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A Material Civilization*

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From all that has been said so far it already seems to follow clearly that those Orientals who reproach modern Western civilization with being a purely material one are fully justified; it is certainly in this direction exclusively that its development has taken place, and from whatever point of view one may look at it, one is always faced with the more or less direct consequences of this materialization. Nevertheless, there still remains something to add to what we have said on the subject and in the first place it is necessary to explain the different ways in which a word like "materialism" can be understood: if we use it to describe the contemporary world, various people, who do not believe themselves to be materialists at all while at the same time claiming to be modern in their outlook, will not fail to protest in the belief that this is sheer calumny; some further explanation therefore is required in order to forestall any ambiguity which might arise on the subject.

It is a significant fact that the word "materialism" itself dates back only as far as the eighteenth century; it was invented by the philosopher Berkeley, who used it to denote any theory admitting the real existence of matter; it is hardly necessary to say that it is not this use of the word which concerns us here, the question of the existence of matter not being in dispute. Soon afterwards the same word took on a more restricted meaning, which it has retained ever since: it came to denote a conception according to which nothing exists at all except matter and its derivatives; and it is important to emphasize the novelty of such a conception and the fact that it is essentially a product of the modern outlook, corresponding therefore at least to a part of its inherent tendencies.[1] But it is above all

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[1] Prior to the eighteenth century there were "mechanistic" theories, from Greek atomism down to Cartesian physics, but mechanism should not be confused with materialism, despite certain affinities which may have subsequently brought about a kind of fellowship between them [Editor's Note: A footnote included in the Arthur Osborne translation, but not present in the Marco Pallis translation].

in a different and much wider, though at the same time quite definite sense that we propose to speak of "materialism" in the present chapter; the word is here taken as referring to an entire mental outlook, of which the conception we have just described amounts to no more than one manifestation among many others, being in itself independent of any philosophical theory. This mental outlook is one which consists in more or less consciously giving preponderance to things belonging to the material order and to preoccupations relating thereto, whether these preoccupations still retain a certain speculative appearance or whether they remain purely practical ones; and it cannot be seriously denied that this is, in fact, the mental attitude of the great majority of our contemporaries.

The whole of the "profane" science which has been developed during the course of recent centuries is confined to the study of the sensible world: its horizon is bounded exclusively by that world and its methods apply within that sphere only; but these methods have been proclaimed "scientific" to the exclusion of all others, an attitude which amounts to repudiating the existence of any science not dealing with material things. Among those who think thus, and even among those who have devoted their lives especially to the sciences in question, there are however many who would refuse to call themselves "materialists" or to accept the philosophical theory which bears that name; there are even some who readily profess a religious faith, the sincerity of which is beyond question; yet their scientific outlook does not differ appreciably from that of avowed materialists. From the religious point of view it has often been debated whether modern science ought to be denounced as atheistical or as materialistic, but this question, more often than not, has been wrongly framed; it is quite apparent that such a science does not deliberately profess either atheism or materialism, and that it is content to ignore certain things as a result of its preconceptions, though without formally denying them as this or that philosopher might do; in connection with modern science, therefore, one can only speak of a *de facto* materialism, or of what we would willingly term a practical materialism; but the evil is then perhaps all the more serious in that it penetrates deeper and is more widely diffused.

A philosophical attitude can be something quite superficial, even among "professional" philosophers; furthermore, there are certain mentalities which shrink from an actual negation, but which

can accommodate themselves to an attitude of complete indifference; and this is the most dangerous attitude of all, since in order to deny something it is still necessary to think about it to some extent, however slightly, whereas an attitude of indifference makes it possible to avoid giving any thought to it whatsoever. When an exclusively material science sets itself up as the only possible science and when men have got into the habit of accepting as an unquestionable truth the doctrine that no valid knowledge can exist apart from it, and when all the education which is imparted to them tends to inculcate the "superstition" of that science (or "scientism" as it should then be termed), how can such men fail to be anything but materialists in practice, or in other words, how can they fail to have all their preoccupations turned in the direction of matter?

It seems that nothing exists for modern man other than what can be seen and touched; or at least, even if they admit theoretically that something else may exist they hasten to declare it not merely unknown but "unknowable," which absolves them from having to give it further thought. If nevertheless some persons still are to be found who try to form some kind of idea of an "other world," relying as they do on nothing but their imagination they picture it in the likeness of the terrestrial world and transfer to it all the conditions belonging to that world, including space and time and even a sort of "corporeality"; in speaking elsewhere of spiritualistic conceptions we have given some very striking examples of this kind of grossly materialized representation; but if the beliefs there referred to represent an extreme case in which this particular feature is exaggerated to the point of caricature, it would be a mistake to suppose that spiritualism and the sects more or less akin to it retain the monopoly of this kind of thing. Indeed, in a more general way, the intrusion of the imagination into realms where it can yield no useful results, and which ought normally to remain closed to it, is a fact which in itself shows very clearly how incapable modern Westerners have become of raising themselves above the realm of the senses; there are many who do not know how to distinguish between "conceiving" and "imagining," and some philosophers, such as Kant, go so far as to declare "inconceivable" and "unthinkable" everything that is not capable of representation. In the same way everything that goes by the name of "spiritualism" or "idealism" usually amounts to no more than a sort of transposed materialism; this applies not only to what we have described as "neo-spiritualism," but

also to philosophical spiritualism, although the latter considers itself to be the very opposite of materialism. The fact is that spiritualism and materialism, in the philosophical sense of these expressions, have no significance apart from one another: they are simply two halves of the Cartesian dualism, whose radical separation has been turned into a kind of antagonism; and, since then, the whole of philosophy has oscillated between these two terms without being able to pass beyond them. Spiritualism, in spite of its name, has nothing to do with spirituality; its conflict with materialism can be of no interest to those who place themselves at a higher standpoint and who see that these opposites are fundamentally very near to being equivalent, their supposed opposition reducing itself, on many points, to a merely verbal disagreement.

The moderns, generally speaking, cannot conceive of any other science except that which deals with things that can be measured, counted, or weighed, material things that is to say, since it is to these alone that the quantitative point of view is applicable; and the claim to reduce quality to quantity is most characteristic of modern science. In this direction the stage has been reached even of supposing that there can be no science at all, in the real sense of the word, except where it is possible to introduce measurement, and that there can be no scientific laws except those which express quantitative relations; Descartes' "mechanism" marked the birth of this tendency, which has grown more and more pronounced ever since, the rejection of Cartesian physics notwithstanding, for it is not a tendency connected with any particular theory but with an altogether general conception of scientific knowledge. Nowadays people try to apply measurement even in the field of psychology, which lies beyond its reach from its very nature; they end by ceasing to understand that the possibility of measurement rests solely upon a property inherent in matter, namely its indefinite divisibility, unless indeed it be supposed that the same property is to be found in everything that exists, which amounts to materializing everything. As we have already remarked, it is matter which is the principle of division and pure multiplicity; the predominance attributed to the quantitative point of view, and extended, as we have already shown, to the social domain, does therefore indeed constitute materialism in the sense mentioned above, although it need not necessarily be connected with philosophical materialism, which, as a matter of fact, it preceded historically in the course of development of the

tendencies inherent in the modern outlook. We will not dwell upon the error of seeking to reduce quality to quantity or upon the inadequacy of all those attempts at explanation conforming more or less to the mechanistic type; that is not our present purpose and we will only remark, in this connection, that even within the sensible order a science of this type has but little connection with reality, of which the greater part must necessarily lie outside its scope.

While speaking of "reality" another fact should be mentioned, which might easily be overlooked by many, but which is very significant as a sign of the mentality we are describing: we refer to the habit of using the word "reality" exclusively to denote reality belonging to the sensible order. As language is the expression of the mentality of a people or of a period, one must conclude from this that for those who speak in this manner everything that cannot be grasped by the senses is illusory and even totally non-existent; it is possible that they are not fully conscious of the fact, but this negative conviction is none the less the underlying one, and if they assert the contrary one may be sure that this assertion is only the expression of some much more superficial element in their mentality, although they happen not to be conscious of the fact, and that their protest may even be a purely verbal one. If this should seem to be an exaggeration one has only to try and ascertain, for example, what the supposed religious convictions of a great many people amount to; a few notions learnt by heart in a purely academic and mechanical way without any real assimilation, notions to which they have never given any serious consideration, but which they retain in their memory and repeat on occasion because they form part of a certain formal and conventional attitude, which is all they are able to understand by the word religion. We have already referred to this "minimizing" of religion, of which the "verbalism" we mentioned represents one of the latest phases: it is this which explains why many so-called "believers" in no wise fall short of the "unbelievers" in the matter of practical materialism; we shall return to this question later, but first we must conclude our investigation of the materialistic nature of modern science, since this is a subject that requires to be treated from various angles.

Attention must once again be drawn to a point that has been mentioned earlier; the modern sciences do not possess the character of disinterested knowledge, nor does their speculative value, even for those who believe in it, amount to much more than a mask

behind which purely practical considerations lie concealed, one which makes it possible nevertheless to retain the illusion of a false intellectuality. Descartes himself, in working out his physics, was already primarily concerned with extracting from it a system of mechanics, medicine, and morality, and a still greater change came with the spread of the Anglo-Saxon empiricism; moreover, the prestige of science in the eyes of the general public rests almost solely upon the practical results it makes attainable because, here again, it is a question of things that can be seen and touched. We have said that pragmatism represents the final outcome of all the modern philosophy and marks the lowest stage in its decline; but outside the philosophical field there also exists, and has already existed for a long time, a diffused and unsystematized pragmatism which is to philosophical pragmatism what practical materialism is to philosophical materialism, and which merges into what people generally call "common sense." This almost instinctive utilitarianism is inseparable, moreover, from the materialistic tendency: common sense consists in not venturing beyond the terrestrial horizon, as well as in not paying attention to anything devoid of an immediate practical interest; it is "common sense," above all, that regards the world of the senses as alone being real and admits of no knowledge beyond what proceeds from the senses; and even this limited degree of knowledge is of value in its eyes only in so far as it allows of satisfying material needs and also sometimes because it feeds a certain kind of sentimentalism, since sentiment, as must be frankly admitted at the risk of shocking contemporary "moralism," really is very closely related to matter. No room is left in all this for intelligence, except in so far as it may consent to be put to the service of practical ends, acting as a mere instrument subordinated to the requirements of the lowest or corporeal portion of the human individual, "a tool for making tools," to quote a significant expression of Bergson's: "pragmatism" in all its forms amounts to a complete indifference to truth.

Under these conditions industry can no longer by considered simply as an application of science, one of which science in itself ought to remain completely independent; it becomes the very object and justification of science, so that in this realm also we find that the normal relations have been reversed. What the modern world has devoted its entire energy to bringing about, even when it has claimed to be pursuing science in its own way, is really nothing

but the development of industry and machinery; and in thus seeking to dominate matter and to mold it to their purposes, men have only succeeded, as we said at the beginning, in turning themselves into its slaves; for not only have they restricted their intellectual ambitions—if it is permissible to use such an expression in this instance—to the invention and construction of machines, but they have also ended by turning into mere machines themselves. Indeed "specialization," so enthusiastically advocated by certain sociologists under the name of a "division of labor," has imposed itself not only upon scholars but also upon technicians and even ordinary laborers, and for the latter all intelligent work has thereby been rendered impossible; very different from the craftsmen of former times, they have become no more than servants of machines, forming as it were a single unit with them; in a purely mechanical way they are obliged to repeat continually certain prescribed movements, which never vary and are always performed in the same way, so as to avoid the slightest loss of time; at least such are the requirements of those American methods which are considered to represent the most advanced stage of "progress." The fact is that it is solely a question of producing the greatest possible quantity; quality receives scant attention and it is quantity alone that counts; we are brought back once more to the same conclusion that we had already reached in other fields: modern civilization can justly be described as a quantitative civilization, which is only another way of saying that it is a material civilization.

To convince oneself more completely of the truth of this statement one has only to notice the tremendous influence exerted nowadays by economic factors alike on the lives of peoples and of individuals; industry, commerce, finance, these seem to be the only things that count; and this agrees with what we have already remarked elsewhere about the only surviving social distinctions being based upon material wealth. Politics appear to be altogether dominated by economics and commercial competition exercises a preponderant influence upon the relations between peoples; it may be that this is only so in appearance and that these factors are not so much causes as means of action; but the selection of such means clearly indicates the nature of the age which finds them opportune.

Moreover, our contemporaries are convinced that it is economic conditions that dictate historical events almost exclusively, and they even imagine that this has always been the case; a theory has

even been invented according to which everything is explainable in terms of economic factors alone, and it bears the significant name of "historical materialism." Here also may be seen the effect of one of those processes of suggestion to which we have already referred, the power of which is all the greater in that they correspond with the tendencies of the general mentality; and the result in this case is that economic factors have really come to decide almost everything that occurs in the social sphere. It is doubtless true that the masses have always been led in one way or another, and it could be said that their part in history consists primarily in allowing themselves to be led, since they represent a predominantly passive element, a *materia* in the Aristotelian sense of the word; but in order to lead them today it is sufficient to possess oneself of purely material means, taking the word matter this time in its ordinary sense, and this clearly shows to what depths the present age has sunk; and at the same time these same masses are made to believe that they are not being led, but that they are acting spontaneously and governing themselves, and the fact that they believe this to be true gives an idea of the extent of their unintelligence.

As economic factors have been mentioned, we will take the opportunity to draw attention to an all too common illusion on the subject, which consists in imagining that relations established in the field of trade can serve to draw people closer together and bring about an understanding between them, whereas in reality the effect is just the contrary. Matter, as we have often pointed out, partakes essentially of the nature of multiplicity and division, and is therefore a source of struggle and conflict; similarly, whether it be a case of peoples or of individuals, the economic sphere remains and cannot but remain one of a rivalry of interests. In particular the West cannot count upon industry, any more than upon modern science which is inseparable from it, to supply a basis for an understanding with the East; if Orientals get to the point of accepting this industry as a troublesome, though transitory, necessity—and for them it could hardly amount to more than that—it will only be as a weapon enabling them to resist the invasion of the West and to safeguard their own existence. It is important to understand that things could not well be otherwise: those Orientals who resign themselves to the prospect of economic competition with the West, in spite of the repugnance they feel for this kind of activity, can only do so with one purpose in mind, namely to rid themselves of a foreign domi-

nation based on brute force, on the material power, that is to say, which industry places at its disposal; violence calls forth violence, but it should be recognized that it is not the Orientals who have solicited conflict in this field.

Furthermore, apart from the question of relations between East and West, it is easy to see that one of the most conspicuous results of industrial development is the continual perfecting of engines of war and the formidable increase in their powers of destruction. This alone should be enough to shatter the pacifist dreams of certain admirers of modern "progress"; but these dreamers and "idealists" are incorrigible and their credulity seems to know no bounds. Certainly the "humanitarianism" at present so much in vogue does not deserve to be taken seriously; but it is strange that people should talk so much about putting an end to war at a time when the ravages it causes are greater than they have ever been before, not only because the means of destruction have been multiplied, but also because, since wars are no longer fought between comparatively small armies composed entirely of professional soldiers, all the individuals on both sides are flung against each other indiscriminately, including those who are least qualified to carry out this kind of function. Here again is a typical example of present-day confusion, and it is truly amazing, for anyone who cares to think about it, that a "mass call-up" or "general mobilization" should have come to be considered quite a natural thing and that, with very few exceptions, the minds of all should have accepted the idea of an "armed nation." In this also one can see a result of the belief in the power of numbers alone: it is in keeping with the quantitative character of modern civilization to set in motion enormous masses of combatants; and at the same time in this way the demands of "equalitarianism" are satisfied as well as by means of such institutions as "compulsory education." Let it be added that these generalized wars have only been made possible by the arising of another specifically modern phenomenon, that is to say by the formation of "nations," a consequence, on the one hand, of the destruction of the feudal system, and, on the other, of the simultaneous disruption of the higher unity of medieval Christendom; and, without pausing to consider a subject that would carry us too far afield, let it be pointed out that matters have been made still worse, by the refusal to recognize any spiritual authority, which, under normal conditions, should be an effective arbiter, occupying a position, as it must do of its very nature, above all the conflicts pertaining to the politi-

cal order. Repudiation of the spiritual authority is in its way also an example of practical materialism; and even those people who in theory claim to recognize such an authority, refuse in practice to allow it any real influence or any power of intervention in the social sphere, exactly in the same way that they fence off religion from the concerns of their everyday existence; whether in public or in private life, it is the same mental attitude that prevails.

Even admitting that material development offers certain advantages, though only from a very relative standpoint, it may well be asked whether, in view of such consequences as we have just been describing, those advantages are not heavily outweighed by other disadvantages. We are not thinking of the many things of incomparably greater worth that have been sacrificed for the sake of this one type of development, of the higher forms of knowledge that have been forgotten, of the intellectuality that has been destroyed and the spirituality that has disappeared; simply taking modern civilization for what it is in itself it can well be maintained that, if the advantages and disadvantages of what has been brought about were to be compared, the result might even so, on balance, prove to be a negative one. Inventions, which at present go on being multiplied with ever-increasing momentum, are all the more dangerous because they call into play forces the real nature of which is completely unknown to the very people that make use of them; and this demonstrates conclusively the worthlessness of modern science from the explanatory point of view, as knowledge that is to say, even when limited to the physical sphere: at the same time the fact that these considerations in no wise cause practical applications to be restrained proves that this science is far from being disinterested and that it is industry which is the only real object of its researches. As the danger of these inventions—even of those not purposely designed to play a fatal part where mankind is concerned, and which nevertheless cause so many catastrophes, not to mention unsuspected disturbances in the terrestrial environment—as this danger, we say, will no doubt continue to grow to an extent that is difficult to foretell, it is permissible to suppose, without too much improbability, that it is perhaps by this means that the modern world will succeed in bringing about its own destruction, unless it can check its present breakneck course while there is yet time.

As far as modern inventions are concerned, however, it is not enough to criticize them on the grounds that they are dangerous, and we must go further than that; people speak of the "benefits" of

what they have become accustomed to call "progress," and which one might agree to describe thus so long as care is taken to point out clearly that the progress is of a purely material kind; but are not these so highly esteemed "benefits" largely deceptive? Today men claim that they are increasing their "welfare" by this means; in our belief this goal which they are aiming at, even if it actually were to be attained, is not worth the expenditure of so great an effort; but, at the same time, it seems extremely debatable whether it is being attained. In the first place, the fact should be taken into account that not all men have the same tastes or the same needs and that there are still some who, in spite of everything, might wish to avoid the modern restlessness and mania for speed, but who are no longer in a position to do so; can anyone presume to maintain that it is a "benefit" to these people to have imposed upon them what is so entirely contrary to their own nature? The answer will be given that such people are few in number nowadays, and therefore that there is every justification for regarding them as a negligible minority, just as also in the field of politics the majority arrogates to itself the right to crush minorities, which, in its eyes, have evidently no right to exist, since their very existence runs counter to the "equalitarian" passion for uniformity. But, if one takes mankind in its entirety instead of limiting one's view to the inhabitants of the Western world, the question assumes a different aspect; has not the majority of a moment ago now become a minority? But it is no longer the same argument which is made to serve in this case and, by a peculiar contradiction, it is in the name of their "superiority" that the "equalitarians" seek to impose their own civilization on the rest of the world, and to cause trouble among people who have never asked them for anything; and as this "superiority" exists solely in a material sense it is only natural that it should be imposed by the crudest means. Let there be no mistake about it: if the general public accepts the pretext of "civilization" in all good faith, there are some for whom it amounts to no more than mere moralist hypocrisy, a cloak for their designs of conquest and economic ambition; but what strange times indeed, when so many men allow themselves to be persuaded that they are making a people happy by reducing them to subjection, by robbing them of what is most precious in their eyes, namely their own civilization, by compelling them to adopt customs and institutions which were intended for another race, and by coercing them into assuming the most dis-

tasteful occupations in order that they may perforce come to acquire things for which they have not the slightest use! That however is the position today: the modern West cannot tolerate the idea that men should prefer to work less and be content to live on little; as quantity alone counts, and as everything that eludes the grasp of the senses is held moreover to be nonexistent, it is taken for granted that anyone not producing material things must be an "idler"; without even taking into account the criticism commonly leveled at the Orientals on this score, one has only to observe the attitude adopted by Europeans towards their own contemplative orders, even in supposedly religious circles. In such a world there is no longer any room for intellectuality or for what is of a purely inward nature, for those are things which can neither be seen nor touched, weighed nor counted; there is only room for outward action in all its forms, including those most completely devoid of meaning. Furthermore it is not surprising that the Anglo-Saxon passion for "sport" gains more and more ground every day; the ideal of the modern world is the "human animal" who has developed his muscular strength to the utmost; its heroes are the athletes, should they even be brutes; it is they who awaken the popular enthusiasm and it is their exploits that command the passionate interest of the crowd; a world in which such things are possible has indeed sunk low and would seem to be nearing its end.

However, let us put ourselves for a moment in the position of those who pin their hopes to the ideal of material welfare and who therefore rejoice at all the improvements to life furnished by modern "progress"; are they quite sure that they are not being made dupes? Is it true that men are happier today than they used to be simply because they command swifter means of transport and other things of that kind, or because of their more agitated and complicated mode of life? The truth would appear to be quite the contrary; disequilibrium cannot be the condition of any real happiness; moreover, the more needs a man has the greater likelihood there is of his lacking something, and consequently of his being unhappy; modern civilization aims at creating ever greater and greater artificial needs, and, as we have already remarked, it will always create more needs than it can satisfy, because, once launched upon such a course, it becomes exceedingly difficult to pull up, and, indeed, there is no reason for pulling up at one stage rather than at another. It was no hardship for people to do without things that did not

exist and which they could never have even dreamed of; now, on the contrary, they are bound to suffer when deprived of those things, since they have grown accustomed to regarding them as necessities, with the result that they have in fact really become necessary to them. Consequently, with all the power at their disposal, they struggle to acquire whatever can procure them material satisfactions, the only kind they are capable of appreciating; they become absorbed in "making money," because it is money which enables them to obtain these things, and the more they possess the more they desire because they are continually discovering fresh needs, until this pursuit becomes their only aim in life. Hence that ferocious competition which certain "evolutionists" have raised to the dignity of a scientific law under the name of the "struggle for existence," the logical result of which is that only the strongest, in the most narrowly material sense of the word, have a right to exist. Hence also the envy and even hatred with which those possessed of wealth are regarded by those who are not so endowed; how could men to whom equalitarian theories have been preached fail to react when all around they see inequality in the most material order of things, the order to which they are bound to be most sensitive? If modern civilization is destined to collapse some day under the pressure of the disorderly appetites it has aroused in the masses, one would have to be blind indeed not to perceive therein the just punishment of its fundamental vice, or, to express oneself without recourse to moral phraseology, the repercussion of its own action in that same sphere in which it was exercised. It is written in the Gospel: "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword"; those who unloose the brute forces of matter will perish, crushed by those same forces, of which they are no longer masters when they rashly set them in motion, and which they cannot claim to hold back indefinitely once launched on their fatal course; forces of nature or forces of mass man, or both in combination, it makes little difference, because in either case it is the laws of matter which come into play and which will inexorably destroy those who believed it possible to manipulate them without themselves rising superior to matter. The Gospel also says: "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand"; this saying too is directly applicable to the modern world with its material civilization, which cannot fail, from its very nature, to provoke strife and division in all directions. The conclusion is only too easy to draw and further considerations need not be elaborated in

order to enable one, without fear of deception, to predict a tragic end to the present world, unless a radical change, amounting to a complete reversal of direction, should intervene within a very short time.

We are well aware that some people will reproach us with having omitted to mention, while describing modern civilization and its materialism, certain elements which seem at least to mitigate it to a certain extent; and indeed, if none such existed it is highly probable that this civilization would have perished miserably long since. We do not therefore in any way dispute the existence of such elements, but at the same time we must not let ourselves fall into illusions; on the one hand, it would be incorrect to include under this heading the various philosophical movements bearing labels such as "spiritualism" or "idealism," or anything among contemporary tendencies that takes the form of "moralism" or "sentimentalism"; we have already sufficiently discussed these questions and we will simply recall the fact that, from our point of view, these attitudes of mind are not less profane than a theoretical or practical materialism and are in reality much less far remote from it than might appear at first sight; on the other hand, if some remnants of true spirituality have been preserved, that can only be in spite of the modern outlook and in opposition to it. As far as strictly Western elements are concerned, it is in the religious sphere only that these remnants of spirituality are still to be found; but we have already pointed out how shrunken has become the conception of religion at the present time, and what a shallow and mediocre idea even believers themselves have formed of it and to what an extent it has been emptied of its intellectuality, which is but one and the same thing as true spirituality; under these conditions, if certain possibilities still remain, they scarcely do so more than latently, and their effective influence at present amounts to very little. The vigor of a religious tradition is nevertheless to be admired when, though withdrawn into a kind of virtuality, it survives in spite of all the attempts made during several centuries to stifle and annihilate it; and, if one pauses to think about it, it will be apparent that there is something about a resistance of this kind implying the presence of a more than human power; but, once again let it be repeated, the tradition in question does not belong to the modern world, nor does it form one of its component elements, but is the exact opposite of all its tendencies and aspirations. It is necessary to say this openly and not

look for deceptive reconciliations; between the religious point of view, in the true sense of the word, and the modern attitude of mind there can be nothing but antagonism; any compromise can but serve to enfeeble the former and strengthen the latter, nor will the hostility of the modern mentality be lessened on that account, since it cannot help desiring the total destruction of everything in mankind that reflects a reality superior to the human.

It is said that the modern West is Christian, but this is a mistake: the modern outlook is anti-Christian because it is essentially anti-religious; and it is anti-religious because, in a still wider sense, it is anti-traditional; it is this that gives it its particular character and causes it to be what it is. Assuredly, something of Christianity has passed over even into the anti-Christian civilization of our time, with the result that its most "advanced" representatives (as they style themselves in their own special language) cannot help having undergone and continuing to undergo, involuntarily and perhaps unconsciously, a certain Christian influence, if only an indirect one; this is so because a break with the past, however radical, can never be altogether complete and such as to preclude all continuity. We will go further and say that everything of any value still to be found in the modern world came to it from Christianity, or at any rate through Christianity, which brought with it the whole heritage of former traditions and has kept that heritage alive, in so far as the conditions of the West permitted, and still bears its latent possibilities within itself; but, even among those calling themselves Christians, is there anyone at the present time who retains a full consciousness of these possibilities? Where, even in Catholicism, are to be found the men who understand the deeper meaning of the doctrine they profess outwardly, and who are not simply content with "believing" in a more or less superficial way, sentimentally rather than through the intelligence, but who really "know" the truth of the religious tradition which they claim for their own? One would indeed welcome some evidence of the existence of at least a few such people, for that would be the greatest and perhaps the only hope of salvation for the West; but it must be admitted that up to the present time none have made themselves known; can it be supposed that, like certain sages of the East, they live apart in some inaccessible retreat, or must this last hope be finally abandoned? The West was Christian in the Middle Ages but is so no longer; if it be said that it might become so again, there is no one who can

desire this more fervently than ourselves, and may it come about in a shorter time than all that is to be seen around would lead one to suppose; but let no man delude himself on the subject; if this should happen, the modern world will have had its day.

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