Spiritual Authority & Temporal Power

René Guénon

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COLLECTED WORKS OF RENÉ GUÉNON

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY
AND TEMPORAL POWER

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE PAST CENTURY HAS WITNESSED an erosion of earlier cultural values as well as a blurring of the distinctive characteristics of the world's traditional civilizations, giving rise to philosophic and moral relativism, multiculturalism, and dangerous fundamentalist reactions. As early as the 1920s, the French metaphysician René Guénon (1886–1951) had diagnosed these tendencies and presented what he believed to be the only possible reconciliation of the legitimate, although apparently conflicting, demands of outward religious forms, 'exoterisms', with their essential core, 'esoterism'. His works are characterized by a foundational critique of the modern world coupled with a call for intellectual reform; a renewed examination of metaphysics, the traditional sciences, and symbolism, with special reference to the ultimate unanimity of all spiritual traditions; and finally, a call to the work of spiritual realization. Despite their wide influence, translation of Guénon's works into English has so far been piecemeal. The *Sophia Perennis* edition is intended to fill the urgent need to present them in a more authoritative and systematic form. A complete list of Guénon's works, given in the order of their original publication in French, follows this note.

The present work complements Guénon's *East and West*, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, and *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, for whereas the latter detail the West's gradual movement away from its tradition, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power* focuses by contrast on what Guénon believed to be the normal relationship between the spiritual and the temporal implied in a healthy traditional civilization, that is, the supremacy of knowledge over action, of the sacerdotal over the royal caste. Touching first on India and the medieval West, Guénon then illustrates his point by citing quarrels over investiture and disputes of certain French kings with the papacy as evidence of a deviation in Christianity. In the preface he refers to recent 'incidents' that had drawn attention to this

general question, and although he says that his deliberations are not meant to deal directly with them, it may be of interest to note that the events concerned centered on a confrontation in 1926 between the political organization *Action Française* and Pope Pius XI.

Guénon often uses words or expressions set off in 'scare quotes'. To avoid clutter, single quotation marks have been used throughout. As for transliterations, Guénon was more concerned with phonetic fidelity than academic usage. The system adopted here reflects the views of scholars familiar both with the languages and Guénon's writings. Brackets indicate editorial insertions, or, within citations, Guénon's additions. Wherever possible, references have been updated, and English editions substituted.

The present translation is based on the work of Henry Fohr, edited by his son Samuel Fohr. Also consulted was a translation by Hubert and Rohini Schiff. The entire text was checked for accuracy and revised by Patrick Moore and Marie Hansen. Additional editing was done by Brian Keeble, Alvin Moore, and John Riess, and final proofing by John Champoux, John Herlihy, Charles Upton, and Brian Latham. A special debt of thanks is owed to Cecil Bethell, who revised and proofread the text at several stages and provided the index. Cover design by Michael Buchino and Gray Henry, based on a drawing by Guénon's friend and collaborator Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

THE WORKS OF RENÉ GUÉNON

Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines (1921)

Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion (1921)

The Spiritist Fallacy (1923)

East and West (1924)

Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta (1925)

The Esoterism of Dante (1925)

The Crisis of the Modern World (1927)

The King of the World (1927)

Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power (1929)

The Symbolism of the Cross (1931)

The Multiple States of the Being (1932)

The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times (1945)

Perspectives on Initiation (1946)

The Great Triad (1946)

The Metaphysical Principles of the Infinitesimal Calculus (1946)

Initiation and Spiritual Realization (1952)

Insights into Christian Esoterism (1954)

Symbols of Sacred Science (1962)

Studies in Freemasonry and the Compagnonnage (1964)

Studies in Hinduism (1966)

Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles (1970)

Insights into Islamic Esoterism and Taoism (1973)

Reviews (1973)

Miscellanea (1976)

PREFACE

We do not customarily refer to current events in our works, for what we have constantly in view are principles that, because they stand outside of time, can be said to possess as it were a permanent actuality. Even if we leave the domain of pure metaphysics to consider certain applications, we always do so in such a manner that these applications retain an altogether general scope. We shall proceed here in the same manner, though it must be admitted that the considerations to be developed in this study have an added interest at the present time due to recent discussions about the relationship between religion and politics — a question that is only one particular form, under certain determinate conditions, of the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal. But it would be a mistake to believe that these considerations have been inspired by the incidents we have alluded to, or that we intend to deal with them directly, for this would amount to according an exaggerated importance to purely episodic matters that could never influence conceptions that are in reality of a completely different order in their nature and origin.

Since we always try our best to anticipate all foreseeable misunderstandings, we are intent on dispelling as clearly and explicitly as possible the false interpretations that some might attach to our thought through political or religious passion, preconceived ideas, or even simple incomprehension of our point of view. Whether or not the present events calling attention to this question of the spiritual and the temporal had taken place, we would still have said all that we are going to say here, and exactly in the same way, for the present circumstances have merely shown more clearly than ever that it is necessary and timely to say it. This occasion might be said to have led us to expound certain truths here rather than many others we mean to explain, time permitting, but which do not seem to be so immediately pressing. As far as we are concerned, this is the entire role of these events.

In current discussions, the most striking thing is that nobody, on either side, seems concerned to place these questions on their true ground or to distinguish in a precise way between the essential and the accidental, between necessary principles and contingent circumstances. To tell the truth, this is no surprise to us, for we see in it only a fresh example, among many others, of the confusion reigning today in all domains, and that we consider to be eminently characteristic of the modern world for reasons already explained in our previous works.[1] We cannot however refrain from deploring the fact that even the representatives of an authentic spiritual authority are affected by this confusion. They seem to lose sight of their real strength: the transcendence of that doctrine in the name of which they are qualified to speak. In the first place it is necessary to distinguish between the question of principle and the question of opportuneness: with respect to the first there is nothing to discuss, since these matters belong to a domain that cannot be subject to essentially 'profane' discussion; as for the second question, which is moreover only of a political and so to speak diplomatic order, it is quite subordinate and should not strictly speaking even weigh against the question of principle. It would have been better not even to offer the adversary the possibility of raising it, since it concerns mere appearances. For our part, we shall add that this second question has no interest for us.

We intend to remain exclusively in the domain of principles, which allows us to remain aloof from all those discussions, polemics, and quarrels of school or party in which we have no wish to be involved, directly or indirectly, in any way or to any degree. Being absolutely independent of anything that is not pure and impartial truth, and intent on remaining so, we propose simply to state things as they are, without the least concern of pleasing or displeasing anybody. We expect nothing of anyone, not even that those who might profit from the ideas we express will be grateful to us in any way—something that is in any case of very little concern to us. And we give notice again that we are not disposed to let ourselves be confined to any of the usual frameworks, and that it would be perfectly vain to try to label us in any way, for among all the labels current in

1. *East and West* and *The Crisis of the Modern World.*

the Western world there is none that really fits. Quite recently certain insinuations (coming moreover simultaneously from quite different sides) have shown us once again how important it is to restate our position so that sincere people might know what to believe and not be induced to attribute to us intentions incompatible with our true attitude and our purely doctrinal point of view.

It is owing to the nature of this point of view, which is free from all contingencies, that we can consider current events in a totally impartial manner, as though these events belonged to a distant past, such as those to which we shall be referring when quoting historical examples to throw light on our exposition. As we have said from the start, it should be clearly understood that we assign to this study a quite general scope that goes beyond all particular forms assumed by temporal power — and even by spiritual authority — according to time and place; in particular, we must make the point without further delay that for us spiritual authority does not necessarily have a religious form, contrary to what is commonly imagined in the West. We leave everyone free to draw from these considerations whatever application may be deemed suitable for particular cases, which we purposely refrain from directly taking into consideration. To be legitimate and valid it is enough that this application be made in a spirit conforming to the principles on which everything depends, a spirit that we call traditional in the true sense of this word, and of which, unfortunately, all specifically modern tendencies are the antithesis or negation.

It is precisely with one of the aspects of the modern deviation that we shall be dealing here, and in this respect the present study will complete what we have already explained in the works just alluded to. Moreover, in connection with this question of the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal, it will be seen that the errors which have developed over the last centuries are far from being new. But at least their previous manifestations had only rather limited effects, whereas today these same mistakes have become as it were inherent to the common mentality, forming part of a state of mind that is becoming more and more widespread. This is what is especially serious and disquieting, and unless a rectification is brought about very soon, it is foreseeable that the modern world will be driven to some catastrophe, toward which it seems to be

moving with ever-increasing speed. Having elsewhere given the justifications for this assertion,[2] we will not dwell any longer on it, only adding that if in the present circumstances there is still any hope of salvation for the Western world it seems that such hope must rely at least partly on the maintenance of the sole traditional authority that still remains. But then this authority must become fully conscious of itself in order to be able to furnish an effective basis for efforts that otherwise run the risk of remaining scattered and uncoordinated. This at least is one of the most immediate means to be considered for a restoration of the traditional spirit, though there doubtless are other means should this one fail. But since this restoration, the sole remedy for the present disorder, is the essential goal that we have unceasingly in view (as soon as we leave the field of pure metaphysics in order to consider contingencies), it is easy to understand why we do not neglect any of the possibilities that may arise for attaining this goal, even if these possibilities seem to have little chance of realization at the moment. This, and this alone, is our true intention; any others that might be attributed to us are wholly non-existent. If some wish to contend that the following reflections have been inspired by external influences of whatever kind, we respond in advance and deny it categorically.

It is our experience that the precautions set forth above are not unnecessary, but, having stated them clearly, we think we can dispense with any direct reference to current events in what follows in order to render the strictly doctrinal character—which we wish to preserve in all our works—even more evident and incontestable. Political and religious passions will doubtless find no profit here, but this will only please us, for we have no desire to furnish new fuel for vain and petty discussions. On the contrary, our aim is to recall the principles of which the oversight is, after all, the sole cause of all these discussions. We repeat that our very independence allows us to make this explanation impartially and without concessions or compromises of any kind. At the same time, any other role is forbidden us, for we preserve this independence only on condition that we always remain in the purely intellectual domain, which is that of

2. *The Crisis of the Modern World.*

immutable and essential principles from which everything else more or less directly derives, and with which the rectification mentioned above must inevitably begin. In the absence of a link to the principles one can only obtain results that are wholly external, unstable, and illusory. In truth, this is but one form of the affirmation of the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal that precisely constitutes the subject of this study.

1

AUTHORITY AND HIERARCHY

THROUGHOUT THE VARIOUS AGES of history, and even well before what are conventionally known as historical times, we find (as far as the concordant evidence of oral and written tradition permits)[1] clues of a frequent opposition between the representatives of two powers, one spiritual and the other temporal. This opposition can be discerned despite the special forms sometimes assumed by these two powers in adapting to different circumstances of time and place. This does not mean however that the opposition and the struggles it engenders are 'as old as the world', as this much-abused expression would imply. Such would be a manifest exaggeration, for all traditions teach that in order for this opposition to arise humanity had to reach a phase quite distant from the pure primordial spirituality. Besides, these two powers did not originally exist as separate functions exercised by different individuals. On the contrary, they were two indivisible aspects of the common principle from which they both proceeded, linked indissolubly in the unity of a synthesis that was at once superior and anterior to their distinction. Hindu doctrine expresses exactly this when it teaches that in the beginning there was only one caste. The name *Hamsa* given to this single primordial caste indicates spirituality of a very high

1. In the beginning, these traditions were always oral, and sometimes, as with the Celts, never written down; their concordance proves their common origin and thus their connection with a primordial tradition, as well as the strict fidelity of the oral transmission the maintenance of which is one of the primary functions of the spiritual authority.

degree which, though quite exceptional today, was originally common to all men, and possessed by them as it were spontaneously.[2] This high degree of spirituality lies beyond the four castes that were subsequently established and among which the different social functions were distributed.

The principle of the institution of castes, so completely misunderstood by Westerners, is nothing else but the differing natures of human individuals; it establishes among them a hierarchy the incomprehension of which only brings disorder and confusion, and it is precisely this incomprehension that is implied in the 'egalitarian' theory so dear to the modern world, a theory contrary to all established facts and belied even by simple observation, since equality is really nowhere to be found—but this is not the place to enlarge on a point we have already treated elsewhere.[3] The words used to designate caste in India signify nothing but 'individual nature', implying all the characteristics attaching to the 'specific' human nature that differentiate individuals from each other; and it should immediately be added that heredity plays only a partial role in the determination of these characteristics, for were it otherwise

2. The same indication is to be found just as clearly formulated in the tradition of the Far-East, as is shown especially in the following passage from Lao Tzu: 'The ancient seers had a mastery over Logic, Clairvoyance, and Intuition. This Force of Soul remained unconscious. This Unconsciousness of their Inner Force rendered their appearance majestic. Who in our days could by his majestic lucidity clarify the internal darkness? In our days, who could revive the internal death by his majestic life? They, on the other hand, carried the Way (*Tao*) in their soul and were Autonomous Individuals; as such, they saw the perfections of their weaknesses' (*Tao Te Ching*, chap. 4, [French] translation by Alexandre Ular; cf. Chuang Tzu, chap. 6, which comments on this passage). The 'Unconsciousness' mentioned here refers to the spontaneity of this state, which at that time was not the result of any effort; and the expression 'Autonomous Individuals' should be understood in the sense of the Sanskrit term *svaychāchari*, 'he who follows his own will', or, according to another equivalent expression found in Islamic esoterism, 'he who is his own law'.

[As has been pointed out elsewhere (*The King of the World*, chap. 7, n8, and chap. 9, n 21, and *The Multiple States of the Being*, chap. 6, n6), Guénon relied for his texts from the Chinese tradition on a rendering that diverges somewhat from any current English version. Ed.]

3. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 6. On the principle of the institution of castes, see *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, pt. 3, chap. 6.

all the individuals of a family would be identical. Thus, caste is not in principle strictly hereditary, even though it has frequently become so in fact and in practice. Besides, since there cannot be two individuals identical and equal in all respects, there are inevitably some differences among those belonging to the same caste. But just as there are more common characteristics among beings of the same species than among beings of different species, so also are there more common characteristics, within a given species, among individuals belonging to the same caste than there are among those of different castes. One could say then that the distinction between castes in the human species constitutes a veritable natural classification to which the distribution of social functions necessarily corresponds. In effect, each man, by reason of his proper nature, is suited to carry out certain definite functions to the exclusion of all others; and in a society established on a regular traditional basis, these aptitudes must be determined according to precise rules, so that, by the correspondence of the various functions with the principal categories in the classification of 'individual natures', each finds his proper place (barring exceptions due to errors of application which, although possible, are reduced to a minimum), and thus the social order exactly expresses the hierarchical relationships that result from the nature of the beings themselves. This in brief is the fundamental reason for the existence of castes, and one must at least be acquainted with these essential notions in order to understand the allusions we shall have to make in the course of this study, whether to the constitution of caste such as it exists in India or to analogous institutions found elsewhere; for it is evident that the same principles, albeit with varying modes of application, have presided over the organization of all civilizations possessing a truly traditional character.

In short, caste distinction, along with the differentiation of social functions which corresponds to it, results from a rupture of the primordial unity; only then do the spiritual power and the temporal power appear separate from one another. The distinct exercise of these two powers in turn constitutes the respective functions of the first two castes: the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. Moreover, between these two powers (as more generally among all the social

functions thereafter attributed to different groups of individuals) there must originally have been a perfect harmony by which the original unity was maintained, at least to the degree that the conditions of humanity in its new phase would allow; for in essence harmony is simply a reflection or image of true unity. It was only at a later stage of development that this distinction was to be transformed into opposition and rivalry, destroying the original harmony and so making way for a struggle between the two powers, while the inferior functions in their turn laid claim to supremacy, resulting finally in total confusion, negation, and the overthrow of all hierarchy. The general conception just outlined conforms to the traditional doctrine of the four successive ages into which the history of terrestrial humanity is divided. This doctrine is found not only in India, but also in the ancient West, particularly among the Greeks and Romans. These four ages are the different phases humanity traverses as it moves away from the principle and so away from primordial unity and spirituality. They are like stages in a kind of progressive materialization that is necessarily inherent in the development of the entire cycle of manifestation, as we have explained elsewhere.[4]

It is only in the last of these four ages, known as the *Kali-Yuga* or 'dark age' in the Hindu tradition, and corresponding to the present era, that the subversion of the normal order can occur, and the temporal power for the first time can prevail over the spiritual authority. However, the first manifestations of the revolt of the Kshatriyas against the authority of the Brahmins lie much further back than the beginning of this age,[5] a beginning that is itself far earlier than anything known to ordinary or 'profane' history. This opposition of the two powers, this rivalry between their respective representatives, was depicted among the Celts as a wild boar and a bear locked in combat, a symbolism of Hyperborean origin and thus connected to one of the most ancient traditions of humanity (if not the oldest of

4. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 1.

5. An indication of this can be found in the story of *Parasurāma* who, it is said, annihilated the rebel Kshatriyas at a time when the ancestors of the Hindus still inhabited a northern region.

all), the true primordial tradition. This symbolism could give rise to many further reflections that would be out of place here, but which we will perhaps explain on another occasion.[6]

It is not our intention here to trace everything back to its origins, and all our examples will be drawn from epochs much closer to us, corresponding to what we may call the last part of the *Kali-Yuga*. This is a time accessible to ordinary history since it begins precisely in the sixth century before the Christian era. It was nonetheless necessary to give this brief summary of the elements of the whole of traditional history, without which the rest would only be understood imperfectly, for one cannot really understand any epoch except by assigning it its proper place in the whole of which it is but one element; it is thus, as we have recently shown, that the particular characteristics of the modern age can only be explained if one considers it to be the final phase of the *Kali-Yuga*.[7] We are fully aware that this synthetic point of view is entirely contrary to the spirit of analysis that governs the development of 'profane' science, the only one known to most of our contemporaries, yet it is all the more essential to clearly affirm this point of view because it is very much misunderstood; it is moreover the only one that can be adopted by all those who wish to remain in strict conformity with true traditional orthodoxy, and not make any concession to the modern spirit which, as we cannot repeat often enough, is one with the spirit of the anti-tradition itself.

No doubt, the prevailing tendency at present is to treat the facts of the most remote period of history, such as those to which we have just alluded, as 'legendary', or even as 'mythical'; and the same applies to other far less ancient facts—some of which will concern us in what follows—since they are inaccessible to the means of

6. It should also be noted that these two symbols—the wild boar and the bear—do not necessarily appear in combat with each other or in opposition. They can also sometimes represent the spiritual and temporal powers, or the two castes of the Druids and the Knights, in their normal and harmonious relationship. This is especially clear in the legend of Merlin and Arthur, who are in fact the boar and the bear. We shall explain this point of symbolism in another study. [See 'The Wild Boar and the Bear', in *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 24. ED.]

7. See *The Crisis of the Modern World*.

investigation available to 'profane' historians. Those who might think in this way, by virtue of habits acquired through an education that today more often than not produces real mental deformity, should, if they have retained some degree of understanding, be able to at least take these facts simply at their symbolic value, a value which for us does not diminish in any way their own reality as historical facts. After all, this symbolic value is what matters most, for it confers on them a superior meaning, of a much profounder order than they can have in themselves. But this point requires further explanation.

All that is, in whatever mode it may be, necessarily participates in universal principles, and nothing exists except by participation in these principles, which are the eternal and immutable essences contained in the permanent actuality of the divine Intellect; consequently, one can say that all things, however contingent they may be in themselves, express or represent these principles in their own manner and according to their own order of existence, for otherwise they would only be a pure nothingness. All things, in every order of existence, are connected and correspond to one another so as to contribute to universal and total harmony; for harmony, as we have already said, is nothing other than the reflection of principial unity in the multiplicity of the manifested world; and it is this correspondence that is the true foundation of symbolism. This is why the laws of an inferior domain can always be taken as symbols for realities of that superior order which is their ground, and which is both their principle and end; and we note in passing the error of modern 'naturalistic' interpretations of the ancient traditional doctrines, which purely and simply invert the hierarchy of relationships between the different orders of reality. Let us cite here as an example just one of today's most prevalent theories. Contrary to the naturalistic point of view, symbols or myths have never played the role of representing the movements of the stars, although it is true that one often finds in myths images inspired by them. These images are meant to explain analogically something altogether different, because the laws of this movement translate physically the metaphysical principles on which they depend. It is on this that the true astrology of the ancients rested. The inferior may symbolize the superior, but the

inverse is impossible. Besides, if the symbol were further removed from the sensible order than that which it represents—rather than being closer—how could it carry out its destined function, which is to render the truth more accessible to man by furnishing a 'support' to his understanding? It is obvious on the other hand that the use of astronomical symbolism—to take the same example—does not prevent astronomical phenomena from existing as such, nor does it deny them all the reality they have in their own order; and it is exactly the same in the case of historical facts which, like any facts, express higher truths in their own way and conform to the law of correspondence we have just mentioned. While these facts have a real existence, they are at the same time also symbols; and from our point of view, they are much more worthy of interest as symbols than as facts. It could not be otherwise, since we intend to relate everything to principles, and it is precisely this which, as we have explained elsewhere,[8] essentially distinguishes 'sacred science' from 'profane science'. If we insist on this point it is in order to avoid confusion: one must put each thing in its proper place, and history properly understood also has its place in integral knowledge, though it has no value in this respect except insofar as it enables us to find a point of support, in the very contingencies that constitute its immediate object, from which to raise ourselves above these same contingencies.

As for the point of view of 'profane history', which clings exclusively to facts without going beyond them, it is of no interest in our eyes, like all else that belongs to the field of mere erudition. It is then not at all as an historian, taking the term in the latter sense, that we consider the facts, and this is what allows us to ignore certain 'critical' prejudices particularly dear to our age. It does seem moreover that the exclusive use of certain methods may have been imposed on modern historians solely to prevent them from seeing clearly in matters that were not to be broached, for the simple reason that they might have led to conclusions contrary to the 'materialistic' tendencies that 'official' teaching has made it its mission to uphold. It goes without saying that for our part we do not feel at all obliged

8. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 4.

to maintain this reserve. This having been said, we think that the subject of our study can now be approached directly without tarrying further over these preliminary observations, which were meant only to define as clearly as possible the spirit in which we write and also the spirit in which this study should be read if one really wishes to understand its meaning.

2

FUNCTIONS OF PRIESTHOOD AND ROYALTY

THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN the spiritual and temporal powers is found in one form or another among almost all peoples. This is not surprising since it corresponds to a general law of human history, relating moreover to the system of 'cyclical laws' that we have frequently alluded to throughout our works. In the most ancient periods this opposition is usually found in traditional accounts expressed in symbolic form, as in the case of the Celts mentioned above; but it is not this aspect of the question that we propose especially to develop here. For the moment we shall restrict ourselves to two historical examples, one taken from the East and the other from the West. In India the antagonism between the spiritual and the temporal is found in the form of a rivalry between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas (about which we shall recall some episodes presently); in medieval Europe it appears especially in the so-called dispute between the priesthood and the empire, even though it had other more particular aspects that were equally characteristic,[1] as we shall see in what follows. It is only too easy to point out that the

1. We could easily find many more examples, especially in the East: in China the struggles that took place in certain epochs between Taoists and Confucianists, whose respective doctrines are linked to the domains of the two powers, as we shall explain later; and in Tibet, the hostility shown initially by the kings toward Lamaism, which ended not only in the latter's triumph, but in the complete absorption of the temporal power within the 'theocratic' organization that still exists today. [This work was written in 1929. ED.]

same struggle continues to this day, although due to the disorder of the modern world and the 'mingling of castes' it is complicated by heterogeneous elements that may sometimes conceal it from the notice of a superficial observer.

It is not that anyone has contested (at least generally speaking and notwithstanding certain extreme cases) the fact that each of these two powers, which we can call sacerdotal power and royal power, for such are their true traditional names, had its own purpose and its own domain; in the final analysis, the dispute usually bears only on the question of the hierarchical relationships that should exist between them. It is a question of a struggle for supremacy, a struggle invariably arising in the same manner: having first been subject to the spiritual authority, warriors, the holders of the temporal power, revolt against this authority and declare themselves independent of all superior power, even trying to subordinate to themselves the spiritual authority that they had originally recognized as the source of their own power, and finally seeking to turn the spiritual authority to the service of their own domination. This alone should suffice to show that in such a revolt there must be a reversal of normal relationships; but the point becomes all the more clear when these relationships are considered, not as between two more or less clearly defined social functions naturally tending to encroach upon one another, but as between two separate domains in which these functions are respectively exercised. It is in fact the relationships between these domains that must logically determine those between the corresponding powers.

However, before tackling these considerations directly, we must make some remarks that will facilitate their comprehension by precisely defining certain terms which will come up often in our discussion. This is all the more necessary in view of the fact that in current usage these terms have taken on quite vague meanings sometimes far removed from their original ones. First of all, if we speak of two powers, and if we do so in cases where it becomes necessary for various reasons to maintain a certain external symmetry between them, we prefer to use the word 'authority' rather than the word 'power' for the spiritual order. The word 'power' can then be reserved for the temporal order, to which it is better suited when taken in its strictest sense. In fact, the word 'power' almost inevitably evokes the idea of

strength or force, and above all the idea of a material force,[2] a force which manifests itself visibly and outwardly and affirms itself by the use of external means, for such means indeed characterize the temporal power by very definition.[3] On the contrary, spiritual authority, interior in essence, is affirmed only by itself, independently of any sensible support, and operates as it were invisibly. If we can speak in this context of strength or force, it is only by analogical transposition, and, at least in the case of a spiritual authority—in its purest state so to speak—it must be understood that it is an entirely intellectual strength whose name is 'wisdom' and whose only force is that of truth.[4]

The expressions sacerdotal power and royal power, which we have just introduced, call for even more explanation here. What exactly is meant by priesthood and royalty? To begin with the latter, we can say that the royal function includes everything that in the social order constitutes what is properly referred to as the 'government'; and this is so even if the government does not take the form of a monarchy. This function belongs properly to the entire Kshatriya caste, for the king is no more than the first among them; it is in a way twofold: administrative and judicial on the one hand, and military on the other. With regard to its regulatory and stabilizing function it must ensure the maintenance of internal order, and with regard to its function of protecting the social organism it must maintain outward order. These two constituent elements of the royal power are symbolized in diverse traditions respectively by the scales and the sword. We see from this that royal power is indeed

2. One could moreover also include in this notion the force of will, which is not 'material' in the strict sense of the word but which for us is still of the same order since it is essentially oriented toward action.

3. The name of the caste of the Kshatriyas is derived from *kshatra*, which denotes 'force'.

4. In Hebrew, the distinction indicated here is marked by the use of roots that correspond with each other but differ by the presence of the letters *caph* and *koph* which, by their hieroglyphic interpretation, are respectively the signs of spiritual force and material force, whence, on the one hand, such senses as truth, wisdom, and knowledge, and on the other, those of power, possession, and domination. Such also are the roots *hac* and *hak*, *can* and *kan*, the first forms designating the attributions of the sacerdotal power, the second those of the royal power (see *The King of the World*, chap. 6).

synonymous with temporal power, even when this latter is taken in its broadest sense. But the much more restricted idea that the modern West has of royalty can prevent this equivalence from being perceived immediately, and for this reason it was necessary to formulate this definition now so that we might not lose sight of it in what follows.

As for the priesthood, its essential function is the conservation and transmission of the traditional doctrine, in which every regular social organization finds its fundamental principles. This function is, moreover, obviously independent of all the special forms the doctrine may take in adapting to the particular conditions of any given era, for these forms do not in any way affect the substance of that doctrine, which remains everywhere and at all times identical and immutable, provided the traditions involved are authentically orthodox. It is easy to understand that the function of the priesthood is not exactly what is attributed by Western conceptions, especially today, to 'clergy' or 'priests'. While these conceptions may apply in certain cases and to a certain extent, the function of the priesthood can also be something very different. In fact, what truly possesses a 'sacred' character is the traditional doctrine and all that is directly attached to it, and this doctrine does not necessarily take a religious form.[5] The terms 'sacred' and 'religious' are by no means equivalent, for the first is much broader than the second. While religion is part and parcel of the 'sacred' domain, this latter includes elements and modalities that have absolutely nothing religious about them; and the 'priesthood' [*le sacerdoce*], as its name indicates, relates without any restriction whatsoever to all that can truly be called 'sacred'.

The true function of the priesthood, then, is above all one of knowledge and teaching, and this is why, as we said above, its proper attribute is wisdom.[6] It is of course true that certain other

5. Moreover, we shall later see why the religious form properly speaking is particular to the West.

6. It is due to this function of teaching that in the *Purusha-Sūkta* of the *Rig-Veda* the Brahmins are represented as corresponding to the mouth of *Purusha* considered as 'Universal Man', whereas the Kshatriyas correspond to his arms because their functions relate essentially to action.

more outward functions, such as the performance of rites, equally belong to it, because they require doctrinal knowledge, at least in principle, and participate in the 'sacred' character inherent to it. But these functions are only secondary, contingent, and, in a way, accidental.[7] If, in the Western world, the accessory seems here to have become the principal, if not the only function, this is because the real nature of the 'priesthood' has been almost completely forgotten, this being one of the effects of the modern deviation, which negates all intellectuality (we think it almost superfluous to recall here that this word is always taken in the sense of pure intelligence and supra-formal knowledge). And if this deviation has not been able to make all doctrinal teaching disappear, it has at least 'minimized' it and relegated it to the background. That it has not always been so is proved by the very word 'clergy', for the word 'clerk' originally signified 'scholar' as opposed to 'layman', which designates a man of the people, that is, of the 'vulgar', who is to be classed among the ignorant or the 'profane', and whose only recourse is to believe whatever he cannot understand, this being the only way for him to participate in

7. The exercise of intellectual functions on the one hand, and rituals on the other, has sometimes given rise within the priesthood itself to two divisions, of which a clear example is found in Tibet: 'The first of the two great divisions comprises those who preach observance of moral precepts and the monastic rule as the means of salvation, and the second all who prefer a purely intellectual method (the "direct path"), liberating the one who follows it from all laws whatsoever. It is essential that the followers of these two systems be kept strictly separate from each other. The monks attached to the first system rarely fail to recognize that the virtuous life and discipline of monastic observances—truly quite excellent and in most cases indispensable though they may be—nevertheless constitute only a preparation for a higher path. As for the partisans of the second system, all without exception fully believe in the beneficent effects of strict fidelity to the moral laws and also to those decreed especially for the members of the Sangha (Buddhist community). Moreover, all are unanimous in declaring that the first of the two methods is more recommendable for the majority of people' (Alexandra David-Neel, 'Le Thibet Mystique', in the *Revue de Paris*, February 15, 1928). This passage seemed worth quoting in full even though certain of its expressions call for some reservations: for example, there are not two 'systems' which, as such, need necessarily exclude each other; but on the other hand, the role of contingent means, which is that of rites and observances of all sorts and their subordination with respect to the purely intellectual path, are defined here quite clearly and in a manner conforming strictly to the teachings of the Hindu doctrine on the same subject.

the tradition to the extent his possibilities allow.[8] It is curious to note that those who today take pride in calling themselves 'laymen', as well as those who take pleasure in calling themselves 'agnostics'—they are indeed often the same people—do nothing but boast of their own ignorance, and for them to fail to realize that such is the meaning of the labels they attach to themselves, their ignorance must indeed be great and truly irremediable.

If the 'priesthood' is in essence the depository of traditional knowledge, this is not to say that it has a monopoly on it, since its mission is not only to conserve it integrally but also to communicate it to all who are fit to receive it, to distribute it hierarchically, so to speak, according to the intellectual capacity of each. All knowledge of this order thus has its source in sacerdotal teaching, which is the instrument of its regular transmission. What appears to be reserved especially to the priesthood, because of its character of pure intellectuality, is the superior part of the doctrine, that is the knowledge of the principles themselves, whereas the development of certain applications is more suitable for the aptitudes of other men whose own functions put them in direct and constant contact with the manifested world, that is, with the sphere to which these applications relate. This is why we see in India, for example, that

8. This does not mean that it is legitimate to extend the meaning of the word 'clerk' as did Julien Benda in his book *La Trahison des Clercs*, for this extension implies ignorance of a fundamental distinction, that of 'sacred knowledge' and 'profane knowledge'. Spirituality and intellectuality certainly do not have the same significance for Benda as for us, and he includes in the domain he qualifies as spiritual many things that are in our view of a purely temporal and human order. But this must not prevent us from acknowledging that there are in his book very interesting considerations that are in many respects true.

The distinction made in Catholicism between the 'teaching Church' and the 'Church taught' ought precisely to be one between 'those who know' and 'those who believe', but though this is so in principle, in the present state of things is it still so in fact? We will content ourselves with raising this question, as it is not for us to resolve it, and besides, we have not the means to do so. Indeed, though many an indication leads us to fear that the reply can only be negative, we lay no claim to an exhaustive knowledge of the present organization of the Catholic church, and can only express the wish that there may still exist within this Church a center where not only the 'letter' but also the 'spirit' of the traditional doctrine is integrally conserved.

certain secondary branches of the doctrine are studied more especially by the Kshatriyas, whereas the Brahmins attach only a relative importance to them, their attention being constantly fixed on the order of the transcendent and immutable principles of which all the rest constitute but accidental consequences. Or, to look at it from the other direction, the attention of the Brahmins is fixed solely on the highest goal, in relation to which all the rest is nothing but a contingent and subordinate means.[9] There are even traditional books specifically intended for the use of the Kshatriyas because they present doctrinal aspects adapted to their own nature,[10] and also 'traditional sciences' especially suited to them, whereas pure metaphysics is the prerogative of the Brahmins.[11] All this is perfectly legitimate, for these applications or adaptations are also a part of sacred knowledge viewed in its integrality; and besides, even though the sacerdotal caste does not take a direct interest in them on their own account, these applications or adaptations are nevertheless its work, since it alone is qualified to control their perfect conformity with principles. Yet it may happen that when they revolt against spiritual authority the Kshatriyas fail to recognize the relative and subordinate character of that knowledge, considering it their own property and denying that they received it from the Brahmins, and finally going so far as to proclaim it superior to

9. We have had occasion to point out in another study a case that illustrates what we are saying here: whereas the Brahmins have always applied themselves almost exclusively, at least for their personal practice, to the immediate realization of final 'Deliverance', the Kshatriyas developed by preference the study of conditioned and transitory states corresponding to the various stages of the two 'ways of the manifested world', called *deva-yāna* and *pitri-yāna* (*Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*, chap. 21).

10. In India, such is the case of the *Itihāsas* and the *Purānas*, whereas the study of the *Veda* properly concerns the Brahmins because it is the principle of all sacred knowledge. Besides, as we shall see later, the distinction between the objects of study suitable for the two castes corresponds in a general way to that of the two parts of the tradition called in the Hindu doctrine *shruti* and *smriti*.

11. We are still speaking of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas taken as a whole. If there are individual exceptions, they do not in any way affect the principle of caste itself, proving only that the application of this principle can only be approximate, especially under the conditions of the *Kali-Yuga*.

the knowledge that is the exclusive possession of the latter. The outcome of this is the reversal of the normal relationships between principles and their applications, or even, in the most extreme cases, the pure and simple negation of all transcendent principles. In all such cases we have the substitution of the 'physical' for the 'metaphysical', taking these words in their strictest etymological sense, or in other words what can be called 'naturalism', as we shall see better in what follows.[12]

From this distinction, in sacred or traditional knowledge, between two orders broadly designated as 'principles' and 'applications' (or the 'metaphysical' and the 'physical' orders, as we have just said) was derived the distinction, in the ancient mysteries of both East and West, between what were called the 'greater mysteries' and the 'lesser mysteries', the latter comprising essentially knowledge of nature and the former knowledge of what is beyond nature.[13] This same distinction corresponds precisely to that between 'sacerdotal initiation' and 'royal initiation'. In other words, the knowledge taught in these two mysteries was regarded as necessary to the exercise of the respective functions of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, or the equivalents of these two castes in the institutions of other peoples.[14] But it goes without saying that it was the priesthood that, by virtue

12. Although we speak here of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, since the use of these words greatly facilitates the expression of what we have in mind, it must be clearly understood that all we are saying here does not apply to India only. The same remark holds true wherever these same terms are employed without special reference to the Hindu traditional form—a point we shall elaborate shortly.

13. From a slightly different though closely related point of view, one can also say that the 'lesser mysteries' concern only the possibilities of the human state whereas the 'greater mysteries' concern the supra-human states. By the realization of these possibilities or these states the two mysteries lead respectively to the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and the 'Celestial Paradise', as Dante put it in a passage of his *De Monarchia*; and it should not be forgotten that, as Dante also indicates quite clearly in his *Divine Comedy*, the 'Terrestrial Paradise' should be considered only as a stage on the path leading to the 'Celestial Paradise'. These points will be addressed later.

14. In ancient Egypt, which had a constitution that was distinctly 'theocratic', it seems that the king was assimilated to the 'priestly' caste by virtue of his initiation into the mysteries, and that he was even sometimes chosen from among the members of this caste. This at least is what Plutarch affirms: 'Their kings were appointed

of its teaching function, conferred both initiations and thus assured the effective legitimacy not only of its own members, but also of those of the caste to which the temporal power belonged, it being from this that the 'divine right' of kings derives,[15] as we shall see later. This is so because possession of the 'greater mysteries' implies necessarily and *a fortiori* possession of the 'lesser mysteries', for every consequence and every application is contained in the principle from which it proceeds, the superior function 'eminently' comprising the possibilities of the inferior functions.[16] It is necessarily so in all true hierarchy, which is founded upon the very nature of beings.

One more point should be at least summarily mentioned here, though we do not wish to overstress it: along with the expressions 'sacerdotal initiation' and 'royal initiation', and in parallel with them so to speak, we also come across those of 'sacerdotal art' and 'royal art', which designate the practical application of the knowledge taught in the corresponding initiations, together with all the 'techniques' pertaining to their respective domains. These designations

from the priests or from the military class, since the military class had eminence and honour because of valour, and the priest because of wisdom. But he who was appointed from the military class was at once made one of the priests and a participant in their philosophy, which, for the most part, is veiled in myths and in words containing dim reflexions and adumbrations of the truth. . . .' ('Isis and Osiris', in *Plutarch: Moralia*, vol. v, tr. Frank Cole Babbitt [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993], par. 9, p23). It is to be noted that the end of this passage contains a very explicit indication of the double meaning of the word 'revelation' (cf. *The King of the World*, chap. 4, n5).

15. It should be added that in India the third caste, that of the Vaishyas, whose proper functions are those of the economic order, also has access to an initiation entitling it to the qualities, which it has in common with the first two, of *ārya* or 'noble' and of *dvija* or 'twice-born'. The knowledge belonging properly to this caste represents moreover, in principle at least, only a limited portion of the 'lesser mysteries', such as we have defined them; but this is a point we need not stress here since the object of the present study is only to consider the relations between the first two castes.

16. We can say then that the spiritual power belongs 'formally' to the sacerdotal caste, whereas the temporal power belongs 'eminently' to this same sacerdotal caste and 'formally' to the royal caste, just as according to Aristotle the superior 'forms' contain 'eminently' the inferior 'forms'.

were preserved for a long time in the ancient guilds, and the second—that of 'royal art'—had a curious destiny, for it was transmitted right up to the time of modern Freemasonry, in which of course it subsists, in company with many other terms and symbols, only as a misunderstood vestige of the past.[17] As for the designation 'sacerdotal art', it has entirely disappeared; nevertheless, it was apt for the cathedral builders in the Middle Ages, just as it was for the art of the temple builders of antiquity. But a confusion between the two domains must have taken place due to an at least partial loss of the tradition, itself a consequence of the encroachment of the temporal upon the spiritual; and thus it was that even the very expression 'sacerdotal art' was lost, doubtless toward the time of the Renaissance, which marks in all respects the consummation of the rupture of the Western world with its own traditional doctrines.[18]

17. Apropos of this it should be noted that among the Romans, Janus, who was the god of initiation into the mysteries, was at the same time the god of the *Collegia Fabrorum*. This connection is particularly significant from the point of view of the correspondence indicated here. On the transposition by which all art as well as all science can receive a properly 'initiatic' value, see *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 2.

18. Some fix the date of this loss of the ancient traditions precisely in the middle of the fifteenth century, a loss that led in 1459 to the reorganization of the brotherhoods of builders on a new basis, from that time forward incomplete. It is to be noted that it is from the end of this epoch that the churches ceased to be oriented in a regular way, a fact of more considerable importance, as regards the present subject, than one may at first think (cf. *The King of the World*, chaps. 8 and 11).

3

KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

We have said that the relationships between the spiritual and temporal powers must be determined by those of their respective domains. The question, thus brought back to its principle, seems to us very simple, for it is fundamentally nothing other than that of the relationship between knowledge and action. One could object, from what we have just shown, that those who possess temporal power must normally possess a certain knowledge also; however, leaving aside for the moment the fact that they do not possess it of themselves—since they derive it from the spiritual authority—this knowledge is in any case related to applications of doctrine and not to the principles themselves and thus is properly speaking only a knowledge by participation. Knowledge par excellence—the only one that truly deserves this name in its fullest sense—is knowledge of principles, independent of all contingent applications; and this belongs exclusively to those who possess spiritual authority because there is nothing in it deriving from the temporal order, even taking this in its widest sense. Applications of this knowledge on the other hand refer to the temporal order because this knowledge is no longer envisaged only in and for itself, but insofar as it gives to action its law; and it is in this measure that it is necessary to those whose proper function is essentially in the domain of action.

It is obvious that in all its diverse forms—military, judicial, and administrative—the temporal power is entirely engaged in action; by virtue of these very attributions it is confined, then, within the

same limits as action, within the limits that is to say of the world that can properly be called 'human', including in this term moreover possibilities much more extensive than those usually imagined. Spiritual authority on the contrary is based entirely upon knowledge, since, as we have seen, its essential function is the conservation and teaching of doctrine, and thus its domain is as limitless as truth itself.[1] What is reserved for this authority by the very nature of things—what it cannot communicate to men whose functions are of another order because their possibilities do not include it—is transcendent and 'supreme' knowledge,[2] which lies beyond the 'human' domain and even, more generally, beyond the manifested world—that is to say, knowledge which is no longer 'physical' but 'metaphysical' in the etymological sense of the word. It should be clearly understood that there is no question here of any wish on the part of the sacerdotal caste to keep the knowledge of certain truths for itself, but of a necessity that results directly from the differences of nature existing among beings, differences that, as we have already said, constitute the raison d' être and the foundation of caste distinction. Those who are made for action are not made for pure knowledge, and in a society constituted on truly spiritual bases each person must fulfill the function for which he is really 'qualified'; otherwise, all is confusion and disorder and no function is carried out as it should be—which is precisely the case today.

We are well aware that by reason of this very confusion the considerations we are setting forth here can only appear quite strange to the modern West, where what is called 'spiritual' usually has only a remote connection with the strictly doctrinal point of view and with knowledge free of all contingency. Here one can make a rather curious observation: today people are no longer content simply to distinguish between the spiritual and the temporal, which is legitimate and even necessary, but also want to separate them radically;

1. According to Hindu doctrine, the three terms 'Truth, Knowledge, Infinity' are considered identical in the supreme Principle, which is the meaning of the formula *Satyam Jnānam Anantam Brahma.*

2. In India, knowledge (*vidyā*), according to its object or its domain, is distinguished into 'supreme' (*parā*) and 'non-supreme' (*aparā*).

nevertheless it happens that the two orders have never been as mixed together as they are at present, and that, above all, temporal preoccupations have never so affected what ought to be absolutely independent of them. This is doubtless inevitable by reason of the very conditions of our epoch, which we have described elsewhere. In order to avoid all false interpretations we should therefore state clearly that what we say here concerns only what we have called spiritual authority in its pure state, of which we should be wary of looking around for examples. If one wishes, this may be thought of as a theoretical type—an 'ideal', so to speak—although in truth this way of considering things is not entirely our own. We do recognize that in historical applications it is always necessary to take contingencies into account, at least to a certain extent; but even while doing so, we have to take the civilization of the West for what it is: a deviation and an anomaly that can be explained by the fact that it corresponds to the last phase of the *Kali-Yuga*.

But let us return to the relationship between knowledge and action. We have already had occasion to treat this question to a certain extent,[3] and consequently we shall not repeat all that was said at that time. It is indispensable however at least to recall the most essential points. We consider the antithesis of East and West in the present state of things to amount to this: the East maintains the superiority of knowledge over action whereas the modern West affirms on the contrary the superiority of action over knowledge (when it does not go so far as to deny knowledge completely). We refer here only to the modern West since things were quite otherwise in antiquity and in the Middle Ages. All traditional doctrines, whether Eastern or Western, are unanimous in affirming the superiority and even the transcendence of knowledge in relation to action, in reference to which it in a way plays the role of Aristotle's 'unmoved mover', which of course does not mean that action has no legitimate place and importance within its own order. But this order is only that of human contingencies. Change would be impossible without a principle from which it proceeds and which, by the very fact that it is the principle of change, cannot itself be subject to

3. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 3.

change, thus being necessarily 'unmoved' and at the center of the 'wheel of things'.[4]

In the same way, action, which belongs to the world of change, cannot have its principle in itself, since it derives its reality from a principle that lies beyond its domain and that can only be found in knowledge. Indeed, knowledge alone enables one to leave behind the world of change or 'becoming' and its inherent limitations; and when it attains the immutable, as is the case in principial or metaphysical knowledge—which is knowledge par excellence[5]—it itself possesses immutability, for all true knowledge is essentially identification with its object. By the very fact that it implies possession of this knowledge, the spiritual authority also possesses immutability. The temporal power, on the contrary, is subject to all the vicissitudes of the contingent and the transitory unless a higher principle communicates to it, in a measure compatible with its nature and character, the stability it cannot have on its own. This principle can only be that represented by spiritual authority. In order to subsist, then, temporal power needs a consecration that comes from spiritual authority; it is this consecration that confers upon it legitimacy, that is to say conformity with the very order of things. Such was the raison d'être of the 'royal initiation', as we explained in the preceding chapter; and it is in this that the 'divine right' of kings properly consists, what the Far-Eastern tradition calls the 'mandate of Heaven': the exercise of temporal power by virtue of a delegation of the spiritual authority, to which that power 'eminently' belongs, as we explained earlier.[6] All action that does not proceed from knowledge is lacking in principle and thus is nothing but a vain agitation; likewise, all temporal power that fails to recognize its subordination

4. The unmoving center is the image of the immutable principle, movement being understood here as the symbol of change in general, of which it is only one particular kind.

5. On the other hand, 'physical' knowledge is only knowledge of the laws of change, laws that are merely the reflection of the transcendent principles in nature, the latter being nothing other than the domain of change. Moreover, the Latin *natura* and the Greek *physis* both express the idea of 'becoming'.

6. This is why the word *melek*, which means 'king' in Hebrew and Arabic, has at the same time, and indeed foremost, the meaning of 'envoy'.

vis-à-vis spiritual authority is vain and illusory: separated from its principle, it can only exert itself in a disorderly way and move inexorably to its own ruin.

Since we have just spoken of the 'mandate of Heaven', it will not be out of place to relate here how, according to Confucius himself, this mandate was to be carried out: 'In order to make the natural virtues shine in the hearts of all men, the ancient princes first of all applied themselves to governing their own principality well. In order to govern their principality well, they first restored proper order in their families. In order to establish proper order in their families, they worked hard at perfecting themselves first. In order to perfect themselves, they first regulated the movements of their hearts. To regulate the movements of their hearts, they first perfected their will. To perfect their will, they developed their knowledge to the highest degree. One develops knowledge by scrutinizing the nature of things. Once the nature of things is scrutinized, knowledge attains its highest degree. Knowledge having arrived at its highest degree, will becomes perfect. Will being perfect, the movements of the heart are controlled. The movements of the heart having been controlled, every man is free of faults. After having corrected oneself, one establishes order in the family. With order reigning in the family, the principality is well-governed. With the principality being well-governed, the empire soon enjoys peace.'[7]

One must admit that this is a conception of the role of the sovereign that differs singularly from what this role is imagined to be in the modern West, making it all the more difficult to put into practice, although also giving it an altogether different significance; and one can note in particular that knowledge is indicated explicitly as the primary condition for the establishment of order even in the temporal domain.

It is easy now to understand that the reversal of the relationships between knowledge and action in a civilization is a consequence of the usurpation of supremacy by the temporal power; this power must in fact claim that there is no domain superior to its own, which is precisely that of action. If matters stopped there, however,

7. *Ta-Hio*, pt. 1, tr. P. Couvreur.

we would still not have reached our present impasse, where knowledge is denied any value. For this to take place, the Kshatriyas themselves had to be deprived of their power by the lower castes.[8] Indeed, as we observed earlier, even when the Kshatriyas rebelled, they still had a tendency to affirm a truncated doctrine, one falsified by ignorance or denial of all that goes beyond the 'physical' order, but one within which there still remains certain real knowledge, however inferior. They made a pretense of passing off this incomplete and irregular doctrine as the expression of the genuine tradition, an attitude—condemnable though it may be as regards the truth—not altogether devoid of a certain grandeur.[9] Besides, do not terms such as 'nobility', 'heroism', and 'honor' designate in their original acceptations qualities that are essentially inherent to the nature of the Kshatriyas? On the other hand, when the elements corresponding to the social functions of an inferior order come to dominate in their turn, all traditional doctrine, even if mutilated or altered, disappears entirely; there subsists not even the slightest vestige of 'sacred science', so that the reign of 'profane knowledge' is ushered in, the reign, that is, of ignorance pretending to be science and taking pleasure in its nothingness. All of which can be summed up in a few words: the supremacy of the Brahmins maintains doctrinal orthodoxy; the revolt of the Kshatriyas leads to heterodoxy; but with the domination of the lower castes comes intellectual night, and this is what in our day has become of a West that threatens to spread its own darkness over the entire world.

Some will perhaps reproach us for speaking as if castes existed everywhere, and for improperly extending to all social organizations designations that properly fit only India; but since these latter

8. In particular, the fact of according a preponderant importance to considerations of an economic order, which is a very striking characteristic of our times, may be regarded as a sign of domination by the Vaishyas, whose approximate equivalent is represented by the bourgeoisie in the Western world. It is indeed the latter who have dominated since the French Revolution.

9. This attitude of the rebel Kshatriyas could be characterized quite exactly by the designation 'Luciferianism', which must not be confused with 'Satanism', although there is doubtless a certain connection between the two: 'Luciferianism' is the refusal to recognize a superior authority whereas 'Satanism' is the reversal of normal relationships and of the hierarchical order, the latter being often a consequence of the former, just as after his fall Lucifer became Satan.

essentially point to functions necessarily found in every society, we do not think this extension unwarranted. It is true that caste is not just a function; it is also and above all that which, in the nature of individuals fits them to exercise this or that function in preference to any other, but these differences of nature and aptitude also exist wherever there are men. The difference between a society where there are castes in the true sense of the word and a society where there are none is that, in the first case, there is a normal correspondence between the nature of individuals and the functions they carry out (subject only to errors of application that are in any event exceptions), whereas in the second this correspondence does not exist, or at least exists only accidentally, the latter case showing what happens when the social organization lacks a traditional foundation.[10] In normal cases there is always something comparable to the institution of castes, with the modifications proper to this or that people; but the organization we find in India is the one that represents the most complete type with respect to the application of metaphysical doctrine to the human order. In short, this reason alone should suffice to justify the terms we have adopted in preference to others that we might have borrowed from institutions having, by their more specialized form, a much more limited field of application, for these other terms would be unable to furnish the same possibilities for expressing certain truths of a very general order.[11] Besides, there is another reason which, though more contingent, is not negligible: it is very remarkable that the social organization of the Western world in the Middle Ages was based precisely on the division of castes, the clergy corresponding to the Brahmins, the nobility to the Kshatriyas, the third-estate to the Vaishyas, and the serfs to the Shūdras.[12] They were not castes in the full meaning

10. It hardly needs pointing out that social 'classes', as they are understood in the West today, have nothing in common with true castes, being at most only a kind of counterfeit of them, without validity or significance, since they are not at all based upon the differences in possibilities implied in the nature of individuals.

11. The reason for this is that, among the traditional doctrines having survived up to the present day, the Hindu doctrine seems to derive most directly from the primordial tradition. But this is a point on which we need not dwell here.

12. The old English designations 'Lords Spiritual' and 'Lords Temporal' refer to the first two of these Western 'castes'. Ed.

of the word, but this coincidence, which is certainly not fortuitous, still permits a very easy transposition of terms in passing from the one case to the other; and this remark will find its application in the historical examples we shall consider below.

4

BRAHMINS AND KSHATRIYAS: THEIR RESPECTIVE NATURES

WISDOM AND STRENGTH: such are the respective attributes of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, or, if one prefers, spiritual authority and temporal power; and it is interesting to note that among the ancient Egyptians one of the meanings of the symbol of the Sphinx joined precisely these two attributes, viewed according to their normal relationships. In fact, its human head can be considered as representing wisdom and its leonine body as representing strength. The head is the spiritual authority which directs, and the body is the temporal power which acts. It should be noted moreover that the Sphinx is always represented at rest, for the temporal power is taken here in the 'non-acting' state, in its spiritual principle where it is contained 'eminently' and therefore as a possibility of action only, or, to put it better, in the divine principle, which unifies the spiritual and the temporal because it lies beyond their distinction and is the common source whence both proceed—the first directly, and the second only indirectly through the mediation of the first. Elsewhere we find a verbal symbol that by its hieroglyphic constitution is an exact equivalent of the Sphinx: this is the word Druid, which is read as *dru-vid*, the first root signifying strength and the second wisdom.[1] Besides showing that royalty is contained implicitly within the priesthood, the union of the two attributes in this name, like

1. This name moreover has a double meaning related to yet another symbolism, *dru* or *deru*, like the Latin *robur*, designating both strength and the oak (in Greek δρυς). In Sanskrit on the other hand, *vid* is wisdom or knowledge, assimilated to

that of the two elements of the Sphinx in one and the same being, is doubtless a memory of the remote epoch when the two powers were still united in the state of primordial indifferentiation, in their common and supreme principle.[2]

We have already dedicated a special study to this supreme principle of the two powers,[3] in which we indicated how this principle, at first visible, became invisible and hidden, and retreated from the 'external world' in proportion as the latter moved away from its primordial state—which was to lead inevitably to an apparent sundering of the two powers. We also showed how this principle is found, under various names and symbols, in all traditions, and how it appears in particular in the Judeo-Christian tradition in the figures of Melchizedek and the Magi-Kings. Here we will simply recall that in Christianity recognition of this unique principle still subsists, at least theoretically, and this is confirmed by the affirmation of the two functions of priesthood and royalty as inseparable in the person of Christ. From a certain point of view, when these two functions are related in this way to their principle, they can also be envisaged as complementary; in this case, although the second has its immediate principle in the first, there is a kind of correlation between the two in their very distinction. In other words, from the moment the priesthood does not hold the regular, effective exercise of royalty, the respective representatives of priesthood and royalty must then derive their power from a common source that is 'beyond caste'. The hierarchical difference between them lies in the fact that the priesthood receives its power directly from this source, with which it is in immediate contact by its very nature, whereas

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vision, but also to the mistletoe: thus, *dru-vid* is the mistletoe of the oak, which was in fact one of the principal symbols of Druidism, and at the same time it signifies the man in whom abides wisdom sustained by strength. Moreover, the root *dru*, as is seen in the equivalent Sanskrit forms *dhru* and *dhri*, includes the idea of stability, which is also one of the meanings of the symbol of the tree in general and of the oak in particular; and this sense of stability corresponds very exactly to the attitude of the Sphinx in repose.

2. As we pointed out above in the citation from Plutarch, the incorporation in Egypt of the king into the priesthood was like a vestige of this ancient state of affairs.

3. *The King of the World.*

royalty, owing to the more external and strictly worldly character of its function, can receive its power only through the intermediary of the priesthood. Indeed, the latter truly plays the role of 'mediator' between heaven and earth, and it is not without reason that in the Western traditions the priesthood in all its plenitude received the symbolic name of 'pontificate', for, as Saint Bernard says, 'the Pontiff, as indicated by the etymology of his name, is a kind of bridge [*pont*] between God and man.'[4] If one then wishes to go back to the primal origin of the priestly and royal powers, one must look to the 'celestial world'. This can be understood moreover both literally and symbolically,[5] but to develop this question would exceed the scope of our present study, and if we have nonetheless provided this brief sketch, it is because we will not be able to avoid referring to this common source of the two powers in what follows.

Returning to the starting-point of this digression, it is obvious that the attributes of wisdom and strength relate to knowledge and action respectively. In India, on the other hand, it is still said in connection with this same point of view that the Brahmin is the type of stable beings and the Kshatriya is the type of changing beings.[6] In

4. *Tractatus de Moribus et Officio Episcoporum* III, 9. In this connection, and in reference to what we said about the Sphinx, it is to be noted that the latter represents *Harmakhis* or *Hormakhouti*, the 'Lord of the Two Horizons', that is the principle uniting the two worlds, the sensible and the suprasensible or the terrestrial and the celestial; and this is one of the reasons why, during the early period of Christianity in Egypt, the Sphinx was regarded as a symbol of Christ, another reason being that the Sphinx, like the griffin spoken of by Dante, is 'the animal of two natures' and as such represents the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. Yet a third reason can be found in the aspect by which it represents, as we have said, the union of the two powers—spiritual and temporal, priestly and royal—in their supreme principle.

5. Involved here is the traditional idea of the 'three worlds' which we have explained elsewhere on various occasions. From this point of view royalty corresponds to the 'terrestrial world', the priesthood to the 'intermediate world', and their common principle to the 'celestial world'; but it should be added that from the time this principle became invisible to men, the priesthood came to outwardly represent the 'celestial world' as well.

6. The sum total of all beings, thus divided into the stable and the changing, is designated in Sanskrit by the composite term *sthāvara-jangama*; thus all beings, according to their natures, stand principally in relation either with the Brahmins or with the Kshatriyas.

other words, in the social order—which is moreover in perfect correspondence with the cosmic order—the first represents the immutable element and the second the mutable element. Here again, the immutability in question is that of knowledge, which is figured by the immobile posture of a man in meditation; for its part, mobility is inherent to action by reason of its transitory and temporary character. Finally, the proper natures of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya are distinguished fundamentally by the predominance of different *gunas*. As we have explained elsewhere,[7] the Hindu doctrine envisages three *gunas*, which are the constituent qualities of beings in all their states of manifestation: *sattva*, conformity to the pure essence of universal Being, which is identified with intelligible light or knowledge and represented as an ascending tendency; *rajas*, the expansive impulse, by which the being develops within a certain state and, so to speak, at a determined level of existence; and lastly *tamas,* obscurity, assimilated to ignorance and represented as a descending tendency. In the primordial indifferentiation the *gunas* are in perfect equilibrium, and all manifestation represents a rupture of that equilibrium. These three elements are present in all beings, but in varying proportions that determine their respective tendencies. In the nature of the Brahmin it is *sattva* that predominates, orienting him toward the supra-human states, and in the nature of the Kshatriya it is *rajas*, which tends to the realization of the possibilities contained in the human state.[8] To the predominance of *sattva* corresponds that of intellectuality, and to the predominance of *rajas* that of what, for lack of a better term, might be called sentiment, and this is another justification of what we were saying earlier: the Kshatriya is not made for pure knowledge. The path suitable for the Kshatriya is what could be called 'devotional', if one may take the liberty of using such a word to render, albeit

7. *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*, chap. 4.

8. To the three *gunas* correspond the symbolic colors: white to *sattva*, red to *rajas*, and black to *tamas*. As regards our present subject, the first two of these colors also symbolize spiritual authority and temporal power respectively, and it is interesting to note apropos of this that the 'banner' of the kings of France was red; the later substitution of white for red as the royal color marks in a way the usurpation of one of the attributes of the spiritual authority.

imperfectly, the Sanskrit term *bhakti*, that is to say the path that takes as its point of departure an element of an emotive order; and, although this path is found outside of strictly religious forms, the role of the emotive element is nowhere so developed as here, where it colors the expression of the entire doctrine with a special tinge.

This last remark allows us to understand the true raison d'être of these religious forms: they are especially suitable for races whose aptitudes are generally speaking directed above all toward action, those races, that is, which, when envisaged collectively, exhibit a preponderance of the 'rajasic' element that characterizes the nature of the Kshatriyas. This is the situation we find in the Western world, which is why, as we have explained elsewhere,[9] it is said in India that if the West were to return to a normal state and acquire a regular social organization, many Kshatriyas would be found there but few Brahmins; and this also explains why religion, understood in its strictest sense, is properly Western, and also why there does not seem to be a pure spiritual authority in the West, or at least any that asserts itself outwardly as such with the characteristics we have just described. Nevertheless, adaptation to a religious form, like the establishment of any other traditional form, is the responsibility of a true spiritual authority in the fullest sense of this term; and this authority, which then takes on a religious appearance, can at the same time also remain something else in itself so long as there are true Brahmins at its heart, by which we mean an intellectual elite that remains aware of what lies beyond all particular forms, that is to say of the profound essence of the tradition. For such an elite the form can only play the role of 'support', while also providing a means for those who do not have access to pure intellectuality to participate in the tradition; but the latter naturally do not see anything beyond the form, for their own possibilities do not let them go any further. Consequently, the spiritual authority need not show itself to them under any other aspect than that corresponding to their nature,[10] although, exterior as it may be, its teaching is always

9. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 3.

10. Symbolically, it is said that when the gods appear to men they always adopt forms in keeping with the nature of those to whom they appear.

inspired by the spirit of the higher doctrine.[11] But it may happen that once this adaptation is made, those who are the depositories of that traditional form subsequently find themselves confined to this adaptation, having lost effective consciousness of what lies beyond it. This may be due moreover to various circumstances, above all to the 'mingling of castes', by reason of which there are found among them men who are in reality for the most part Kshatriyas. From this it is easy to understand that such a case is possible principally in the West, all the more in that the religious form there particularly lends itself to this. The combination of intellectual and sentimental elements that characterizes this form actually creates a kind of mixed domain where knowledge is envisaged less in itself than in its application to action. If the distinction between 'sacerdotal initiation' and 'royal initiation' is not maintained clearly and rigorously, we have an intermediate ground where all sorts of confusions can arise, not to mention certain conflicts that would not even be conceivable if the temporal power had to face a pure spiritual authority.[12]

Our present purpose is not to inquire as to which of these two possibilities corresponds to the religious state of the Western world at present, and the reason for this is easy to understand: a religious authority cannot have the appearance of what we call a pure spiritual authority even if it carries such a reality within itself. There was certainly a time when the religious power did effectively possess this

11. We have here again the distinction between 'those who know' and 'those who believe'.

12. When 'supreme' knowledge has been forgotten there exists only a 'non-supreme' knowledge, no longer due to a revolt of the Kshatriyas as in the case described earlier, but rather to a sort of intellectual degeneration of the element corresponding by its function, if not by its nature, to the Brahmins. In this case the tradition is not altered as it is in the former, but only diminished in its superior part. At the end-point of this degeneration there is no longer any effective knowledge, for only its virtuality subsists due to the conservation of the 'letter', and nothing remains but a simple belief shared by all without exception. We must add that the two cases being distinguished here theoretically can in fact also be combined, or at least they can occur concurrently in the same milieu and can reciprocally condition one another, so to speak. But no matter, for on this point we do not intend to make any application to specific facts.

reality, but is this still the case?[13] This would be all the more difficult to determine because when true intellectuality has been lost as completely as it has in modern times, it is natural that the superior and 'interior' part of the tradition should become more and more hidden and inaccessible, since those who are capable of understanding it are no more than a tiny minority. Until we have proof to the contrary, we claim that such is the case, and that consciousness of the integral tradition, with all that it implies, still subsists effectively among some few, however small their number may be; besides, even if this consciousness had entirely disappeared, the fact remains that by the mere conservation of the 'letter' and its protection from any alteration, every regularly constituted traditional form always maintains the possibility of its own restoration, which will one day take place if among its representatives there are those who possess the requisite intellectual aptitudes.

In any case, even if by some means we had more precise information on this subject, we would not be obliged to state it publicly unless we were led to do so by exceptional circumstances, and the reason is this: an authority that is only religious is nevertheless, even in the most unfavorable case, still a relative spiritual authority; we mean that, without being a fully effective spiritual authority, it nonetheless bears this within itself from the beginning as a virtuality; and from this very fact it can always carry out this function externally;[14] it thus legitimately plays this role vis-à-vis the temporal power, and it must be truly considered as such in its relations with the latter. Those who have understood our point of view will

13. This question corresponds, in another form, to the one raised earlier on the subject of the 'teaching Church' and the 'Church taught'.

14. It should be clearly noted that those who thus fulfill the external function of the Brahmins without really having the requisite qualifications are even so not usurpers, as would be rebel Kshatriyas if they were to take the place of the Brahmins in order to set up a divergent tradition. This is merely a situation arising from the unfavorable conditions of a particular milieu, a situation moreover that ensures the maintenance of the doctrine in the fullest measure compatible with these conditions. In the worst instance, one could always apply here the saying of the Gospel: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses's seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you . . . .' (Matt. 23:2–3).

realize without difficulty that in case of a conflict between a spiritual authority—whatever it may be, even a relative one—and a purely temporal power we must in principle always take the side of the spiritual authority; we say 'in principle', for it must be clearly understood that we have not the slightest intention of actively intervening in such conflicts, nor above all of taking any part whatever in the quarrels of the Western world, for this could never be our role.

In the examples to be considered in what follows we will not therefore make any distinction between those concerning a pure spiritual authority and those concerning only a relative spiritual authority; in every case we shall consider as a spiritual authority that which fulfills this function socially. Moreover, the striking similarities presented by all these cases, however distant they may be from one another historically, will sufficiently justify this assimilation. We would only have to make a distinction if the question of the effective possession of pure intellectuality happened to arise, and this question does not in fact arise here; similarly, we would not have to demarcate the exact boundary, so to speak, of an authority that is exclusively attached to a particular traditional form except in cases where it claimed to surpass these limits, and such cases do not figure among those we shall examine.

On this last point we shall recall what we said earlier: the superior 'eminently' contains the inferior; whoever then is competent within the limits that define his own domain, is so also *a fortiori* for all other domains that lie within these same limits, whereas, on the other hand, he is not competent for that which lies beyond. If this simple rule were observed and applied properly—at least by those who have a true notion of hierarchy—no confusion of domains and no error of 'jurisdictions', so to speak, would ever occur. Some will no doubt see only precautions of a dubious utility in the distinctions and reservations we have formulated here, and others will be tempted to assign to them only a theoretical value; but we think that there are still others who will understand that they are in reality something else entirely, and it is these latter whom we invite to reflect on them with particular attention.

5

THE DEPENDENCE OF ROYALTY ON PRIESTHOOD

LET US NOW DIRECT OUR ATTENTION TO the relationship between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas in the social organization of India. To the Kshatriyas normally belongs outward power since the field of action, which concerns them directly, is the external and perceptible world; but this power is nothing without an interior principle, a purely spiritual one, that incarnates the authority of the Brahmins and in which it finds its only real guarantee. We see here that the relationship between the two powers could still be represented by that between the 'interior' and the 'exterior', a relationship that in fact symbolizes well that between knowledge and action or, to put it differently, between the 'mover' and the 'moved', taking up again the idea we explained above in reference to Aristotelean theory as well as Hindu doctrine.[1] It is from the harmony between this 'interior' and 'exterior'—a harmony moreover that must not be conceived as a kind of 'parallelism', which would imply an ignorance of the essential differences of the two domains—that there results the normal life of what can be called the social entity. By the use of such an expression, we do not mean to suggest any sort of comparison of the collectivity to a living being, especially as certain people have abused this notion in the strangest way in recent times,

1. Here one could again apply the image of the center and the circumference of the 'wheel of things'.

mistaking what is mere analogy and correspondence for a true identity.[2]

In exchange for the guarantee of their power by the spiritual authority, the Kshatriyas must use this power to ensure that the Brahmins will have the means to peacefully accomplish their proper function of knowledge and teaching, sheltered from trouble and agitation. This is what is represented in Hindu symbolism by the image of Skanda, lord of war, protecting the meditation of Ganesha, lord of knowledge.[3] It should be noted that the same thing was taught, even outwardly, in the Western Middle Ages; indeed, Saint Thomas Aquinas expressly declares that all human functions are subordinate to contemplation as their superior end, 'so that, when considered properly, they all seem to be in the service of those who contemplate the truth,' the true raison d'être of the entire government of civil life fundamentally lying in the assurance of the peace necessary for this contemplation.

One sees how far this is from the modern point of view, and also how the predominance of a tendency to action, as it incontestably exists among Westerners, does not necessarily bring about the disparagement of contemplation, that is of knowledge, at least so long as a people possesses a civilization of a traditional character, whatever form that tradition may take—which in the context cited was religious, whence the theological nuance that Saint Thomas always

2. The living being bears within itself the principle of its unity, which is superior to the multiplicity of the elements that enter into its constitution, and since there is nothing similar in the collectivity, which is strictly speaking only the sum of the individuals that compose it, a word such as 'organization' when applied to either cannot be taken in strictly the same sense. One can say however that the presence of a spiritual authority introduces into the social collectivity a principle superior to its constituent individuals, since this authority by its nature and origin is itself 'supra-individual'. But this presupposes that society be not envisaged merely under its temporal aspect, and this consideration—the only one that can make of it something more than a simple collectivity in the sense just indicated—is precisely one of those that escapes most completely the contemporary sociologists who claim to identify society with a living being.

3. Ganesha and Skanda are moreover represented as brothers, both being sons of Shiva, which is another way of saying that both the spiritual and the temporal powers proceed from a common principle.

attached to contemplation, whereas in the East the latter has always been envisaged in the order of pure metaphysics.

On the other hand, in Hindu doctrine and in the social organization that is its direct application—and therefore among a people where a contemplative aptitude understood in the sense of pure intellectuality is manifestly preponderant and even generally developed to a degree found perhaps nowhere else—the place accorded to the Kshatriyas and consequently to action, while subordinate (as it should normally be), is nevertheless very far from negligible, since it comprises all that can be called the visible power. Besides, as we have already noted on another occasion,[4] those who, under the influence of the false interpretations fashionable in the West, might doubt this very real though relative importance accorded to action by Hindu doctrine, as well as by all the other traditional doctrines, need only refer to the *Bhagavad Gītā* to be convinced otherwise, for we must not forget that this work can only be rightly understood if we recall that it is one of those especially destined for the use of Kshatriyas.[5] The Brahmins have only to exercise an as it were invisible authority which as such may be unknown to the vulgar but which is nonetheless the immediate principle of all visible power, being like the pivot around which all contingent things turn, the fixed axis around which the world accomplishes its revolution, the pole or the immutable center that directs and regulates the cosmic movement without participating therein.[6]

4. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 2.

5. The *Bhagavad Gītā* is strictly speaking only an episode in the *Mahābhārata*, itself one of the two *Itihāsas*, the other being the *Rāmāyana*. This character of the *Bhagavad Gītā* explains the use it makes of a martial symbolism, comparable in certain respects to that of the 'holy war' among the Muslims. There is moreover an 'inner' way of reading this book, which gives it its profound meaning, and it is then called the *Ātma-Gītā*.

6. The axis and the pole are above all symbols of the one principle of the two powers, as we have explained in *The King of the World*; but they can also be applied to spiritual authority in relation to temporal power, as we are doing here, because, by reason of its essential attribute of knowledge, this authority is effectively part of the immutability of the supreme principle, which is what these symbols fundamentally express, and also because, as we said above, it represents this principle directly in relation to the external world.

The dependence of the temporal power on the spiritual authority has its visible sign in the anointing of kings, who are not truly 'legitimized' until they have received investiture and consecration from the hands of the priesthood, implying the transmission of a 'spiritual influence' necessary for the regular exercise of their functions.[7] This influence has at times manifested itself outwardly with distinctly perceptible effects, and we can cite as an example of this the healing power of the kings of France, which was indeed directly connected to their anointing, for the influence in question was not transmitted to the king by his predecessor but received only by virtue of this anointing, which shows clearly that this influence does not belong properly to the king but is conferred on him by a kind of delegation of the spiritual authority, in which, as we indicated above, the 'divine right' truly consists. The king, then, is merely a depository of this influence and consequently can lose it in certain circumstances, which explains why in the Christendom of the Middle Ages the pope could release subjects from their oath of allegiance to their sovereign.[8] Moreover, in the Catholic tradition Saint Peter is depicted holding in his hands not only the golden key of sacerdotal power but also the silver key of royal power. For the ancient Romans these two keys were an attribute of Janus, signifying the keys to the 'greater mysteries' and the 'lesser mysteries' which, as we have explained, also correspond respectively to 'sacerdotal' and 'royal' initiation.[9] Here it should be noted that Janus represents the common source of the two powers, whereas Saint Peter is properly the incarnation of the sacerdotal power, the two

7. We have been translating as 'spiritual influence' the Hebrew and Arabic word *barakah*. The rite of 'laying on of hands' is one of the most customary modes of transmitting the *barakah*, in particular of bringing about through it certain kinds of healing.

8. The Islamic tradition also teaches that the *barakah* can be lost, while in the tradition of the Far East the 'mandate of Heaven' is likewise revocable when the sovereign fails to carry out his functions in a regular way, that is in harmony with the cosmic order itself.

9. According to another symbolism they are also the keys to the gates of the 'Celestial Paradise' and the 'Terrestrial Paradise', as we shall later see in one of

keys being transferred to him because it is through his intermediation that the royal power is transmitted, whereas the sacerdotal power is itself received directly from the source.[10]

What has just been said defines the normal relationships between spiritual authority and temporal power, and if these relationships were everywhere and always observed, no conflict would ever arise between them, for each would occupy its own proper place in the hierarchy of functions and beings, a hierarchy that, we stress again, conforms strictly to the very nature of things. Unfortunately this is far from always being the case, and this normal relationship is only too often misunderstood and even inverted. Here it is first of all important to note that it is already a grave error simply to consider the spiritual and the temporal as two correlative or complementary terms, and to lose sight of the fact that the latter finds its principle in the former. This error can arise all the more easily since from a certain point of view, as we have already said, this consideration of their complementarism also has its raison d'être, at least when the two powers are considered in their state of division, where one is no longer the supreme and ultimate principle of the other, but only its immediate principle, which as such is still relative.

As we have explained elsewhere regarding knowledge and action,[11] this complementarity is not false but only insufficient, for

Dante's texts; but it would perhaps not be opportune, at least for the present, to give certain precise 'technical' details on the 'power of the keys', nor to explain various other things connected more or less directly with them. If we bring up this subject here it is only so that those who have some knowledge of these things may see that our reserve is deliberate and not due to any obligation.

10. As for the transmission of royal power there are however exceptional cases where for special reasons it is conferred directly by representatives of the supreme power, the source of the other two: thus kings Saul and David were not anointed by the high priest but by the prophet Samuel. This can be compared with what we said elsewhere (*The King of the World*, chap. 4) on the threefold character of Christ as prophet, priest, and king in connection with the respective functions of the three Magi-Kings, who themselves correspond to the 'three worlds', as we recalled in a previous note, the 'prophetic' function here implying a direct inspiration and corresponding properly to the 'celestial world'.

11. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 2.

it corresponds to a still exterior point of view, as indeed does the very division of these two powers, made necessary by a state of the world in which the unique and supreme power is no longer within the reach of ordinary humanity. One could even say that when they are differentiated the two powers inevitably first appear in their normal relationship of subordination, and that they are seen as correlatives only in a later historical phase of the cycle's descent. It is to this new phase that certain symbolic expressions particularly emphasizing the aspect of complementarity correspond, although a correct interpretation could show that they also indicate the relationship of subordination. Such is the case of the well-known (but in the West little understood) parable of the blind man and the lame man, which in one of its principal meanings actually represents the relationship between the active life and the contemplative life: action left to itself is blind, and the essential immutability of knowledge is expressed outwardly by an immobility comparable to that of the lame man. The point of view of complementarity is represented by the mutual aid of the two men, each compensating by his own faculties for what is lacking in the other; and if the origin of this parable, or at least this particular application of it,[12] is to be related to Confucianism, it is easy to see that the latter must confine itself to this point of view by the very fact that it is itself confined exclusively to the human and social order. We must note apropos of this that in China the distinction between Taoism, which is a purely metaphysical doctrine, and Confucianism, which is a social doctrine (both

12. There is another application of the same parable, no longer social but cosmological, to be found in the doctrines of India, specifically in the *Sānkhya*. The lame man is *Purusha* insofar as he is immutable or 'non-acting', and the blind man is *Prakriti*, the undifferentiated potentiality of which is likened to the darkness of chaos. These are in effect two complementary principles considered as poles of universal manifestation, both proceeding moreover from a single superior principle, which is pure Being, that is, *Ishvara*, consideration of which exceeds the limits of the special point of view of the *Sānkhya*. In relating this interpretation to the one given above, it should be noted that an analogical correspondence can be established between contemplation or knowledge and *Purusha*, and between action and *Prakriti*; but we cannot enter into an explanation of these two principles here; instead we refer the interested reader to what we have written on this subject in *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*.

proceeding moreover from the same integral tradition, which represents their common principle) corresponds very exactly to the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal.[13] And we should add that the importance of 'non-action' from the Taoist point of view particularly justifies the symbolism employed in the fable in question for whomever looks at it from the outside.[14] We should, however, carefully note that it is the lame man who plays the leading role in the association of the two men, and that his very position—mounted on the blind man's shoulders—symbolizes the superiority of contemplation over action, a superiority that Confucius himself was far from disputing in principle, as is shown in an account of his meeting with Lao Tzu preserved by the historian Ssu-Ma-Chi'en, in which he admitted that he was not 'born to knowledge', that is that he had not attained knowledge par excellence, which is knowledge of the purely metaphysical order, and which, as we said above, by its very nature belongs exclusively to those who possess true spiritual authority.[15]

If then it is an error to envisage the spiritual and the temporal merely as correlatives, there is an even graver error which consists in claiming to subordinate the spiritual to the temporal, that is to say, knowledge to action. This error, which completely reverses the normal relationship, corresponds to the tendency that generally characterizes the modern West, and it can obviously occur only in a period of very advanced intellectual decadence. In our time, moreover,

13. This division of the Far-Eastern tradition into two distinct branches was accomplished in the sixth century before the Christian era, an epoch the special character of which we have previously drawn attention to (*The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 1), and to which we shall return later on.

14. We say 'from the outside' because, from the inner point of view, 'non-action' is in reality supreme activity in all its plenitude; but, precisely because of its total and absolute character, this activity does not appear outwardly like activities that are particular, determined, and relative.

15. It is clear from this that there is no opposition in principle between Taoism and Confucianism, which are not and cannot be rival schools, since each has its own sharply distinct domain. If there have nevertheless been disputes, at times even violent ones (as we noted above), these were due above all to the misunderstandings and the exclusivism of the Confucianists, who were forgetful of the example given by their own master.

some go yet further in this direction, even as far as to deny the very value of knowledge as such, and also, proceeding quite logically—for the two things are closely linked—to the negation pure and simple of all spiritual authority. This last degree of degeneration, which implies domination by the lowest castes, is one of the characteristics of the final phase of the *Kali-Yuga*. If we consider religion in particular, since this is the special form that the spiritual takes in the Western world, this reversal of relations can be expressed in the following way: instead of regarding the entire social order as deriving from religion, as being suspended from it so to speak and finding its principle therein (as was the case in medieval Christendom, and as it was equally in Islam, which is quite similar to it in this respect), today people see religion at most only as one element of the social order, one element among others of equal value. This is the enslavement of the spiritual to the temporal, even its absorption by it, pending the inevitable complete negation. To consider things in this way amounts perforce to 'humanizing' religion, that is, to treating religion as a purely human fact of the social order, or better still, of the 'sociological' or psychological order, depending on one's preference. In truth, this is no longer religion, for religion essentially includes something 'supra-human' lacking which we are no longer in the spiritual domain, for the temporal and the human are essentially identical, as we explained earlier. Thus we have here a veritable implicit negation of religion and the spiritual, whatever the appearances may be, a negation such that the explicit and avowed negation will amount less to the establishment of a new order than simply to the recognition of a fait accompli. In this way the reversal of relations prepares directly for the suppression of the superior term—something it already implies, at least virtually—just as the revolt of the Kshatriyas against the authority of the Brahmins prepares for and summons as it were the ascendancy of the lowest castes, as we shall see. And those who have followed us this far will easily understand that there is something more in this parallel than a simple comparison.

6

THE REVOLT OF THE KSHATRIYAS

Among almost all peoples and throughout diverse epochs—and with mounting frequency as we approach our times—the wielders of temporal power have tried, as we have said, to free themselves of all superior authority, claiming to hold their power from themselves alone, and so to separate completely the spiritual from the temporal, or even to subordinate the first to the second. This 'insubordination', taken in the etymological sense, has proceeded to differing degrees, the most advanced also being the most recent, as we indicated in the preceding chapter. It has indeed never gone so far in this direction as in modern times, and above all it seems that the various ideas that went along with it in former times were never so integrated into the general mentality as they have become during the last centuries. In this connection, let us repeat what we have already said elsewhere on 'individualism' considered as a characteristic of the modern world:[1] the function of the spiritual authority is the only one that relates back to a supra-individual domain; and from the moment this authority goes unacknowledged, it is logical that individualism should immediately appear, at least as a tendency if not as a well-defined affirmation,[2] since all other social functions, beginning with the 'governmental' (which is that of the temporal power), are of a purely human order, individualism being precisely the reduction of the whole of civilization to

1. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 5.

2. Whatever form it may take, this affirmation is in reality a more or less dissimulated denial of all principles superior to the individuality.

human elements alone. It is the same with 'naturalism', as was mentioned earlier: since it is linked to metaphysical and transcendent knowledge, the spiritual authority alone has a truly 'supernatural' character, all the rest being of a natural or 'physical' order, as we pointed out regarding the kind of learning that in a traditional civilization is primarily the prerogative of the Kshatriyas. Moreover, individualism and naturalism are quite closely interdependent, for they are basically only two aspects of one and the same thing, looked at either with respect to man or to the world; and it may be said generally that 'naturalistic' or anti-metaphysical doctrines appear in a civilization when the element representing the temporal power becomes predominant over that representing the spiritual authority.[3]

This is what happened in India itself when the Kshatriyas, no longer content to occupy the second rank in the hierarchy of social functions (even though this second rank included the exercise of all external and visible power), revolted against the authority of the Brahmins and tried to free themselves of all dependence upon them. Here history offers a striking confirmation of what we said above, that the temporal power brings about its own ruin when it disregards its subordination to the spiritual authority, because, like everything belonging to the world of change, it is not sufficient unto itself since change is inconceivable and contradictory without reference to an immutable principle. Any conception that denies the immutable by placing the being entirely in the world of 'becoming' involves an element of contradiction; it will be eminently anti-metaphysical since the metaphysical domain is precisely that of the

3. Another curious fact, which we can only point to in passing, is the important role very often played by a feminine element, or one symbolically represented as such, in the doctrines of the Kshatriyas, whether in doctrines regularly constituted for their use, or in the heterodox ideas that they sometimes embrace. In this connection we may even point out that the existence among certain peoples of a feminine priesthood seems to be linked to the domination of the warrior caste, a fact that can be explained on one hand by the preponderance of the 'rajasic' and emotive element among Kshatriyas, and on the other, and above all, by the correspondence in the cosmic order of the feminine with *Prakriti* or 'primordial Nature', which is the principle of 'becoming' and of temporal mutation.

immutable, of what is beyond nature or 'becoming'; and it could also be called 'temporal', thereby indicating that its point of view is exclusively that of succession.

It should be noted moreover that the very use of the word 'temporal', when applied to the power so designated, has as its raison d'être to signify that this power does not extend beyond what is involved in succession, or what is subject to change. Modern 'evolutionist' theories in their various forms are not the only examples of this error that consists in placing all reality in 'becoming', although some have given it a special nuance by introducing the recent idea of 'progress': theories of this kind have existed since antiquity, notably among the Greeks, and also in certain schools of Buddhism,[4] which should moreover be regarded as deviant or degenerate forms although in the West it has become customary to consider them as representing 'original Buddhism'. In reality, the more closely one investigates what is known of the latter, the more it appears to differ from the idea that orientalists generally have of it; in particular, it now seems well-established that it never in any way denied *Ātman* or the 'Self', that is, the permanent and immutable principle of the being, which is precisely what we particularly have in view here. Whether the rebel Kshatriyas (or those under their inspiration) introduced this negation later in certain schools of Indian Buddhism or whether they only wished to use it for their own ends is a matter that we will not pursue, for it is after all of little importance since the consequences are in any event the same.[5]

There is then clearly a direct link between the negation of all immutable principles and the negation of spiritual authority,

4. This is why the Buddhists of these schools were called *sarva-vaināshikas*, meaning 'those who uphold the dissolubility of all things'. This dissolubility is, in short, equivalent to the 'universal flux' taught by certain 'natural philosophers' of Greece.

5. The fact that Shākyamuni himself was born a Kshatriya cannot be invoked as an argument against what we say here about the original Buddhism and a later deviation, for this fact can very legitimately be explained by the special conditions of a certain epoch, conditions resulting from cyclic laws. Moreover, it can be noted in this respect that Christ too is descended, not from the priestly tribe of Levi, but from the royal tribe of Judah.

between the reduction of all reality to 'becoming' and the affirmation of the supremacy of the Kshatriyas; and it must be added that in subordinating the being entirely to change one thereby reduces it to what is individual, for what allows passage beyond individuality and is transcendent with respect to it can only be the immutable principle of the being. All this clearly shows the solidarity of naturalism and individualism that we just noted.[6]

But the revolt overshot its mark and the Kshatriyas were not able to stop it at the precise point where they could have reaped advantage from what they had set in motion. It was the lowest castes that really profited from it, and this can easily be understood since, once underway down such a slope, it is impossible not to descend all the way to the bottom. The denial of *Ātman* was not the only one introduced by this deviated Buddhism; there was also the denial of caste distinctions, the basis of the traditional social order, and this denial, directed at the outset against the Brahmins, was not long in turning against the Kshatriyas themselves.[7] In fact, as soon as hierarchy is denied in its very principle, it is impossible to see how any caste can maintain its supremacy over the others, or, for that matter, in the name of what they could claim to impose it. In such conditions anyone can consider that he has as much right to power as anyone else, provided that he in fact has sufficient force at his disposal to seize it and to wield it; and if it is merely a question of material force, is it not obvious that this must be found to the highest degree in those social elements that are both most numerous and, by their function, furthest from any preoccupation touching even indirectly upon spirituality? The denial of caste opened the door to every usurpation, and men of the lowest caste, the Shūdras, were not long in taking advantage of it; some of them in fact were even able to seize hold

6. It is also worth noting that theories of 'becoming' tend quite naturally toward a certain 'phenomenalism', even though in its strictest sense this is an entirely modern concept.

7. One cannot say that the Buddha himself denied caste distinctions but only that he did not need to take them into account, for what he really had in view was the institution of a monastic order, within which this distinction did not apply. Only when there was an attempt to extend this absence of caste distinction to the society outside was it transformed into a real denial.

of royalty and, by a kind of 'repercussion' that lay in the logic of events, dispossess the Kshatriyas of the power that had at first belonged to them legitimately, but of which they themselves had destroyed the legitimacy.[8]

8. A government in which men of inferior caste arrogate to themselves the title and functions of royalty is what the ancient Greeks called 'tyranny', from which it can be seen that the original sense of this word is remote indeed from the modern understanding, where it is used rather as a synonym of 'despotism'.

7

THE USURPATIONS OF ROYALTY AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

It is sometimes said that history repeats itself, but this is false, for there cannot be in the universe two beings or two events strictly alike in all respects; if there were, they would no longer be two but, since they would coincide in everything, they would merge purely and simply in such a way that there would be but one and the same being or one and the same event.[1] Moreover, the repetition of identical possibilities implies the contradictory supposition of a limitation of universal and total possibility, and as we have explained in detail elsewhere with all the necessary elaborations,[2] it is this which allows us to refute such theories as those of 'reincarnation' and an 'eternal return'. But another no less false opinion, which is quite the opposite of this one, is the contention that historical facts are entirely dissimilar and that there is nothing common among them. The truth is that there are always dissimilarities in certain respects and similarities in others, and that, as there are different types of beings in nature, so there are also (in this domain as in all the others) different types of facts; in other words there are facts that are the manifestation or expression of one and the same law in

1. Leibnitz called this the 'principle of indiscernibles'. As we have already had occasion to point out, Leibnitz, in contrast to other modern philosophers, possessed some traditional information, which was however fragmentary and insufficient to permit him to free himself from certain limitations.

2. *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pt. 2, chap. 6.

diverse circumstances. This is why one sometimes encounters similar situations which, if one neglects their differences and focuses only on their similarities, can give the illusion of a repetition. In reality, there is never identity between different periods of history, but there is correspondence and analogy, just as there is between the cosmic cycles or the multiple states of a being; and just as different beings can pass through similar phases—with the one reservation that there are modalities proper to the nature of each of them—so too can peoples and civilizations.

Despite very great differences, then, there is, as we have shown above, an incontestable analogy (perhaps never sufficiently remarked upon before) between the social organization of India and that of the Western Middle Ages; between the castes of the one and the classes of the other there is only a correspondence, not an identity, but this correspondence is nonetheless of the greatest importance because it serves to show with particular clarity that all institutions presenting a truly traditional character rest on the same natural foundations and in the final analysis differ from one another only by the adaptations required by varying circumstances of time and place. It should be clearly noted moreover that we do not in any way mean to suggest that Europe in this epoch borrowed this notion directly from India, for this seems quite unlikely; we say only that there are here two applications of one and the same principle and that fundamentally this is all that matters, at least from our present point of view. We shall therefore set aside the question of a common origin, which in any case could only be found by tracing it back to the most remote past, for this origin would go back to the filiation of the different traditional forms with the great primordial tradition and so, as should be readily apparent, would be complex indeed. If we nevertheless raise this possibility, it is because we do not in fact believe that such precise similarities can be satisfactorily explained outside of a regular and effective transmission, and also because we find in the Middle Ages many other concordant indications that show quite clearly that there still was in the West at that time a conscious link, at least for some, with the true 'center of the world', the unique source of all orthodox traditions, whereas in the modern epoch, on the contrary, we see no such thing.

We also find in Europe beginning with the Middle Ages an analogue to the revolt of the Kshatriyas, particularly in France where from the time of Philip the Fair, who must be considered one of the principal authors of the deviation characteristic of the modern epoch, royalty worked almost continually at becoming independent of the spiritual authority, while conserving however, by a singular illogicality, the outward sign of its original dependence since, as we have explained, the anointing of kings represented nothing else than this. Long before the 'humanists' of the Renaissance, the 'jurists' of Philip the Fair were already the real precursors of modern secularism; and it is to this period, that is, the beginning of the fourteenth century, that we must in reality trace the rupture of the Western world from its own tradition.

For reasons that would take too long to set forth here (and which we have in any case indicated in other studies),[3] we think that the starting-point of this rupture was marked very clearly by the destruction of the Order of the Temple. We shall only recall that this order was a kind of link between East and West and that in the West itself it was, because of its at once religious and martial character, such a link also between the spiritual and the temporal, even if this double character must not be interpreted as the sign of a more direct relation with the common source of the two powers.[4] One may be tempted to object that even if this destruction was deliberately desired by the king of France, it was at least implemented with the agreement of the papacy; but the truth is that it was imposed upon the papacy, which is something altogether different. By thus reversing the normal relationship, the temporal power henceforth began to use the spiritual authority for its own ends of political domination.

One might doubtless object further that the fact that the spiritual authority let itself be subjugated in this way proves that it was

3. See in particular *The Esoterism of Dante.*

4. On this subject see our study 'Saint Bernard' [*Insights into Christian Esoterism*, chap. 10], where we showed that the characters of both the monk and the knight were united in the person of Saint Bernard, author of the rule of the Order of the Temple, which he later called 'God's militia'. This explains his continual role as peacemaker and arbitrator between the religious and political powers.

no longer what it should have been, and that its representatives were no longer fully conscious of its transcendent character. This is true, and it even explains and justifies Dante's sometimes violent invectives against the clergy of his time; but the fact remains that in relation to the temporal power they still represented spiritual authority, and that it was from this authority that the temporal power derived its legitimacy. The representatives of the temporal power are not, as such, qualified to recognize whether or not the spiritual authority corresponding to the traditional form from which they derive possesses the plenitude of its effective reality; they are even incapable of doing so by definition, since their competence is limited to a lower domain; but whatever this authority might be, if they disregard their subordination to it, they thereby compromise their legitimacy.

We must, then, take great care to distinguish between the question of what a spiritual authority may be in itself at a given time, and that of its relationship with the temporal power. The second question is independent of the first, which has to do solely with those who exercise the priestly functions, or who would normally be qualified to exercise them; and even if this authority had entirely lost the 'spirit' of its doctrine through the fault of its representatives, the mere conservation of the deposit of the 'letter' and of the outward forms in which this doctrine is in some way contained would still continue to ensure for it the necessary and sufficient power to validly exercise its supremacy over the temporal.[5] For this supremacy is attached to the very essence of spiritual authority and belongs to it so long as it exists regularly; and no matter how 'diminished' it may be, the least portion of spirituality is still incomparably superior to anything of the temporal order. It follows from this that the spiritual authority can and must always control the temporal power, and

5. This case is comparable to that of a man who has inherited a treasure in a sealed box that he cannot open, and who thus knows nothing of its real nature. Such a man would nonetheless be the authentic possessor of the treasure, for the loss of the key would not deprive him of its ownership; and if certain outward prerogatives were attached to this ownership, he would still retain the right to exercise them, though in what concerns him personally it is obvious that under these conditions he could not enjoy his treasure fully.

that it cannot itself be controlled by anything else, at least outwardly.[6] However shocking such a statement may seem in the eyes of most of our contemporaries, we do not hesitate to declare that this is but the expression of an undeniable truth.[7]

But to return to Philip the Fair, who for our present purpose furnishes an especially characteristic example. It is instructive that Dante attributes his actions to 'cupidity',[8] which is a vice, not of a Kshatriya but of a Vaishya; we could say that when they enter a state of revolt the Kshatriyas as it were degrade themselves, losing their

6. This reservation concerns the supreme principle of the spiritual and the temporal, which is beyond all particular forms, and the direct representatives of which obviously have the right of control over both domains. But the action of this supreme principle in the present state of the world is not being exercised visibly, so that one may say that all spiritual authority appears outwardly as supreme, even if it is only what we have called a relative spiritual authority, and even if, as in this case, it has lost the key to the traditional form it is charged to conserve.

7. The same holds true for 'papal infallibility', the proclamation of which has raised so much protest simply because of modern incomprehension, an incomprehension moreover that rendered its explicit and solemn affirmation all the more indispensable. An authentic representative of a traditional doctrine is necessarily infallible when he speaks in the name of this doctrine; and it must be clearly understood that this infallibility is attached, not to the individual, but to the function. Thus, in Islam, every *mufti* is infallible insofar as he is an authorized interpreter of the *sharī'a*, that is of the legislation based essentially on the religion, even though his competence may not extend to a more interior order. Easterners would be astonished, not that the pope is infallible in his own domain—something that poses no difficulty for them—but rather that he should be the only one infallible in all the West.

8. This explains not only the destruction of the Order of the Temple but also, and even more visibly, what was called the debasement of the coinage, two facts that are perhaps more closely related than might at first glance seem apparent. In any case, if the contemporaries of Philip the Fair considered this debasement a crime on the part of the king, it must be concluded that by changing the standard of coinage on his own initiative he exceeded the acknowledged rights of the royal power. Here is an indication well worth holding in mind, for in antiquity and in the Middle Ages the question of coinage had certain aspects entirely unknown to the moderns, who confine themselves to a merely 'economic' point of view. Similarly, it has been noted that the symbols figuring on Celtic coins can only be explained in reference to the doctrinal knowledge that was reserved to the Druids, which implies their direct intervention in this domain. Such control by the spiritual authority must have lasted until nearly the end of the Middle Ages.

own character and taking on that of a lower caste. It may even be added that this degradation must inevitably accompany the loss of legitimacy: if by their own fault the Kshatriyas are deprived of their normal right to the exercise of temporal power, it is because they are not truly Kshatriyas, by which we mean that they are not of a nature any longer to fulfill what was their proper function. If the king is no longer content to be the first of the Kshatriyas, that is to say the head of the nobility, and to play the 'regulating' role to which he is entitled as such, he loses what essentially constitutes his raison d'être, and at the same time opposes himself to the nobility of which he is but an emanation and as it were the most complete expression. Thus we see royalty, in order to 'centralize' and to absorb in itself the powers that belong collectively to all the nobility, enter into a struggle with the nobility and work relentlessly toward the destruction of the very feudal system from which it had itself issued. It can do so, moreover, only by relying on the support of the third-estate, which corresponds to the Vaishyas; and this is why we also see, precisely from the time of Philip the Fair, the kings of France beginning to surround themselves almost continually with the bourgeoisie, especially such kings as Louis XI and Louis XIV, who pushed the work of 'centralization' the furthest, the bourgeoisie moreover later reaping the benefits of this when it seized power during the Revolution.

Let us add that temporal 'centralization' is generally the sign of an opposition to the spiritual authority, the influence of which governments try to neutralize in order to substitute their own. This is why the feudal form, the one in which the Kshatriyas can most completely exercise their normal functions, is at the same time the one that best seems to suit the regular organization of traditional civilizations such as that of the Middle Ages.

The modern epoch, which is that of rupture from tradition, could be characterized from a political point of view as the substitution of the national system for the feudal system; and it was in fact during the fourteenth century that 'nations' began to form through the agency of that 'centralization' we just spoke of. It is right to say that the formation of the 'French nation' in particular was the work of its kings, but in doing this they unwittingly prepared their own

ruin;[9] and if France was the first European country where the monarchy was abolished, it is because 'nationalization' had started there. Besides, we scarcely need recall how fiercely 'nationalist' and 'centralist' the Revolution was and also what truly revolutionary use was made throughout the nineteenth century of the so-called 'principle of nations';[10] there is therefore a rather singular contradiction in the 'nationalism' proclaimed today by certain avowed adversaries of the Revolution and its work. But the most interesting point for us at present is the following: the formation of 'nations' is essentially one episode in the struggle of the temporal against the spiritual; and if we want to get to the root of the matter, it may be said that this is precisely the reason why it proved fatal to the monarchy, which, even at the moment when it seemed to be realizing all its ambitions, was only rushing to ruin.[11]

There is a kind of political (and therefore entirely external) unity that implies a disregard, if not the denial, of the spiritual principles that alone can establish the true and profound unity of a civilization, and 'nations' are an example of this. During the Middle Ages there existed throughout the West a real unity, based on properly traditional foundations, which we call 'Christendom', but when these secondary unities of a purely political—that is to say temporal and no longer spiritual—order were formed, this great unity of the West was irremediably broken and the effective existence of Christendom came to an end. Nations, merely the dispersed fragments of what was formerly Christendom, false unities substituted for the true one by the temporal power's will to dominate can, given the very conditions of their origin, survive only by opposing each other

9. To this struggle of royalty against the feudal nobility one can quite strictly apply the Gospel saying: 'And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.' [Mark 3:25].

10. It should be noted that this 'principle of nations' was exploited especially against the papacy and against Austria, which represented the last vestige of the heritage of the Holy Roman Empire.

11. Where the monarchy has maintained itself by becoming 'constitutional' it is no more than a shadow of itself and has hardly more than a nominal and 'representative' existence, as is expressed by the well-known formula, 'the king reigns, but does not rule.' This is truly nothing but a caricature of the former monarchy.

and ceaselessly contending among themselves in all fields.[12] Now spirit is unity, matter is multiplicity and division; and the more one removes oneself from spirituality, the more antagonisms are accentuated and amplified. No one can deny that the feudal wars, which were quite localized and subject moreover to restrictive regulation by the spiritual authority, were nothing compared to the national wars that have resulted, following the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, in 'armed nations',[13] and we have seen in our own day new developments hardly reassuring for the future.

On the other hand, the establishment of 'nations' made possible actual attempts to subjugate the spiritual to the temporal, implying a complete reversal of the hierarchical relations between the two powers. This subjugation found its most definitive expression in the notion of a 'national' church, that is, one subordinated to the State and confined within its limits. The very phrase 'state religion' is a deliberate equivocation signifying fundamentally nothing else than that religion is used by the temporal government to ensure its own domination; it is religion reduced to no more than a mere factor of the social order.[14]

This idea of a national church first appeared in Protestant countries; or, to be more exact, it was perhaps above all to realize this idea that Protestantism was instigated, for it seems clear that Luther was hardly anything more, at least politically, than an instrument of the ambitions of certain German princes; and it is moreover quite likely that if the revolt against Rome had taken place without such

12. This is why the idea of a 'league of nations' can only be a utopian one with no real significance; the national form is essentially hostile to the recognition of any unity superior to its own. Besides, according to present-day conceptions, only a unity of an exclusively temporal and hence all the more ineffectual order would be involved, which could only be a parody of the true unity.

13. As we have noted elsewhere (*The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 5), by compelling all men indiscriminately to take part in modern wars, the essential distinctions among the social functions are entirely ignored, this being moreover a logical consequence of 'egalitarianism'.

14. Moreover, this conception can be realized in forms other than that of a 'national' church properly speaking. Of this we have a most striking example in such a regime as the Napoleonic 'Concordat', which transformed priests into civil servants—a true monstrosity.

support its consequences would have been quite as negligible as those of many other short-lived incidents of dissent.

The Reformation is the most visible symptom of the rupture of the spiritual unity of Christendom; but it is not what actually first began 'to rend the seamless robe,' as Joseph de Maistre puts it, for this rupture had long been a fait accompli, since, as we have already said, its beginnings can in fact be traced back two centuries earlier; and an analogous remark could be made about the Renaissance which, by a not altogether fortuitous coincidence, came about at almost the same time as the Reformation and only when the traditional knowledge of the Middle Ages had been almost entirely lost. Protestantism was in this respect rather more an outcome than a point of departure; but if in reality it was above all the work of princes and sovereigns, who first of all used it for political ends, its individualist tendencies were not long in turning back upon them, for they were directly preparing the way for the democratic and egalitarian conceptions characteristic of the present epoch.[15]

However, as regards the question of the subjugation of religion to the State in the way we have indicated, it would be wrong to believe that examples outside of Protestantism cannot be found:[16] if the Anglican schism of Henry VIII represents the most complete success in the creation of a 'national' church, Gallicanism itself [the spirit of nationalism within the Roman Catholic church in France], as conceived by Louis XIV, was in reality nothing else; if this latter movement had succeeded, the link with Rome would no doubt have continued at least in theory, but in practice its effects would have been annulled by the interposition of the political power, and the situation in France would not have been appreciably different from

15. It is worth noting that Protestantism suppresses the clergy, and though it claims to uphold the authority of the Bible, it in fact ruins it by 'free inquiry'.

16. We are not considering here the case of Russia, which is somewhat special and would give rise to distinctions that would uselessly complicate the present exposition. While it is no less true that one also finds there a 'state religion' in the sense we have defined, the monastic orders have at least managed to escape to a certain degree the subordination of the spiritual to the temporal, whereas in the Protestant countries their suppression has rendered this subordination as complete as possible.

what it would be in England if the tendencies of the 'ritualist' faction of the Church of England were to prevail definitively.[17]

Under its various forms Protestantism pushed things to extremes, but it was not only in countries where Protestantism established itself that royalty destroyed its own 'divine right'—that is, the sole foundation of its legitimacy and at the same time the only guarantee of its stability—for according to what we have shown, the French monarchy, without going so far as a clean break with the spiritual authority, acted in exactly the same way (though by more roundabout means); and it even seems quite clear that it was the first to take this path. Those of its partisans who consider this a kind of distinction scarcely realize the consequences that this attitude brought about, consequences that were inevitable. The truth is that by virtue of this attitude the monarchy unconsciously opened the way for the Revolution; and this, by destroying it in turn, only went further in the direction of disorder to which the monarchy had begun to commit itself. Throughout the Western world in fact the bourgeoisie succeeded in grasping the power which the monarchy had first improperly shared with them; nor does it much matter whether the bourgeoisie subsequently abolished the monarchy, as in France, or allowed it to exist nominally, as in England and elsewhere, for both result in the triumph of the 'economic' and its openly proclaimed supremacy.

But as one sinks deeper into materiality, instability grows and changes take place more rapidly; thus the reign of the bourgeoisie will be relatively short-lived in comparison with the regime that preceded it. Furthermore, as usurpation calls forth usurpation, it is now the Shūdras who follow the Vaishyas in aspiring for domination, such being precisely the significance of bolshevism. We do not wish to formulate any forecast here, but it would not be very difficult to predict from the preceding remarks certain consequences for the future. If the lowest social elements come to power in one way or another, their reign will probably be the briefest of all, and it will mark the last phase of a given historical cycle since it is not possible

17. There is moreover a close similarity between the terms 'Anglicanism' and 'Gallicanism', which do indeed correspond well to the reality.

to descend any lower; and even if such an event were not to have wider implications, one may suppose that this phase will be at the very least, for the West, the end of the modern period.

An historian conversant with the above-mentioned facts could no doubt develop these considerations almost indefinitely, searching out more particular details that would emphasize even more precisely what we principally wanted to show here:[18] the too little known responsibility of the royal power for the origin of the whole modern disorder, this first deviation in the relations between the spiritual and the temporal which leads inevitably to all the others. But this cannot be our role; we wished only to give some examples in order to shed light on a wider synthesis, and so we must be content to consider only the main trends of history, and limit ourselves to the essential indications that stand out in the course of events.

18. It would be interesting for instance to study from this point of view the role of Richelieu, who was bent on destroying every last vestige of feudalism and who, while fighting the Protestants in France itself, forged an alliance with them abroad against what remained of the Holy Roman Empire, that is, against the vestiges of the former 'Christendom'.

8

THE TERRESTRIAL AND CELESTIAL PARADISES

THE POLITICAL CONSTITUTION of medieval Christendom was, as we have said, essentially feudal; it found its consummation in a function that was truly supreme in the temporal order, that of the emperor, who was, with respect to the kings, what the kings were in turn to their vassals. It must be admitted however that this conception of the Holy Roman Empire remained somewhat theoretical and was never fully realized, doubtless through the fault of the emperors themselves, who, misled by the extent of the power conferred upon them, were the first to contest their subordination to the spiritual authority, from which however they held their power even more directly than did the other sovereigns.[1] This came to be known later as the feud of the priesthood and the empire, and its diverse vicissitudes are well enough known that we need not recall them even summarily here, all the more so as the details are of little importance to our present purpose. What is more interesting is to understand what the emperor ought truly to have been and also what could have provoked the error that led him to mistake his relative supremacy for an absolute supremacy.

The distinction between the papacy and the empire originated in a way from a division of powers that in ancient Rome were united

1. The Holy Roman Empire begins with Charlemagne, and it is well known that it was the pope who conferred on him his imperial dignity, his successors also being legitimized only in this way.

in a single person, since during that period the *Imperator* was at the same time *Pontifex Maximus*;[2] but we do not think that it is necessary in this special case to inquire how that union of the spiritual and the temporal is to be explained, for this would risk involving us in some rather complex considerations.[3] The pope and the emperor were in any case certainly not the 'two halves of God' as Victor Hugo wrote but much more precisely the two halves of the Christ-Janus figure which certain representations depict holding a key in one hand and a scepter in the other, emblems respectively of the priestly and royal powers united in this figure as in their common principle.[4] This symbolic assimilation of Christ with Janus as the supreme principle of the two powers is the very clear sign of a certain traditional continuity (too often ignored or deliberately denied) between ancient Rome and Christian Rome; and we must not forget that in the Middle Ages the empire was just as 'Roman' as the papacy. But this same figure also explains the error we just pointed out and which was to prove fatal for the empire: this error lies, in brief, in regarding as equivalent the two faces of Janus; these are indeed so in appearance but, when they represent both the spiritual and the

2. It is very remarkable that the pope has always retained this title of *Pontifex Maximus*, the origin of which is so obviously foreign to Christianity and moreover greatly anterior to it, this fact being among those that ought to illustrate, to anyone capable of reflection, that so-called 'paganism' had in reality an entirely different character from that usually attributed to it.

3. The Roman emperor appears in a way as a Kshatriya exercising, in addition to his own function, that of a Brahmin, which seems something of an anomaly; and so one ought to inquire whether the Roman tradition may not have a particular character that allows us to consider this as something other than a mere usurpation. On the other hand, it may be doubted that the emperors were for the most part really 'qualified' from the spiritual point of view, though a distinction must sometimes be made between the 'official' representative of the authority and its actual holders; it is enough that the latter should inspire the former—even if he is not one of them—for things to be as they ought to be.

4. See an article by L. Charbonneau-Lassay entitled 'Un ancien emblème du mois de Janvier', published in the review *Regnabit*, March 1925. The key and the scepter are equivalent here to the more customary figure of the two keys, one of gold and the other of silver. These two symbols have moreover a direct relationship to Christ, according to this liturgical formula: 'O Key of David, and scepter of the house of Israel' (Roman breviary, service of 20 December).

temporal, cannot be so in reality. In other words, it is again the error of mistaking the relationship of the two powers for one of coordination, whereas it is really one of subordination, because once they are separated the one proceeds directly from the supreme principle while the other does so only indirectly, a point which, since it has been dealt with sufficiently above, we will not insist upon further here.

At the end of his treatise *De Monarchia*, Dante very clearly defines the respective powers of the pope and the emperor. The key passage is this:

> Twofold, therefore, are the ends which unerring Providence has ordained for man: the bliss of this life, which consists in the functioning of his own powers, and which is typified by the earthly Paradise; and the bliss of eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of that divine vision to which he cannot attain by his own powers, except they be aided by the divine light, and this state is made intelligible by the Celestial Paradise. These two states of bliss, like two different goals, man must reach by different ways. For we come to the first as we follow the philosophical teachings, applying them according to our moral and intellectual capacities [virtues]; and we come to the second as we follow the spiritual teachings which transcend human reason according to our theological capacities [virtues], Faith, Hope, and Charity. Though these two goals and their ways are made plain to us, the one by human reason, which as it is used by the philosophers makes all these things known to us, the other by the Holy Spirit, which through the prophets, through the holy writers, through Jesus Christ the Son of God co-eternal with the Spirit, and through his disciples, has revealed to us whatever supernatural truths we need, yet man's greed would keep them from us were not men like horses in their animal vagaries kept on the road by bit and rein. Thus the reins of man are held by a double driver according to man's twofold end; one is the supreme pontiff, who guides mankind with revelations to life eternal, and the other is the emperor, who guides mankind with philosophical instructions to temporal happiness. And since none or very few (and

> these with difficulty) can reach this goal, unless a free mankind enjoys the tranquility of peace and the waves of distracting greed are stilled, this must be the constant aim of him who guides the globe and whom we call Roman Prince, in order that on this threshing floor of life mortals may exist free and in peace.[5]

This text calls for a number of explanations in order to be perfectly understood, for we cannot doubt that beneath a language purely theological in appearance are concealed much deeper truths, conforming moreover to the habits of its author and of the initiatic organizations to which he belonged.[6]

On the other hand—let us note in passing—it is quite astonishing that the one who wrote these lines has sometimes been represented as an enemy of the papacy; he no doubt did, as we have already said, denounce the insufficiencies and imperfections he saw in the papacy of his day, and particularly the consequent, too ready recourse to purely temporal means of action, which hardly befitted the exercise of spiritual authority. But he knew enough not to impute to the institution itself the defects of the men who represented it temporally, something that modern individualism does not always know enough to do.[7]

5. *De Monarchia,* III, 16. [Taken from *On World Government or De Monarchia,* tr. Herbert W. Schneider (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949), p 60.]

6. On this subject see in particular our study *The Esoterism of Dante* and also Luigi Valli's work *Il Linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei 'Fedeli d'Amore'.* Unfortunately the author died before he was able to complete his research and at the very moment when it seemed to be leading him to envisage things in a spirit closer to traditional esoterism.

7. When speaking of Catholicism the utmost care must always be taken to distinguish between what concerns Catholicism itself as a doctrine and what relates only to the present organizational state of the Catholic church. Whatever one may think about the second, it cannot affect the first. What we are saying here of Catholicism, because this example immediately presents itself apropos of Dante, could moreover find many more applications; but there are very few today who are able, when such a need arises, to free themselves from historical contingencies, to the extent that—to continue with the same example—certain defenders of Catholicism, and not only its adversaries, believe that everything can be reduced to a simple question of 'historicity', which is one form of the modern 'superstition of fact'.

In light of our previous explanations it should not be difficult to see that the distinction Dante draws between the two ends of man corresponds very exactly to that between the 'lesser mysteries' and the 'greater mysteries', and consequently also to that between 'royal initiation' and 'sacerdotal initiation'. The emperor presides over the 'lesser mysteries', which correspond to the 'Terrestrial Paradise', that is to say the realization of the perfection of the human state;[8] the sovereign pontiff presides over the 'greater mysteries', which concern the 'Celestial Paradise', that is, the realization of supra-human states, joined thus to the human state by the 'pontific' function, understood in its strictly etymological sense.[9]

Man as man can himself obviously gain only the first of these two ends, which can be called 'natural', whereas the second is properly speaking 'supernatural' since it lies beyond the manifested world; and so this distinction is indeed that between the 'physical' and the 'metaphysical' orders. Here we see as clearly as possible how all the traditions are in agreement, whether of the East or the West. By defining the respective attributes of the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins as we did, we were quite justified not to see in them something applicable only to a certain form of civilization—that of India—since we find them again, defined in a rigorously identical form, in what was before the modern deviation the traditional civilization of the Western world.

Dante thus assigns to the emperor and to the pope, respectively, the functions of leading mankind to the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and to the 'Celestial Paradise', the first of these two functions being accomplished 'according to philosophy' ['with philosophical instructions to temporal happiness'] and the second 'according to revelation' ['with revelations to life eternal'], expressions that demand careful

8. This realization is in fact that same restoration of the 'primordial state' to be found in all the traditions, as we have already explained on many occasions.

9. In the symbolism of the cross, the first of these two realizations is represented by the indefinite development of the horizontal line, and the second by that of the vertical line, these being, according to the language of Islamic esoterism, the two senses of 'amplitude' and 'exaltation', the full blossoming of which is realized in 'Universal Man', who is the mystical Christ, the 'second Adam' of Saint Paul.

explanation. It goes without saying, of course, that 'philosophy' cannot be understood here in its ordinary and profane sense, for if it were it would be all too obviously incapable of playing the role assigned to it. To understand what is really involved we must restore to the word 'philosophy' its original significance as understood by the Pythagoreans, who were the first to use it.

As we have indicated elsewhere,[10] this word, which etymologically signifies 'love of wisdom', designates first of all a prior disposition required for attaining wisdom, and by a natural enough extension of its meaning it can also designate the search, arising from this disposition, that will lead to true knowledge, so that philosophy is thus only a preliminary and preparatory stage, a step toward wisdom, just as the 'Terrestrial Paradise' is a stage on the way to the 'Celestial Paradise'. Understood thus, 'philosophy' could be called 'human wisdom' because it comprises the sum of all knowledge that can be attained by the faculties of the human individual alone, faculties that Dante synthesizes as reason, for it is this that truly defines man as such; but this 'human wisdom', precisely because it is only human, is not true wisdom, which, identified with metaphysical knowledge, is essentially supra-rational and thus also supra-human. And just as the path to the 'Celestial Paradise' departs earth from the 'Terrestrial Paradise' in order to *salire alle stelle*, as Dante puts it,[11] that is, to ascend to the superior states (represented in astrological language by the planetary and stellar spheres, and in theological language by the angelical hierarchies), so in the case of all knowledge that surpasses the human state do the individual faculties become powerless and other means become necessary; and it is precisely here that 'revelation' intervenes, that is, a direct communication from the superior states, which is, as we have said, effectively established by the 'pontificate'. This 'revelation' is possible because of the existence of faculties transcendent with respect to the individual, and whatever may be the name one gives to them, whether one speaks for example of 'intellectual intuition' or of 'inspiration', it is always essentially the same thing. The first of these

10. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 1.
11. *Purgatorio*, XXXIII, 145. See *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 8.

two terms may prompt us to think in one sense of the 'angelic' states, which in effect are identical with the supra-individual states of the being, and the second may evoke above all that action of the Holy Spirit to which Dante expressly alludes.[12]

One might also say that what is inward inspiration to the one who receives it directly becomes outward revelation to the human collectivity for which it serves as the medium of transmission insofar as this is possible, that is to say within the limits of the expressible. We are, naturally, only summing up concisely and thus in perhaps too simplified a way matters that would be quite complex if they were fully developed, and that would moreover lead us far from our subject; in any case, what has been said suffices for our present purpose.

Understood in this way, 'revelation' and 'philosophy' correspond respectively to what Hindu doctrine calls *shruti* and *smriti*.[13] Here again it should be noted that we speak of correspondence and not of identity, the difference of traditional forms implying a real distinction between the points of view from which things are here envisaged. *Shruti*, which includes all the Vedic texts, is the fruit of direct inspiration, while *smriti* includes all the consequences and diverse applications to be drawn from them by reflection; their relationship is in certain respects that of intuitive knowledge to discursive knowledge; and indeed, of these two modes of knowledge the first is supra-human and the second strictly human. Just as the domain of revelation is attributed to the papacy and that of philosophy to the empire, so also *shruti* concerns the Brahmins more directly (the study of the Veda being their principal occupation) whereas *smriti* (including the *Dharma-Shāstra* or the 'Book of Law',[14] that is to say the social application of the doctrine) concerns the Kshatriyas, for

12. Pure intellect, which is of a universal and not an individual order, and which links all the states of the being together, is the principle Hindu doctrine calls *Buddhi*, a name of which the root expresses essentially the idea of 'wisdom'.

13. See *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*, chap. 1.

14. In this regard one might draw certain conclusions from the fact that in the Jewish tradition, which is the source and starting-point of all that can be called 'religion' in its most precise sense (since Islam as well as Christianity have a direct link with it), the designation *Torah* or 'Law' is applied to the whole of the sacred

whom most of the books dealing with this application are especially intended. *Shruti* is the principle from which all the rest of the doctrine derives, and knowledge of it, implying that of the superior states, constitutes the 'greater mysteries'; knowledge of *smriti* on the other hand—that is, of applications to the 'world of man' (understanding by this the integral human state considered in the full amplitude of its possibilities)—constitutes the 'lesser mysteries'.[15] *Shruti* is direct light which, like pure intelligence (here equivalent to pure spirituality), corresponds to the sun; and *smriti* is reflected light which, like memory, the name of which it bears (and which is the 'temporal' faculty by very definition), corresponds to the moon.[16] This is why the key to the 'greater mysteries' is made of gold and that to the 'lesser mysteries' of silver, for gold and silver are alchemically exact equivalents to what the sun and the moon represent in the astrological order.

These two keys—those of Janus in ancient Rome—were one of the attributes of the sovereign pontiff, to whom the function of 'hierophant' or 'master of the mysteries' essentially belonged. Along with the very title *Pontifex Maximus* they have remained among the principal emblems of the papacy; and the words of the Gospel concerning the 'power of the keys' (as moreover for many other points) fully confirm the primordial tradition.

We can now understand even more completely than before why these two keys are at the same time those of spiritual and temporal

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books. We see this to be evidence of the special aptness of the religious form to peoples in whom the nature of the Kshatriya predominates, and also of the particular importance the social point of view assumes in that form, these two considerations moreover being quite closely linked.

15. It must be clearly understood that in all that we say it is always a question of knowledge that is not only theoretical, but effective, and that in consequence it essentially includes the corresponding realization.

16. In this respect it should be noted that the 'Celestial Paradise' is essentially the *Brahma-Loka*, identified with the 'spiritual sun' (*Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*, chaps. 21 and 22), and that, on the other hand, the 'Terrestrial Paradise' is described as touching the 'sphere of the moon' (*The King of the World*, chap. 6): in the symbolism of the *Divine Comedy* the summit of the mountain of Purgatory is the boundary of the human or earthly individual state and the point of communication with the celestial, supra-individual states.

power. The relationship between these two powers may be expressed by saying that the pope must keep for himself the golden key to the 'Celestial Paradise' and entrust to the emperor the silver key to the 'Terrestrial Paradise', and as we just saw, the symbolism of this second key is sometimes replaced by that of the scepter, the insignia belonging more particularly to royalty.[17]

In the preceding reflections there is one point to which we must draw further attention in order to avoid even the appearance of a contradiction. We said on the one hand that metaphysical knowledge, which is true wisdom, is the principle from which all other knowledge derives as by application to contingent orders, and on the other hand that philosophy (in its original sense, designating the entire sum of contingent knowledge) must be considered as a preparation for wisdom; so then how can these two things be reconciled? We have already explained this in another study, in connection with the double role of the 'traditional sciences':[18] it is a matter of points of view, one descending and the other ascending, the first corresponding to a development of knowledge starting from principles and leading to applications increasingly remote from them, and the second corresponding to a gradual acquisition of that same knowledge by proceeding from the inferior to the superior, or, if one prefers, from the exterior to the interior. This latter point of view corresponds, then, to the path by which men can be led to knowledge in a gradual manner proportioned to their intellectual capacities; and it is thus that they are led first to the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and then to the 'Celestial Paradise'. But this order of teaching or of communicating the 'sacred science' inverts that of its hierarchical constitution. Indeed, all knowledge that truly has the character of 'sacred science', of whatever order it may be, can only be validly established by those who fully possess principial knowledge and who by this very fact are alone qualified to realize, in conformity with the strictest traditional orthodoxy, all the adaptations

17. The scepter, like the key, is related symbolically to the 'World Axis'; but this is a point to which we can only make passing reference, reserving the privilege of developing it suitably to other studies.

18. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 4.

required by circumstances of time and place. This is why these adaptations, if accomplished in a regular fashion, are necessarily the work of the priesthood, to whom principial knowledge belongs by definition; and this is also why the priesthood alone can legitimately confer 'royal initiation', by communicating the knowledge that constitutes it.

One sees also that the two keys, considered as those of knowledge of the 'metaphysical' and of the 'physical' orders, really both belong to the sacerdotal authority, and that it is only by delegation so to speak that the second is entrusted to the holders of the royal power. In fact, when 'physical' knowledge is separated from its transcendent principle, it loses its primary raison d'être and is not long in becoming heterodox; and so it is then, as we have explained, that 'naturalist' doctrines appear, a result of the adulteration of 'traditional sciences' by the rebel Kshatriyas. This is already a step on the way to 'profane science', which will be the special work of inferior castes and the sign of their domination in the intellectual order—if in such a case one can still speak of intellectuality at all. Here again, as in the political order, the revolt of the Kshatriyas prepares the way for that of the Vaishyas and the Shūdras; and so, from one stage to another, we descend at last to the lowest kind of utilitarianism, the negation of all disinterested knowledge (even of the lowest rank) and of all reality beyond the perceptible domain. This is precisely what one witnesses in our own time, where the Western world has nearly arrived at the final stage of this descent which, like the fall of heavy bodies, keeps accelerating.

There is another point in the text of *De Monarchia* that we have not yet elucidated and which is no less worthy of our attention than what we have thus far considered. It is the allusion to navigation made in the last sentence, using a symbolism that Dante moreover frequently employs.[19] Among the emblems formerly attributed to Janus, the papacy has preserved not only the keys but also the barque—likewise attributed to Saint Peter—which has become the

19. On this subject see Arturo Reghini, 'L'Allegoria esoterica di Dante', in *Il Nuovo Patto*, September–November 1921, pp 546–8.

symbol of the Church.[20] The 'Roman' character of the papacy necessitated this transmission of symbols, without which it would have represented a mere geographical fact that conveyed nothing real.[21] Those who would see in this nothing but 'borrowings' for which to reproach Catholicism only display thereby a totally profane mentality; but we on the contrary see in this a proof of that traditional regularity without which no doctrine could be valid and which can be traced back step by step to the great primordial tradition; and we are certain that none of those who understand the profound meaning of these symbols would contradict us.

The figure of navigation was often used in Greco-Latin antiquity; one could cite in particular the expedition of the Argonauts in quest of the 'golden fleece',[22] the voyages of Ulysses, and also episodes from the works of Virgil and Ovid. One also encounters this image in India, sometimes framed by expressions strangely resembling those used by Dante, as in this passage from Shankarāchārya: 'The Yogi, having crossed the sea of passions, is united with tranquility and possesses the "Self" in plenitude.'[23] The 'sea of passions' is obviously the same as the 'waves of distracting greed', and in both texts it is similarly a question of 'tranquility', the symbolic voyage indeed representing the acquisition of the 'great peace'.[24] Moreover, this

20. The symbolic barque of Janus could move in both directions, forward and backward, which corresponds to the two faces of Janus himself.

21. We should moreover note well that if there are in the Gospels words and deeds that enable us to attribute the keys and the barque directly to Saint Peter, it is because from its origin the papacy was predestined to be 'Roman' by reason of the situation of Rome as the capital of the West.

22. Dante indeed makes a distinct allusion to this in one of the passages of the *Divine Comedy* most characteristic as regards the use of this symbolism (*Paradiso*, II, 1–18), and it is not unintentionally that he recalls this allusion in the last canto of the poem (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, 96). Moreover, the Hermetic significance of the 'golden fleece' was well known in the Middle Ages.

23. *Atmā-Bodha*; see *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*, chap. 23 and *The King of the World*, chap. 10.

24. It is this same conquest that is sometimes represented under the figure of a war. We have pointed out earlier the use of this symbolism in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as well as among the Muslims, and it can be added that a symbolism of the same kind can be found in the chivalric romances of the Middle Ages.

'great peace' can be understood in two ways according to whether it refers to the 'Terrestrial Paradise' or to the 'Celestial Paradise', in the latter case being identified with the 'light of glory' and the 'beatific vision'[25] while in the former case it represents 'peace' properly speaking, which has a more restricted sense but one still very different from the profane meaning. And it is noteworthy that Dante applies the same word 'bliss' to the two ends of man. The barque of Saint Peter is to convey men to the 'Celestial Paradise'; but if the role of the 'Roman Prince', that is the emperor, is to lead them to the 'Terrestrial Paradise', then this also implies a voyage.[26] This is why the 'Holy Land' of the various traditions, which is none other than that 'Terrestrial Paradise', is often represented by an island: the goal assigned by Dante to 'him who guides the globe' is the realization of 'peace',[27] and the port toward which he must direct mankind is the 'sacred island' that remains fixed in the midst of the incessant agitation of the waves, and that is the 'Mount of Salvation', the 'Sanctuary of Peace'.[28]

We now bring our explanations of this symbolism to a close, feeling that its comprehension should no longer present any difficulties, at least insofar as it is necessary to understand the respective roles of the empire and the papacy; moreover, we could scarcely say any more on this subject without raising issues that we do not wish to

25. This is what the different meanings of the Hebrew word *Shekinah* indicate very clearly; besides, the two aspects we mention here are those designated by the words *Gloria* and *Pax* in the formula *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* [Luke 2:14], as we have explained in our study *The King of the World*.

26. This is related to the symbolism of the two oceans, that of the 'upper waters' and that of the 'lower waters', which is common to all traditional doctrines.

27. On this point a parallel could be drawn with the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas mentioned earlier, as well as with the text of Confucius that we cited.

28. We have said elsewhere that 'peace' is one of the fundamental attributes of the 'King of the World', one of whose aspects is presented by the emperor. A second aspect finds its correspondence in the pope, but there is a third, the principle of the two others, which has no visible representation in this organization of 'Christendom' (on these three aspects, see *The King of the World*, chap. 4). It is easy to understand in the light of all these considerations that Rome was for the West an image of the true 'Center of the World', of the mysterious *Salem* of *Melchizedek*.

broach just now.[29] In its deliberate conciseness this passage from *De Monarchia* represents, as far as we know, the clearest and the most complete exposition of the constitution of Christendom and of the way in which the relationships between the two powers were to be envisioned therein.

One might doubtless wonder why such a conception has remained an ideal that was never to be realized; and it is strange that at the very time Dante formulated it events current in Europe were precisely such as to forever preclude its realization. Dante's corpus as a whole is in certain respects like a testament to the closing medieval age; it shows what the Western world would have been had it not broken from its tradition. But that the modern deviation did take place shows that this world really did not contain such possibilities, or at least that they were no more than the privilege of an already restricted elite that doubtless realized them to its own benefit, though without being able to pass them on to be reflected in the social organization.

At this point we reach the moment in history when the darkest period of the 'dark age' was to begin,[30] characterized in all orders by the development of the most inferior possibilities; and this development, ever advancing in the direction of change and multiplicity, was inevitably to result in what we see around us today. From the social point of view as from all others, instability is as it were at its maximum, disorder and confusion are everywhere, and humanity has surely never been further from the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and

29. This is the domain of Catholic esoterism of the Middle Ages, envisaged more particularly in its connections with Hermeticism; failing knowledge of this order, the powers of the pope and the emperor, such as they have been defined above, could not have been effectively realized, and this is precisely the knowledge that seems most lost to the modern world. And we have left aside certain secondary points since they were not important for the purpose of this study; thus, the allusion Dante makes to the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, should be compared to the role that he attributes to them in the *Divine Comedy* (see *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 3). On the other hand, one could also compare the respective roles of Dante's three guides, Virgil, Beatrice, and Saint Bernard, to those of the temporal power, the spiritual authority, and their common principle. As regards Saint Bernard, this last point should be related to what we said earlier.

30. See *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 1.

from primordial spirituality. Must we conclude that this alienation is final, that no stable and legitimate temporal power will ever again rule the earth, that all spiritual authority will disappear from this world, and that darkness, spreading from West to East, will forever hide the light of truth from men's eyes? If such were our conclusion, we would certainly not have written these pages, any more than we would have written any of our other works, for on such an hypothesis the effort entailed would have been futile. Our remaining task is to say why we do not think this is so.

9

THE IMMUTABLE LAW

THE TEACHINGS OF ALL TRADITIONAL DOCTRINES are, as we have seen, unanimous in affirming the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal and in considering as normal and legitimate only that social organization in which this supremacy is recognized and expressed in the relations between the two powers corresponding to these two domains. Moreover, history clearly shows that misunderstanding of this hierarchical order always and everywhere brings about the same consequences: social imbalance, confusion of functions, domination by progressively more inferior elements, and also intellectual degeneration—forgetfulness of the transcendent principles coming first, followed, as one descent follows another, by the negation of all true knowledge. It should be noted however that this doctrine, which allows us to foresee that things must inevitably happen this way, does not in and of itself need such *a posteriori* confirmation; nonetheless we feel it necessary to stress the point because, as our contemporaries are particularly sensitive to facts because of their own tendencies and mental habits, there is enough here to stimulate them to reflect seriously and perhaps above all to lead them to recognize the truth of this doctrine. If that truth were recognized even by a small number it would still be a result of considerable importance, for it is only in this way that a change of orientation leading to a restoration of the normal order can begin; and that restoration, whatever may be its means and modalities, will necessarily take place sooner or later—a point to which we now turn.

We have said that the temporal power concerns the world of action and change; now change, not having in itself its sufficient

reason,[1] must receive its law from a superior principle, by which alone it is integrated within the universal order. If on the contrary it tries to be independent of all superior principles, it is no longer anything but disorder pure and simple. Disorder is fundamentally the same thing as disequilibrium, and in the human domain it manifests itself through what is called injustice, for there is an identity between the notions of justice, order, equilibrium, and harmony; or, to be more precise, these are only diverse aspects of one and the same thing envisaged in different and multiple ways according to the domains to which they apply.[2] Now, according to Far-Eastern doctrine, justice is composed of the sum of all injustices, and in the total order all disorders are compensated by other disorders; this is why the revolution that overthrows the monarchy is both the logical result and the punishment, that is to say the balancing compensation, of the prior revolt of that same monarchy against the spiritual authority. Law is repudiated from the moment one denies the very principle from which it emanates; but the deniers could not really suppress it, and so it recoils upon them; thus does disorder finally return again to order, against which nothing can stand except in appearance and in an altogether illusory way.

Some will no doubt object that the revolution by which the power of the inferior castes was substituted for that of the Kshatriyas was only a worsening of that disorder, and this is certainly true if one considers only the immediate results; but it is precisely that worsening which prevents disorder from continuing indefinitely. If the temporal power did not lose its stability by the very fact that it ignored its subordination to the spiritual authority, there would be no reason for disorder to cease once it is introduced into the social

1. This is, properly speaking, the very definition of contingency.

2. All these senses, as well as that of 'law', are included in what Hindu doctrine designates by the word *dharma*; the accomplishment by each being of the function suitable to its own nature, on which caste distinction is based, is called *svadharma*, which could be compared with what Dante designates as the 'functioning of his own powers" in the text we mentioned and commented on in the preceding chapter. On this point, one may also refer to what we have said elsewhere about 'justice' considered as one of the fundamental attributes of the 'King of the World' and about his connection with 'peace'.

organization. But to speak of the stability of disorder amounts to a contradiction in terms, for disorder is nothing but change reduced to itself so to speak, and this would be tantamount to asserting immobility in movement. When disorder is accentuated movement is accelerated, for one more step is taken in the direction of pure change and of 'instantaneity'; this is why, as we were saying earlier, the more inferior are the prevailing social elements, the less durable is their domination, for like everything that has only a negative existence disorder destroys itself. It is in its very excess that the remedy for the most desperate cases is found, for the increasing rapidity of change will necessarily have a limit, and today are not many beginning to feel more or less confusedly that things cannot continue on their present course indefinitely? Even if in the present state of the world a rectification is no longer possible without a catastrophe, is that sufficient reason not to envisage it despite everything? And if we refused to do so, would that not again be a way of forgetting the immutable principles, which are beyond all the vicissitudes of the 'temporal' and which consequently nothing could affect?

We said earlier that humanity has never been so removed from the 'Terrestrial Paradise' as it is at present; one must not forget however that the end of a cycle coincides with the beginning of another cycle. One need only refer to the Apocalypse to see that the extreme limit of disorder, proceeding toward an apparent annihilation of the 'external world', must bring about the advent of the 'Heavenly Jerusalem' that will be, for a new period of the history of mankind, the analogue of what the 'Terrestrial Paradise' had been to the one that will have ended at that very moment.[3] The identity of the characteristics of the modern epoch with those indicated in the traditional doctrines for the final phases of the *Kali-Yuga* allow us to imagine without too much implausibility that this eventuality may not lie very far off; and this would most assuredly be the complete triumph of the spiritual after the present period of obscuration.[4]

3. On the connections between the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and the 'Heavenly Jerusalem', see *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 8.

4. According to certain traditions of Western esoterism, this could also be connected with the current to which Dante belonged, the veritable realization of the 'Holy Roman Empire'; and indeed, humanity would then have really recovered the

If such predictions seem too daring, as they may indeed be to those who do not possess sufficient traditional data to support them, one can at least call to mind the examples of the past, which clearly show that all things depending only on the contingent and transitory inevitably pass away and that disorder always disappears and order is finally restored, so that, even if disorder sometimes seems to prevail, its triumph can only be a passing one; and the greater the disorder has been, the more ephemeral will the triumph be. Such will doubtless be the case sooner or later (and perhaps sooner than one might expect) in the Western world, where in all domains disorder has gone further than anywhere else before; but here also it is better to await the end, and even if this disorder were to spread for a time over all the earth—as there are some grounds to fear—we would not modify our conclusions, for it would only confirm the predictions we have just made regarding the end of an historical cycle, although in this case the restoration of order would have to operate on a much vaster scale than in all the known examples; but then it would also be incomparably more profound and more integral since it would go as far as that return to the 'primordial state' of which all traditions speak.[5]

Besides, when we place ourselves, as we are now doing, at the point of view of spiritual realities, we can wait without anxiety as long as necessary, for as we have said, this is the domain of the immutable and the eternal. The feverish haste so characteristic of our times proves that our contemporaries really still hold to the temporal point of view even when they believe they have left it behind, and that, despite the claims of some in this respect, they scarcely know what pure spirituality is; moreover, even among those who try to react against modern 'materialism', how many are actually capable of conceiving a spirituality free from all special forms—and more particularly from a religious form—and of separating

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'Terrestrial Paradise', which would moreover imply the reunion of the spiritual and the temporal powers in their principle, this being again visibly manifested as it was in the beginning.

5. It should be understood that the restoration of the 'primordial state' is always possible for certain people, but that they represent exceptional cases. Here this restoration is envisaged for humanity taken collectively and in its totality.

principles from every application to contingent circumstances? Among those who pose as defenders of spiritual authority, how many have even an inkling of what this spiritual authority can be in its pure state? How many truly realize what its essential functions are, and do not stop short at outward appearances, where everything is reduced to mere questions of rites (the profound reasons for which remain moreover totally misunderstood) and even of 'jurisprudence', which is quite a temporal thing? Among those who would attempt to restore intellectuality, how many do not debase it to the level of a simple philosophy, understood this time in the usual and profane sense of the word? And who understands that, in their essence and in their profound reality, intellectuality and spirituality are absolutely one and the same thing under two different names? Among those who in spite of all have kept something of the traditional spirit (and we address them because they are the only ones whose thought could have any value in our eyes), how many envisage the truth for its own sake, in a totally disinterested way, independent of every sentimental preoccupation, of every party or ideological passion, of all concern for domination or proselytism?

Among those who understand that it is necessary above all to denounce the vanity of 'democratic' and 'egalitarian' illusions in order to escape the social chaos in which the Western world is foundering, how many have a notion of true hierarchy based essentially on the differences inherent in the very nature of human beings and on the degrees of knowledge to which they have effectively attained? Among those who declare themselves adversaries of 'individualism', how many are conscious of a reality that transcends the individual? If we ask such questions as these it is because they will permit all those who truly wish to reflect on them to find the explanation for the futility of certain efforts (despite the undoubtedly excellent intentions animating those who undertake them) and also for all the confusions and misunderstandings we referred to in the first pages of this book.

However, as long as a regularly constituted spiritual authority continues to subsist, even though it be unacknowledged by almost all (including its own representatives) and reduced to no more than a shadow of itself, this authority will always prove the better part,

and this can never be taken away from it because it contains something higher than purely human possibilities; even weakened or dormant, this part still incarnates 'the one thing needful', the only thing that does not pass away.[6] *Patiens quia æterna* [patient because eternal] is sometimes said of spiritual authority, and rightly so; not of course that any of the external forms it may assume will be eternal, for every form is only contingent and transitory, but because in itself, in its true essence, it partakes of the eternity and the immutability of the principles; and this is why, in all conflicts that pit temporal power against spiritual authority, one can rest assured that, whatever the appearances may be, it is always the latter that will have the last word.

6. We are thinking here of the well-known narrative from the Gospel in which Mary and Martha may be considered to symbolize the spiritual and the temporal respectively, insofar as they correspond to the contemplative life and the active life. According to Saint Augustine (*Contra Faustum*, XX, 52–58) one finds the same symbolism in the two wives of Jacob, Leah (*laborans*) representing active life and Rachel (*visum principium*) representing the contemplative life. Moreover, in 'Justice' are summed up all the virtues of active life whereas in 'Peace' the perfection of the contemplative life is realized; and here we find the two fundamental attributes of Melchizedek, that is of the common principle of the spiritual and temporal powers which govern the domains of the active life and the contemplative life respectively. Furthermore, also according to Saint Augustine (*Sermon* XLIII *on the Words of Isaiah*, chap. 2), reason is at the summit of the inferior part of the soul (senses, memory, and reflection) and the intellect is at the summit of its superior part (which knows the eternal ideas that are the immutable reasons of things); to the first belongs science (of earthly and transitory things) and to the second Wisdom (knowledge of the absolute and the immutable), the first being related to active life and the second to contemplative life. This distinction is equivalent to that between the individual and the supra-individual faculties, and between the two orders of knowledge that correspond respectively thereto; and we can also compare this with the following text of Saint Thomas Aquinas: *Dicendum quod sicut* RATIONABILITER *procedere attribuitur* NATURALI PHILOSOPHIAE, *quia in ipse observatur maxime modus rationis, ita* INTELLECTUALITER *procedere attribuitur* DIVINAE SCIENTIAE, *eo quod in ipse observatur maxime modus intellectus.* ['It must be said that just as to proceed *rationally* is attributed to *natural philosophy*, because in it there is observed most greatly the mode of reason, so to proceed *intellectually* is attributed to *divine science*, because in it there is observed most of all the mode of the intellect'] (*In Boetium de Trinitate*, q.6, art.1, ad3). We have seen earlier that, according to Dante, temporal power is exercised according to 'philosophy' or rational 'science' and spiritual power according to 'revelation' or supra-rational 'Wisdom', which corresponds most exactly to the distinction between the two parts of the soul, the inferior and the superior.

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