled human life that the latter could externally please God. The gospel has deeply changed all that by interiorising moral life and the sanctity in the hearts of men, in the secret of the invisible relations between the Divine Personality and the human personality.

Henceforth what is secular or 'profane' is not to be distinguished from what is sacred in the sense that what is impure is differentiated from what is pure; but rather as a certain order of human activity, the aim of which is temporal, is distinguished from another order of human activity which is socially constituted to assure spiritual aims by preaching the Word of God and ministering to the soul. And both, the one involved in the secular or temporal order and the other involved in the sacred order, must tend to the perfection of human life; that is, to inner sanctity.

Now it can be observed that this evangelical principle has been progressively realised and manifested in human conscience and behaviour, but that its process of spiritual development is far from being achieved on earth.

In these perspectives we may understand that a new 'style' of sanctity, a new step in the sanctification of secular life, will be demanded by the new age. Not only will the spirit of Christ spread

into secular life, seek for witnesses among those who labour in yards and factories, in social work, politics or poetry, as well as among monks dedicated to the search for perfection; but a kind of divine simplification will help people to realise that the perfection of human life does not consist in a stoical athleticism of virtue nor in a bookish and humanly calculated application of holy recipes, but rather in a ceaselessly increasing love, despite our mistakes and weaknesses, between the Uncreated Self and the created Self. There will be a growing consciousness that everything depends on that descent of the divine plenitude into the human being of which I spoke above, and which performs in man death and resurrection. There will be a growing consciousness that man's sanctification has its touchstone in neighbourly love, requiring him to be always ready to give what he has, especially himself, and finally to die in some manner for those he loves.

JACQUES MARITAIN

THE CROSS OF GOLD

THIS little book¹ is introduced by a quotation from William Jennings Bryan attacking the Gold Standard but it turns out to be a plea for a restoration of a gold currency as the only kind of currency likely to maintain its value. Money is generally defined as anything—from cowrie shells to cigarettes—which is generally acceptable in settlement of debt and is not consumed but used as a medium of exchange and standard of value. The fact that gold has been used as money for thousands of years suggests that there is much to be said for its use; it is homogeneous, portable and, above all, though it may vary in value is not likely to vary very much or become valueless because the supply is limited. Paper money, on the other hand, is liable to be issued in excessive quantities, as happened in Germany after the Great War and in China, Hungary and other countries after the second world war, and to lose its value practically altogether. Even the pound, in spite of price subsidies, blocked sterling and other devices, is worth less than half what it was worth in 1930 and is likely to be worth still less, especially if people expect its value to decline further instead of recovering. The best way to maintain the value of the pound, says Mr Pepler, is to restore a gold currency; and he reinforces his argument about the solidity and intrinsic value

¹ *The Cross of Gold*. By H. D. C. Pepler. (Distributist Books; 1s.)