A General Theory of

AUTHORITY

by

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With an Introduction by

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It seems most fitting to dedicate this book to the two institutions in America which afforded my husband the great opportunity of teaching and research in an atmosphere of intense intellectual stimulation and friendship: The University of Notre Dame and the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. The present work is to a large degree the result of the opportunities provided by these universities.

—MRS. YVES R. SIMON

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The issue of authority has such a bad reputation that a philosopher cannot discuss it without exposing himself to suspicion and malice. Yet authority is present in all phases of social life. The skill of anarchist thinkers may lend verisimilitude to systems marked by extensive dependence upon good will, tolerance, mutual understanding, persuasion and consent. But, within these pictures of smoothly operating institutions, authority is unmistakably present, or, if it is not, verisimilitude disappears and what is left is a lifeless mimicry of social relations. Why is it that men distrust so intensely a thing without which they cannot, by all evidences, live and act together? As a matter of common experience, subjection to authority causes much discomfort and mortification; it involves the permanent foundation of an ever threatening, if not ever present, distress. But reluctance to bear such distress does not sufficiently account for the bad name of authority. Over and above this obvious reluctance, aversion to authority derives energy from sublime sources. Its really formidable power originates in the loftiest inclinations of the human soul. The case would be relatively simple and easy to deal with if the enemies
of authority were only pride and passion. The fact is that authority is reputed to conflict with justice, life, truth and order.

AUTHORITY IN SEEMING CONFLICT WITH JUSTICE

The common way to secure a good or service is to surrender a good or service held equal in value. In a society where such method generally obtains, the services of plumbers and carpenters, as well as those of physicians and lawyers, are purchased at unpleasantly high cost. No wonder that some people feel a nostalgia for circumstances where an upper position gives a right to an abundance of facilities. Prices and wages forcibly kept low do not balance the goods and services procured. The exchange is unequal; more exactly, the transaction has only in part the character of an exchange; part of the service rendered is a tribute describable as the privilege of authority and disquietingly reminiscent of the stated sums which used to be paid periodically to the pirates of Barbary. The notion of authority thus comes to be associated with that of an exchange disrupted by sheer might.

AUTHORITY IN SEEMING CONFLICT WITH LIFE

Actions ordered by authority originate outside the agent; they bear a mark of externality in contrast with the spontaneity which characterizes the operations of nature and life.\(^1\) Suppose that the things procured are altogether good: the fact that they are procured by authority still denies them the cherished perfection of proceeding from within. A man can behave well either because he is told to do so or by his own inclination. Good behavior obtained by commandment and obedience is still held defective inasmuch as it lacks spontaneity, life, voluntariness, liberty. The ideal subject of authoritarian rule would display all the submissiveness and determinateness of a machine. Other things being equal, a state of affairs brought about vitally is preferable to a state of affairs brought about mechanically. It may even be argued that lesser results obtained through vital processes are more valuable than greater results obtained by curbing the forces of life. Authority boasts of unique ability to assure peace: but the peace it procures is that of death.—They make a solitude, and call it peace (Tacitus). Even when the effects intended are in line with nature, the way in which authority brings them about involves a sort of violence.

Authority becomes more detestable as the things subjected to its methods increase in dignity and pertain more directly to what is vital and spiritual in man. If, in order to cut down the rate of accidents, it is held expedient that street traffic be governed in machine-like fashion by the agents of an irresistible power, so let it be. The sacrifice of some spontaneity at the wheel of a car is not a very serious one. But when a power pretends to shape the moral personality of citizens, their beliefs, their tastes and their loves, the time for anger has come. Authority, if needed at all, should be relegated to the domains where lifelessness is least destructive. If, through the mechanization of less important functions, it helps to liberate the higher forms of life, so much the better. But

\(^1\) "That alone was right which was done of one's own inner conviction and mere motion, that was lifeless and evil which was done out of obedience to any external authority." F. Pollock, Introduction to William K. Clifford's Lectures and Essays (London: Macmillan, 1901), vol. I, 44.
keep it away from things noble and spiritual, and do not attempt to force a soul into this enemy of life.

AUTHORITY IN SEEMING CONFLICT WITH TRUTH

Among the lofty things that authority is reputed to threaten is the respect of our minds for truth. The anger commonly aroused by the notion that authority might supersede the power of truth is a metaphysical sentiment of great significance. We all have some experience of situations in which a problem of truth happens to be unjustifiably answered by submission to authority. Thus, if often happens that in international disputes incompatible versions of the same event are held by diverse governments; to spare ourselves the pangs of anxiety, the labors of research, and sometimes the humiliation of having been wrong, we may make it a rule that our assent will go to the version officially held by the government which is ours. A similar situation is common in the conflict of political parties and in dialogues between schools of thought. Our daily life is constantly troubled by vexing questions, ideological, ethical, political, esthetic, and factual, to which we cannot remain indifferent, to which we must give some sort of answer, and which involve such obscurities that an answer in terms of objective determination is very hard to reach. But most of the time these questions admit of cheap, easy, pacifying, and heartening answers if we make it a set rule to repeat what authority has said. The lovers of truth easily come to suspect that the whole system of authority is a pragmatic device, designed to spare weak souls the hardship of finding truth and abiding by it.

No doubt, grounds for suspecting an antagonistic relation between authority and truth are as old as human reason and human testimony. However, such suspicion assumed a more determinate form and a greater power when, some time in the eighteenth century, the ideal of a social science built after the pattern of physics got hold of minds and imaginations. The essentials of this epoch-making adventure can be summed up as follows: Western men had become aware that their control over physical nature was immensely increased whenever scientific propositions replaced common experience as the theoretical basis of their action. As far as physical nature is concerned, wonders can be worked by arts grounded in scientific formulas. Why should it be impossible to do for society what is being done so successfully in the realm of physical nature? Why should it be impossible to work out a social science patterned after physics, and like physics objective, impersonal, free from anthropomorphic bias, free from value judgments, exact, rigorous, indifferent to national or personal whims and preferences, necessary, and irresistible? From such a science a rational art would be derived, and the proper conduct of societies would be insured by the impersonal decisions of enlightened reason. In the construct of a society ruled by the power of social science, authority plays no part. This construct helps us to understand why authority plays such an overwhelming part in societies ignorant of social science. We are wondering about the proper way to attain a certain goal and, because of our inability to demonstrate scientifically which way is the proper one, we would deliberate indefinitely did we not agree to follow the decisions of authority. These may not be the
best possible ones, but they are still preferable to indefinitely protracted irresolution. The case is like that of Descartes' travelers, lost in the midst of a forest.² By moving constantly in the same direction, they will reach a place which may not be the best but where they will certainly be better off than in the midst of a forest. Not knowing which way to take, but realizing that movement in any clear direction is better than unending idleness, we let authority decide which way we shall take, and we admire its ability to substitute definite action for endless deliberation. In the enthusiastic visions of early social science, such a state of affairs constitutes, according to an expression used by Karl Marx in a different connection, the prehistory of society. Genuinely human history begins when the travelers in the forest are provided by science with rational, objective, definite, and demonstrated methods of knowing which way to take in order to reach the place where they want to go. For the most audacious, social science would not only solve the conditional problem of selecting the way on the basis of an established intention of the goal; it would resolve, just as well, the problem of the goal to be intended. Authority would no longer have anything to do either with regard to the means or with regard to the end. It has a role to play as long as common action, by reason of ignorance, remains subject to looseness, flexibility, uncertainty. But as soon as mature reason, i.e., reason perfected by science, proposes definite forms of action according to truth, the method of authority becomes sheer deception. Of this method of deception, what can be the purpose if not just the advantage of the men or classes in power?

² Discourse on Method, Third Part.
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Conflict with both. Indeed, laws are counted among the works of authority. But it should also be remarked that the more a law is universal, natural and impersonal, the more it has the character of a law, whereas the distinctive features of authority are more intensely present in the particular and the contingent law than in the universal and necessary one, in the decree than in the law, in the decree regulating matters strictly determined with regard to here and now than in the decree concerned with somewhat general cases, and in the command marked by the personality of a leader than in an anonymous and impersonal ordinance. Briefly: whereas the law is attracted by an ideal of rational impersonality, acts of authority tend toward a state of concreteness involving the personalities of men, and all the contingencies to which human wills are subject. Considered in its contrast with law, authority seems to be connected with human arbitrariness, by all means the worst enemy of order. As to the contractual settlement, it is essentially a rule of exchange, consequently an equalitarian rule. Order obtains in exchange relations when, regardless of all the ways in which the exchanging parties may be unequal, a free discussion has procured a sound approximation to definite equality between the exchanged values. When there is no problem except that of determining what value is equal to what value, any act of authority is a disruption of order.

HYPOTHESIS: AUTHORITY EMBRACES A COMPLEX OF FUNCTIONS

Arguments derived from justice, life, truth, and order constitute a powerful prejudice against authority. In spite of this, anarchy is rarely or never upheld with qualified consistency. In the pedagogy of Rousseau, there is a set purpose to let the child be guided by natural necessity rather than by human command, and to let him learn from the experience of physical facts rather than by obedience. “Keep the child solely dependent on things; you will have followed the order of Nature in the process of his upbringing. Never oppose to his unreasonable wishes any but physical obstacles or punishments resulting from the actions themselves—he will remember these punishments in similar situations. It is enough to prevent him from doing evil without forbidding him to do it. . . .”

Remarkably, the theory that the method of authority is a poor substitute for the pedagogical power of nature has been accepted, in varying degree of enthusiasm or reluctance, by all schools of pedagogy and has demonstrated lasting power. Yet the authority of parents and tutors is present throughout pedagogical theories, even when it is passed over in silence. Childhood is the domain where the suppression of all authority is obviously impossible. The most radical constructs of anarchy, as soon as they rise above the level of idle rhetoric, must admit of qualifications so far as the immature part of mankind is concerned. Anti-authoritarian theorists, with few exceptions if any, do not mean that authority should disappear or that it can ever cease to be a factor of major importance in human affairs. What the thinkers opposed to authority generally mean is that authority can never be vindicated except by such deficiencies as are found in children, in the feeble-minded, the emotionally unstable, the criminally inclined, the illiterate, and the historically primitive. The real problem is not whether authority must wither away: no doubt, it will always play an all-

* Emile, II. Amsterdam, Jean Neaulme, 1762.
important part in human affairs. The problem is whether deficiencies alone cause authority to be necessary. It is obvious, indeed, that in many cases the need for authority originates in some defect and disappears when sufficiency is attained. But the commonly associated negation, viz., that authority never originates in the positive qualities of man and society, is by no means obvious and should not be received uncritically. The supposition that authority, in certain cases and domains, is made necessary not by deficiencies but by nature—this supposition is not evidently absurd. To hold, in some a prioristic way, that it does not deserve examination would merely evince wishful thinking of the least scientific kind. The truth may well be that authority has several functions, some of which would be relative to deficient states of affairs and others to features of perfection.

Throughout the following studies, we propose to try the theory that authority must be analyzed into a plurality of functions. But attitudes ignore analyses and commonly lump together heterogeneous aspects never considered in their distinct intelligibility. An analytical study of functions is perhaps all that is needed to ascertain the relation of authority to justice, to life, to truth, and to order. If the relation between authority and these cherished values was successfully clarified, unexpected reconciliations would take place, and improved circumstances would be provided for the dialogue of the philosophers on the fundamental problems of society.

If any functions of authority originate in nature and plenitude rather than in deficiency, it can be reasonably conjectured that they are relative to common existence and common action. Granted that in many cases authority merely substitutes for self-government, the theory that it also has essential functions must be tested first in the field of community life. But the definition of this field presupposes an inquiry, no matter how brief, into human sociability.

GROUND AND FORMS OF SOCIABILITY

THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

It is perfectly obvious that the needs of the individual call for the association of men; yet significant implications of this proposition are commonly ignored. For one thing, the notion of individual need is often restricted, in most arbitrary fashion, to needs of a biological, physical, material character. The necessity of mutual assistance and division of labor in the fight against hunger and thirst, cold, wild beasts, and disease is more commonly
expressed than the immense and almost constantly increased service that society renders to individuals in intellectual, esthetic, moral, and spiritual life. Any improper emphasis on the physical needs served by society suggests that the purposes and the requirements of social life are contained within a sphere of material goods. Concomitantly, it is often taken for granted that the goods of the spirit are altogether individual and that their pursuit is an entirely individualistic concern. Thus, human life would be split into a part socialized by material needs and a nobler part distinguished both by spirituality and individual independence. To dispose of this construct, just think of what a beginner in the sciences owes to the daily assistance of society. A comparison between a student in our universities and a man self-educated in the wilderness would involve a good deal of fiction, but we have all the data needed to compare, with regard to proficiency, students separated by a few generations. In the fields where the social life of the understanding is most successful—mathematics, physics...—the men of the younger generation can solve, with the resources of ordinary intelligence, problems which were hardly treatable for geniuses of earlier ages.

By another unwarranted restriction of meaning, it is often held that a need is necessarily self-centered. In fact, the notion of need expresses merely the state of a tendency not yet satisfied with ultimate accomplishment. Among the tendencies which make up the dynamism of a rational being, some are self-centered and some are generous; all admit of a state of need, and the need to give is no less real than the need to take. Consider the grounds of friendship and the ways in which a man is related to his friends. A young fellow, uncertain about what he is and what he wants to be, with little background, no estate, no steady position, with much anxiety, will be looking for friends in a context of self-centered needs. No ethically unfavorable connotation attaches to the notion of a need centered about the self. Whether the center of a need is within the self or beyond it depends upon the nature of the tendency involved and is antecedent to moral use. Needs relative to such goods as food and shelter are self-centered by nature and remain self-centered in the most disinterested man despite all the generosity which enters into his way of satisfying his needs and of relating their satisfaction to further ends. But some needs have their center beyond the self; a man whose personality features contrast with those of the young fellow described just above still needs friends. He does not depend on the help of friends for food or shelter, for his fortune is already made; he is not in the least motivated by the expectation of physical care in case of disease, for he is in good health and anyway has little fear of disease and death; neither does it occur to him that he may need friendly attention to soothe him in case of emotional disaster, for his nervous balance is well assured; and he does not feel that the company of friends is necessary to him as protection against boredom, for he does so well in the company of his ideas, his memories, his books and familiar belongings that the threat of boredom is not felt. We are describing a distinguished instance of mature development, strength of character, soundness, dominating indifference, freedom. Yet this accomplished person needs the company of beloved ones, inasmuch as his very state of accomplishment intensifies in him every generous trait and every tendency to act by way of superabundance. He needs to give. True,
the center of the act of giving is found in the beneficiary of the gift, and the gift is primarily designed to satisfy a need in the receiver. Yet the gift satisfies also a need in the giver. Such a non-self-centered need may attain a high degree of intensity. The accomplished person whom we are considering would be unhappy if he knew no children to please with Christmas presents, and his homecoming from happy journeys would be gloomy if no one expected him to bring jewelry or dresses from the remote land. His knowledge would give him little joy if he had no chance to impart it to eager intellects, and the very firmness of his character would seem to him a tedious advantage if it should never result in a friend's achieving greater mastery over himself.

For the sake of clarity, we have used the example of a firm and accomplished person to describe other-centered needs. In such persons generosity is most obviously noticeable. However, other-centered needs exist in all; they secretly move the last of men. To appreciate the power and the social significance of other-centered needs in everyone, it suffices to remark that in case of frustration the tendency to act generously becomes the most redoubtable of antisocial drives. Men would rather stand physical destitution than be denied opportunity for disinterested love and sacrifice.

The Common Good

The question now arises whether the needs of the individual are the only cause of human association and whether, correspondingly, society has no purpose beyond the satisfaction of individual needs. The word "individualism," which so often is made worthless by confusion, admits of a precise sense insofar as it designates the theory that the single purpose of society is the service of the individual. The individualistic interpretation of sociability appeals to souls trained in humane disciplines and possessed of an exacting sense for the human character of everything that pertains to society. As soon as it is suggested that the purpose of human effort lies in an achievement placed beyond the individual's good, a suspicion arises that human substance may be ultimately dedicated to things as external to man as the pyramids of Egypt. In all periods of history, voluminous facts signify that under the name of common good, republic, fatherland, empire, what is actually pursued may not be a good state of human affairs but a work of art designed to provide its creator with the inebriating experience of creation. The joy of the creator assumes unique intensity when the thing out of which the work of art is made is human flesh and soul. The artist's rapture is greatest when he uses as matter of his own creation not marble and brass but beings made after the image of God. "The finest clay, the most precious marble—man—is here kneaded and hewn. . ."

1 True, the common good conceived as a work of art and a thing external to man is merely a corruption of the genuine common good. In this world of contingency, every form or process admits of imitation; in human affairs, counterfeit is often so related to the genuine form that it appears, with disquieting frequency, precisely where the genuine form is most earnestly sought. An inquiry into the common good must involve constant awareness that its object may, at any time, be displaced by deadly counterfeit.

To answer the question of whether the association of

men is designed to serve not only the needs of the individual but also goods situated beyond individual achievement, we should turn our attention, first, to the limitations of individual plenitude; then we may be able to understand, just by glancing at the daily life of human communities, how these limitations are transcended.

Individuals are narrowly restricted with regard to diversity, and inevitable circumstances hold in check the desire for totality which belongs to rational nature. In terms of essential causality, there is no reason why one and the same man should not be painter, musician, philosopher, captain of industry, and statesman. In fact, personalities developed excellently on more than a very few lines are extremely rare, and significant limitations can easily be found in Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe. The rule to which all men are subjected in varying degree is one of specialization for the sake of proficiency. This rule entails heavy sacrifices even in the most gifted. A man highly successful in his calling accomplishes little in comparison with the ample virtualities of man. He has failed in a hundred respects. Only the union of many can remedy the failure of each. But of all the restrictions inflicted upon the boundless ambition of our rational nature, the most painful concerns the duration of individual achievements. Within the temporal order we would feel hopeless if the virtual immortal life of the community did not compensate for the brevity of individual existence. Death is known to be particularly hard and surrounded with anxiety for those who end their days in individualistic loneliness.

These are the familiar facts referred to by a well known text of Aristotle, ordinarily summed up in the following words. "The common good is greater and more divine than the private good." "Greater" expresses a higher degree of perfection with regard both to duration and to diversity. "Divine," as translating the Greek theion, does not designate so much a godlike essence as a participation in the privilege of imperishability. In this world of change, individuals come and go. The law of generation and corruption covers the whole universe of nature. This law is transcended in a very proper sense by the incorruptibility of the species and the immortality of human association. The masterpiece of the natural world cannot be found in the transient individual. Nor can it be found in the species, which is not imperishable except in the state of universality; but in this state it is no longer unqualifiedly real. Human communities are the highest attainments of nature, for they are virtually unlimited with regard to diversity of perfections, and virtually immortal. Beyond the satisfaction of individual needs the association of men serves a good unique in plenitude and duration, the common good of the human community.

**PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY**

Before we are ready to state the problem of authority, we still need to inquire into the basic forms of association. These are the mere partnership and the community. Let us consider familiar examples. A merchant succeeds in convincing an owner of capital that money invested in his business would bring nice dividends. By the terms of their contract, any profits will be divided according to a definite ratio. Then the merchant goes to the market, and the money-lender sits back and awaits the event. Their "common interest" was celebrated in ex-

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2 *Eth. 1.2. 1094b7.*
pectant toasts, but they are not engaged in any common action designed to promote any "common interest." The merchant works by himself or with his employees; he does not work with the money-lender, who remains a silent partner. Where there is no common action, there is no common good. These two men do not make up a community. What they call their "common interest" is in fact a sum of private interests that happen to be interdependent.

In contradistinction to mere partners, the members of a community—family, factory, football team, army, state, church—engage in a common action whose object is qualitatively different from a sum of interdependent goods. Whereas the contractual relation is normally the sufficient rule of the mere partnership, our problem is precisely to decide whether the community normally calls for the kind of rule known as authority.

To conclude this preliminary inquiry, let us remark that contract and community can be related in diverse ways. (1) The association established by contract may be of such nature that the relation between the associates remains exclusively contractual. The money-lender and the merchant exemplify such a case. (2) The association founded by contract may be of such nature as to involve a common action. When they sign a contract, partners may be entering into a society which is not a mere partnership. Such is the case, for instance, in the hiring of labor. Production demands that manager and laborer act together, and neither has the character of a silent partner. However, communities of this type can, in most instances, be dissolved at will, or according to terms specified by the initial contract. (3) The community founded by contract may not be dissoluble at will. It may even be of such nature as not to be dissoluble at all. Because the contract is the only rule of the mere partnership, it is commonly assumed, by unwarranted inference, that persons associated by contract necessarily remain mere partners and can dissolve their association. The relation between man and wife involves a character of stability determined by the very nature of the man-and-wife community. Yet this community was founded by contract.

If nothing abnormal occurs, the need for authority is never felt in a relation of mere partnership. The contractual arrangement which, as such, is absolutely equalitarian, suffices. A decision by authority will be necessary only if the working of the contract is impeded by such accidents as misunderstanding, bad faith, or unforeseen conjuncture. Thus, if all human societies were mere partnerships, authority would never be needed except on account of some fault or accident. The deficiency theory of authority would be entirely vindicated.

THE UNITY OF COMMON ACTION

Assuming now the features proper to the kind of association described as a community, let us state the problem of united action. Every community is relative to a
good to be sought and enjoyed in common. But, by the very fact that a community comprises a number of individuals, the unity of its action cannot be taken for granted: it has to be caused. Further, if the community is to endure, the cause of its united action must be firm and stable. Since rational agents are guided by judgment, the problem of bringing about unity in the action of men resolves into the problem of insuring the unity of their practical judgment. For example, the family community would cease to exist if each member did not judge—for one reason or another—that he ought to reside in this particular locality and in this particular house. A farm would soon be ruined if those engaged in the production of wheat did not judge—again, for one reason or another—that these fields ought to be put into wheat this year. A factory could not operate if the members of its personnel did not all judge that a definite schedule ought to be observed. A deliberating assembly is indeed a community designed to stand disagreement, yet in order that it should exist at all, there must be some agreement regarding the place and time of its meetings, regarding the rules of procedure, and regarding some principles. In these and all similar cases, unity of judgment cannot be procured by rational communication. The believers in a social science which would, under circumstances of perfect enlightenment, eliminate the decisions of authority—and those of freedom as well—assume that the kind of necessity which makes demonstration possible extends to the particulars of social practice. But, clearly, such propositions as "It is good for us to live in this house," and "It is proper that our assembly should meet at noon," admit of no demonstration. Philosophical prejudice alone may cause failure to perceive the contingency in which such propositions are engaged. United action demands a principle that works steadily amidst the overwhelming contingencies of perishable existence. Rational communication, which is bound up with essential necessities, is not such a principle.

Does it follow that unanimity is under all circumstances an uncertain and precarious principle of unity in action? This question requires that we consider a community whose members are, without exception, ideally virtuous and enlightened persons. Unanimity is well known to be a most precarious achievement in communities afflicted by such common deficiencies as ignorance, prejudice, selfish interest, etc., but our purpose is to decide whether authority is ever needed independently of deficiencies. We must bear in mind, accordingly, a group free from stupidity and ill-will. If such a group were a Utopian fiction, it still could play a part in the understanding of society. In fact, there exist groups whose members are all intelligent and morally excellent; that these groups are very small makes no difference for the purposes of rational analysis.

RATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND AFFECTIVE COMMUNION

Since unanimity cannot be established in these practical matters by the power of demonstration, the ideally clever and virtuous members of a community cannot be unanimous in more than fortuitous fashion unless a determined course of action is demanded by the virtuous inclination of their hearts. Whenever wisdom has to find its way in the midst of circumstances contingent and possibly unique, the certainty of its judgment results from its agreement with honest inclination. An ethical issue universal in character—say, a general problem of justice
can be answered, as St. Thomas puts it, in either of two ways, the way of cognition and the way of inclination. In the way of cognition, the answer proceeds from principles by logical connections. This is how the moral philosopher is supposed to answer questions, and no other method is acceptable in philosophy, because no other method procures certainty in knowledge as knowledge. But an honest man unacquainted with deductive processes may find the answer intuitively and in incommunicable fashion by feeling that such and such a way of doing things pleases or revolts his sentiment of justice.  

4 Sum. Theol. i. 6 ad 3. The words "is supposed to" are not used casually. Moral philosophy is still in a rather primitive stage, and moral philosophers commonly fail to render obvious the deductive connection of their answers with the self-evident principles of the moral order. Their answers may still be true and good and worth adhering to: but the cause of their certainty is an inclination, not a deduction, and for a conclusion so attained to be safe, the philosopher's—or the theologian's—inclination must be sound, which is the same as to say that the fellow must be possessed, first, of genuine virtue and, second, of all the conditions and instruments required for the regular functioning of virtuous inclination as cause of true practical judgment. Of course whoever writes a book of ethics, whether philosophical or theological, likes the reader to believe that every bit of it is scientifically established; in case it were not, the only guaranty of his statements would be the perfection of his virtue: a thing that moralists, understandably, do not like the public to inquire into.

5 Such words as "heart," "sentiment," etc., must not be allowed to convey the belief that the determination of the right and the wrong ever is entrusted to emotional reactions. Let it be said that there exist inclinations of a purely intellectual character, the best example of which is the familiarity of a man of science with the scientific field which is his; thanks to this familiarity he is able to put his finger on the true statement a long time—i.e., a few years or a few centuries—before this statement is demonstrated. The inclinations which assure the determination of the right and the wrong in contingency are not of purely intellectual nature. They pertain to the appetite and can be termed affective with propriety provided it is understood that the appetite of man comprises, as its principal part, the system of desires and aversions born of rational apprehension, i.e., the will. The affective inclination which alone can determine the right and the wrong when demonstration is powerless is principally the inclination of the will, i.e., an inclination born of intelligent apprehension, and constantly strengthened by dedication to truth. Inclinations of an emotional character are by no means excluded, but they are subordinate. It often is a feeling of charm or disgust which notifies us that—perhaps in spite of appearances—there is something definitely right or wrong about a situation: but if such a feeling were let loose, and allowed to work outside an integrated system whose principal part is the will, we would run into all the absurdities of the doctrines, so popular at the end of the eighteenth century and in the Romantic period, which give an infrational sentiment ultimate control over the determination of the right and the wrong and the utterances of reason. The "conscience" of the Savoy Vicar (J.-J. Rousseau Emile, III, Amsterdam, Jean Neaulme, 1762, p. 114) would not perform any of the wonders that Rousseau describes if it were not precisely this: an inclination antecedent to reason, more native than anything born of understanding, closer to cosmic energies, closer to animals and plants and other things of nature, and closer to sheer existence.
ing to the words of John of St. Thomas, "Love takes on
the role of the object." 6

It is entirely by accident that we can demonstrate so
little about the requirements of justice or chastity, con-
sidered in their intelligible universality, but it is not by
accident that nobody can demonstrate what the rule of
justice consists in under historically-conditioned, abso-
lutely concrete, individual, and possibly unprecedented
and unrenewable circumstances. Here the rule of justice
is not uttered by an essence and cannot be grasped by the
demonstrative power of the intellect. It is uttered by the
love which is the soul of the just and it can be learned
only by listening to the teaching of love. Take for in-
stance the problem of ownership of extreme necessity.
Our sense of justice acknowledges that a starving person,
without money and without liberal friends, has a right to
save his life with food that he cannot pay for. No doubt,
such a proposition can be demonstrated, and St. Thomas
successfully designated the middle term of its demon-
stration when he remarked that in case of necessity all
things become common. 7 But argumentation will never
establish a logical connection between the theory of prop-
erty and the answer that I am looking for when, already
weakened by hunger, I wonder whether my case is actu-
ally one of extreme necessity. A man in need will know
for sure whether his necessity is extreme or not if and
only if he is so just as to feel how far the right of his
neighbor and his own right go, so temperate as not to
mistake an accidental urge for a real need, and so strong
as to fear neither the sufferings of hunger nor the resent-
ment of his illiberal neighbors.

6 Cursus theologicus, i-ii. disp. 18. a. 4. Vivès, VI, p. 638.
7 Sum. Theol. ii-ii. 32. 7 ad 3.

Thus, whereas a question relative to an ethical essence
can be answered both by way of cognition and by way of
inclination, the way of inclination alone can procure an
answer when a question of human conduct involves con-
tingency. This holds for the rules of common action as
well as for those of individual conduct. Political prudence
is no less dependent upon the obscure forces of the appe-
tite than prudence in the government of individual life.
However, with regard to unity of judgment among men,
there is a significant difference between individual pru-
dence and any prudence concerned with the conduct of a
community. The prudence of the individual normally
involves something singular and peculiar—it would al-
most be appropriate to say "eccentric." In their hopeless
search for guidance amidst the obscurities of action, men
easily assume that problems of individual conduct are
the same for all, or at least for many, and that the rule
which led one to a happy solution can be confidently fol-
lowed by others. This assumption works sometimes, viz.,
when problems are not significantly modified by individ-
ual circumstances; yet it is false, and may at any time
bring about disastrous effects, for, in the broad field that
lies beyond determination by ethical essentials, it never
can be said a priori that individual features are irrelevant.
A life of moderate work and strict parsimony may be
precisely what a certain family needs, but misfortune may
befall a neighboring home unless the line followed is one
of rather lavish expenditure at the cost of strenuous
work, and in still another case real wisdom may para-
doically require liberal spending, an abundance of
leisure, and willingness to go into debt. Of such contrast-
ing rules of action, some may prove sound in a great
number of cases and some may prove harmful save for
A General Theory of Authority

rare exceptions. Yet it is never possible to know in advance—i.e., prior to an investigation of whatever unique features a case may comprise—that the rule required in this individual case is not precisely the one which would prove unsuited to nearly all other cases. Because of the possible relevance of unique features in the determination of individual prudence, each man is threatened with the contingency of having to make his decisions in utter solitude and to act like no one else. The anguish of such solitude is more than most men can stand, hence the tendency to take refuge in uniformity and conformity, even though precious features of individual destiny may be destroyed by adherence to common practice.

When the prudence of men is concerned with the welfare of one and the same community—their community—individual features have, in principle, nothing to do with the making of a wise decision. Among the most significant data, some are, indeed, strictly unique, but they pertain to the community's history and thus tend to cause agreement rather than diversity of judgment. Any common pursuit, on no matter how humble a level, is a welcome remedy to the anguished solitude of individual prudence. To be sure, science is a factor of human unity, but it is in a world of abstraction that it causes men to elicit identical judgments. In common action, alone does

*To see why the qualification “in principle” is necessary, consider the case of a leader who knows that, under the circumstances, he cannot resign, and that it is he, and no one else, who has to guide the community toward a certain goal. Two ways, a and b, are open: a would be preferable if it were not for a feature pertaining to the individual history of this leader, who cannot resign, but, his individual history being what it is, b ought to be preferred. In fact, whenever an individual feature modifies the ability of a leader to carry out a certain policy, this feature belongs to the system of data that public prudence is confronted by and has to reckon with.

Common Good and Common Action

concrete existence, with all its determinateness, with its character of totality, its location in time, and its contingency, tend to procure unity among men. Assuming that our community is made entirely of clever and well-intentioned persons, whatever is needed for its welfare is the object of unanimous assent. Affective communion achieves what cannot be expected of rational communication: it brings about unanimity of judgment in the life of action. Again, every certain judgment concerning what we have to do under concrete circumstances is dictated by an affective motion and owes its certain truth to its agreement with dependable inclination. But when the pursuit is that of a common good, the part played by affective and secret determinants is no longer an obstacle to unity of judgment among men. Wills properly inclined toward the same common good cannot but react in the same way to the same proposition, if what this proposition expresses is definitely what the common good demands. In groups small enough not to involve much error and bad will, the adherence of all to decisions that are necessary though indemonstrable brings about marvels of united action. As to larger communities—say, cities or nations—where all sorts of evils and deficiencies are inevitable, situations resembling unanimity and entailing most of the effects that unanimity would entail are a comparatively frequent occurrence. Consider the case of a nation attacked by a neighbor eager for territorial expansion. That resistance is better than appeasement cannot be demonstrated, and many citizens do not have the civic virtue which would procure indefectible adherence to what common salvation demands. Yet history shows that spontaneous unity often characterizes the reaction of peoples in this predicament. If there were a
question of polling opinion, it would be impossible to speak of unanimity. There are traitors, collaborationists, neutralists, abstentionists, honest men deceived by overwhelming illusions, and passive citizens without an answer to a question that never actually reached their minds. But these disrupters of unanimity are comparatively few, and they carry so little weight as to make little difference. Practically and for all significant purposes, the situation is about what it would be if unanimity were realized.

But after having recognized the marvels that unanimity, or quasi-unanimity can work, let it be remarked that **unanimity is a precarious principle of united action whenever the common good can be attained in more than one way.** All that has been said in the foregoing about the power of unanimity simply makes no sense except when the way to the common good is uniquely determined. If the common good can be attained in more than one way, neither enlightenment nor virtue, but only chance, can bring about unanimity. Accordingly, if unity of action is guaranteed by no other principle than that of unanimous agreement, it becomes an entirely casual affair, the result being either stalemated or divided and destructive action. Circumstances may be such that the happy life of a man-and-wife community can be easily attained either in Washington or in New York, if one of the community prefers, with the best of intentions, Washington, and the other, with an equally virtuous disposition. New York, the principle of action by unanimous agreement determines the separation of these well-meaning spouses. —There is nothing wrong with a man who so far as he is concerned, likes to drive on the right hand side of the road, and nothing wrong with the fellow who, if he had his own choice, would drive on the left. Thus traffic rules cannot be decided by the unanimous consent of enlightened and virtuous drivers. —Assuming that all good citizens are agreed that the public budget cannot be cut below such and such an amount, it is obvious that the money needed for public purposes can be gathered, without injustice or particular harm, in a diversity of ways. Citizens may, without there being anything wrong with their intelligence or intention, take diverse stands with regard to such methods of taxation as sales tax, gross income tax, or a combination of both. —In military operations, either of two plans of attack may provide a reasonable chance of victory, but defeat is certain if the attacker’s power is split between the two plans. Among the most experienced and dependable leaders, some prefer one plan and some the other. There is no reason why they should be unanimous, since each plan, insofar as those things fall under human providence, is a way to victory. —Among the many ways of playing a concerto of Bach, several satisfy the requirements of great music, and highly qualified musicians will clash as to how the fourth Brandenburg Concerto should be played. Yet the members of an orchestra cannot be allowed conflicting interpretations of a concerto. In fact, any conceivable instance of common action, if considered in all its modes and particulars, admits of being carried out according to one or another of several methods, all leading to the common good.

**Knowledge and Freedom**

To the proposition that authority, as cause of united action, exercises an essential function, i.e., a function made necessary not by any evil or deficiency but by the
nature of common action, it is currently objected that any multiplicity of ways leading to a common purpose is an illusion that social science, if more developed, would dismiss. The problem involved here is that of choice, and it pertains to the subject of liberty more directly than to the subject of authority.

When the theory of liberty is not enlivened by some sort of ethical enthusiasm, it often is surrounded by a cloud of misgivings, as if liberty could be preserved only by cherished ignorance and should yield to unique determination as soon as the truth is known about the proper way to our end. Indeed, everyone’s experience tells of deliberations that bear on illusory as well as genuine means. If proper information comes before decision is made, and excludes the illusory means—i.e., the lines of action which, in spite of appearances, do not lead to the end but to failure and perhaps disaster—everything is better in all conceivable respects. Considering that a wholesome simplification takes place whenever an illusory means is ruled out, we sometimes dream of carrying simplification down to the state of unique determinateness, and we like to imagine that in perfect acquaintance with the real state of affairs the lines of action originally listed as means would, with but one exception, be identified as so many illusions. It is easy to see that this postulate expresses aversion to the mystery involved in free choice as well as to the darkness of contingency. Relations characterized by sheer determinateness, without contingency and without freedom, offer an average type of intelligibility which has been constantly preferred by rationalism. Indeed, any feature of contingency is a restriction on intelligibility, but the real world may not be intelligible in all respects. It is, after all, a question of fact, and we

must be ready to accept whatever conclusion is reached by the scientific and philosophic description of the world. Freedom, on the other hand, if there is such a thing, would involve extraordinary plenitude of being, causality and intelligibility. But the more intelligible is not always the more easy to understand. In all scientific disciplines there are admirably simple views and methods which remain inaccessible to all but a very few scholars. Why are these things so hard to grasp? Not because they lack intelligibility, but rather because they are so excellently intelligible that only the best intellects are proportioned to them. With a mind open both to the restricted intelligibility of things contingent and to the secrecy of freedom, it is possible to inquire into the meaning of choice without begging any question. Let the problem be stated in these simple words: Is choice necessarily narrowed down to one genuine and one (or several) un-genuine means? Is choice necessarily between one good and one (or several) evils? Is there such a thing as a choice among goods? Can there conceivably be several means to an end? In a comparison of agents, should it be said that some are restricted to one or few means and that others have a wide variety of means at their disposal?

As soon as these questions are posed without any prejudice relative to the intelligibility of things, experience supplies the basic answers. Several diets can maintain the health of a healthy man, but a diseased organism may need, as a sine qua non of survival, what everyone calls a strict—i.e., uniquely determined—diet. —An ordinary student, to attain proficiency in mathematics, needs all the complex system worked out by academic societies—teachers, textbooks, treatises, discussions, tutorials—but in the case of genius alternative means make it pos-
possible to dispense with much of the academic apparatus. —It has been remarked that when a new pedagogical method is tested by a born teacher, success proves nothing, for born teachers are known to achieve success with almost any method; in order to know how a method is, it is better to have it tested by an undistinguished teacher who depends heavily on the quality of the method used.

—A man trained in one craft and unable to do any other job often has to work in uncongenial conditions; the man with many skills can afford to be more particular about the circumstances of his employment. No one would say that the broader choice open to the man with many skills originates in ignorance and illusion; clearly, it results from a greater power and presupposes more and better knowledge. —An industrial enterprise with little capital must produce only that which will surely bring immediate returns; the privilege of contributing extensively to diversity and novelty in the market belongs to firms better financed. —It is a commonplace of American history that waste of natural resources was determined initially by an acute shortage of manpower. The only ways of development open to a young community placed in natural abundance were the wasteful ones. We judge more severely the habits of waste in those later generations which, owing to great numbers, firmer establishment, more advanced techniques, and many other forms of increased power, have choices that the early settlers did not have. —A nation with no navy, a very small army, no financial stature, and declining population, if offered the alliance of a powerful neighbor, has to accept it albeit at the cost of heavy sacrifices and historical resentments; but given great bargaining power, a nation can choose its allies. In all conceivable circumstances, power in-

creases choice. The proper effect of enlightenment, accordingly, is twofold: improved knowledge rules out illusory means and, insofar as it entails greater power, multiplies the genuine ones. To destroy the illusion of a means is not to cut the amplitude of choice, for, insofar as it extends to illusory means, choice itself is but an illusion. In an ideally enlightened community, authority would be spared the unhappy task of directing the common effort, in the darkness of illusion, along a possibly disastrous line. But, inasmuch as an excellent condition of knowledge implies greatly increased power, social science at its perfection would multiply genuine means and broaden real choice. It would, consequently, increase the need for authority as a factor of united action in the cases where the plurality of the genuine means renders unanimity fortuitous.

Strikingly, it is a better understanding of freedom which first discloses the essential character of the need for authority in common action. But why is it that whenever we think of diverse ways leading to the common good we are so strongly tempted to attribute their diversity, and the corresponding variety of preferences, to our ignorance of some relevant features or circumstances? A stubborn objection holds that if men were omniscient, unanimous adherence to the end would necessarily entail unanimity regarding the means. Let us briefly inquire into the causes of this belief.

In all domains of understanding and interpretation, whether trivial or lofty and subtle, we are inclined to transfer the properties of the better known subjects to subjects that are not so well known. This is why Aristotle—or some follower of his—says that it is unreasonable to seek at the same time the science of a subject and the
method of this science: unless the method is known in advance—albeit in the most rudimentary fashion—we shall inevitably force upon the new study dispositions acquired in previous studies, e.g., apply to medicine dispositions which proved excellent in mechanics, or consider ethics with the bias of a mind trained in theoretical science.

Notice, at this point, that the things pertaining to cognition are better known than the things pertaining to appetite and volition. Every time we turn to some aspect of appetitive and volitional life, we carry with us frames of mind and schemes of interpretation developed in our endeavor to understand cognitive life. We are inclined to reconstruct appetite after the pattern of cognition. But cognition is not free from deficiency unless it is strictly determinate. If the problem is to know what the things are, nothing is worse than perfect indifference, i.e., the state in which a proposition appears just as plausible as its contradictory. Things are somewhat better if one part of the alternative is more probable than the other, but so long as one of the two is not excluded by unqualified necessity, cognition remains defective. With regard to facts and to essences as well, the faculty of choosing, at will, between assent and dissent is not an advantage but expresses an entirely negative state of affairs. Accordingly, the understanding of cognition results in a pattern where perfection strictly coincides with uniqueness. But appetite is, in a way, the opposite of cognition, for, whereas the known is attracted into the knower, the lover is attracted toward the beloved, and whereas the true exists in the mind, the good

exists in the things. This basic contrast reverses the meaning of uniqueness, plurality and indifference, when inquiry moves from cognition to appetite. A plurality of possible assents with regard to one and the same subject evidences failure to attain truth with certainty; the indifference of the uncertain mind is made of in achievement, indeterminacy, potentiality, passivity. On the contrary, a plurality of means with regard to one and the same end evidences mastery, domination, actuality, activity, superdetermination. The myth of a perfect knowledge which would eliminate authority and liberty rests upon a crude confusion of two kinds of indifference: the passive one, which results from potency and inachievement, and the dominating one, which results from excellence.

An Essential Function of Authority

The existence of a plurality of genuine means in the pursuit of the common good excludes unanimity as a sufficient method of steadily procuring unity of action. To achieve indispensable unity in common action, one method is left, which can be described as follows: whether we prefer to live in Washington or in New York, whether we prefer to drive on the right or on the left side of the road, whether we prefer sales tax, gross income tax, or their combination, whether we prefer a richer or a more austere orchestration of Bach, everyone of us, insofar as he is engaged in the common action, will accept and follow, as rule of his own action, one judgment thus constituted into rule for all. This rule of common action may coincide with my own preference, but this is of no significance, for the common rule might just as well be

9 Met. 2.3. 995a13. That the treatise classified as Bk. 2 (a) of Metaphysics was written by Aristotle himself is questioned by some.

10 Met. 6.4. 1027b25.
at variance with my liking, and I would be equally bound to follow it out of dedication to the common good, which cannot be attained except through united action. The power in charge of unifying common action through rules binding for all is what everyone calls authority.11

Between the concept of authority and that of law there exist enlightening relations. It is, indeed, perfectly proper to speak of the authority of the legislator, and nothing would warrant the identification of authority with executive power. Many acts of authority assume the form of laws passed by assemblies. However, authority and law evidence opposite intelligible tendencies inasmuch as the more a proposition is expressive of necessity, the more it participates—other things being equal—in the character of law, whereas there is nothing in the concept of authority, that expresses aversion to contingency. A law rules human acts in the capacity of premise, not of conclusion; now, the more a premise is independent of contingency, the more of a premise it is. The first or absolute premises regulating human actions express the absolute necessities intelligibly following upon the rational nature. But authority is perfectly at home in the management of contingency and in the uttering of practical conclusions. A decree which applies a law to a particular and unique situation is no less an act of authority than a law passed by an assembly to establish a principle that can be applied to indefinitely many particular situations. No doubt, this law is already so particularized, and so engaged in contingency as not to be a sheer expression of natural necessity. Yet it retains the character of premise, and calls for further determination in terms of adjustment to contingencies that an assembly cannot deal with. Common usage contrasts "government by law" and "authoritarian government." Both of these expressions are objectionable, and their meaning has to be carefully specified. In a way every government is authoritarian. On the other hand, "government by law" conveys the suggestion that propositions retaining the character of premises may suffice to guide a community in entirely concrete and perhaps unique situations, and this involves the nonsense of a premise which is also an ultimate conclusion. Provided these abusive interpretations are definitely ruled out, it is perfectly correct to use the expression "government by law" when a political system depends as much as possible on premises established by the wisdom of the legislator, and to call "authoritarian" the system of government which gives the few men in the executive power the
greatest possible liberty to manage the concrete circumstances by connecting the conclusions of their choice with premises that have no other source than their good judgment, since no positive enactment ever gave these premises any juridical existence.

It may be a distinct person designated by nature, as in the couple and in the family. It may be a distinct person designated by God, as in the cases of Saul and Peter. It may be a distinct person designated by the people, as in the case of David. It may be a distinct person designated by birth and accepted by the people. It may be a distinct group of persons designated by hereditary election or by lot. And it may be no distinct person or group of persons, but the community itself proceeding by majority vote. The problem of the need for authority and the problem of the need for a distinct governing personnel have often been confused: at this point, it is already clear that they are distinct and that the argumentation which establishes the need for authority, even in a society made of ideally enlightened and well-intentioned persons, leaves open the question of whether some communities may be provided with all the authority they need without there being among them any distinct group of governing persons.

Thus, authority does not have only substitutional functions; in other words, it is not made necessary by deficiencies alone. We know, by now, that in one case at least the need for authority derives not from any lack or privation but from the sound nature of things. Given a community on its way to its common good, and given, on the part of this community, the degree of excellence which entails the possibility of attaining the good in a diversity of ways, authority has an indispensable role to play, and this role originates entirely in plenitude and
accomplishment. The deficiency theory of authority is given the lie. An ideally enlightened and virtuous community needs authority to unify its action. By accident, it may need it less than a community which, as a result of ignorance, is often confronted by illusory means. But by essence it is more powerful than any community afflicted with vice and ignorance, and as a result of its greater power it controls choices involving new problems of unity which cannot be solved by way of unanimity but only by way of authority.

THE FORM AND THE MATTER OF THE COMMON GOOD

Engaged in the pursuit of a common end, we deliberate about ways of insuring the unity of our action. These may be the steady ways of authority or, should it prove impossible to embody the principle of authority in an appropriate agency, the precarious ways of unanimity. But the problem would not arise if we were not already intending in common a certain end. Underlying any problem relative to the unity of common action, there exist problems relative to the end of the action to be united. The next step in the theory of authority concerns the end willed in common, as presupposed by the question of the way to unify action toward this end. Let this problem be posed as follows: granted that authority has an essential part to play in the unifying of action toward the common end, does it have any essential part to play with regard to the common end itself?

The precise vocabulary worked out by Aristotle (Ethics, 3.) and improved by Aquinas (i-ii, 6ff.) can supply much valuable clarity. In perfect accord with the best usage of common language, philosophers describe "voli-
essential function, except with regard to the unity of common action when there exists a plurality of genuine means.

It sometimes happens that a very simple analysis suffices to bring into focus difficulties hidden by familiar appearances. In a discussion of authority with regard to the end of common action, it is decisively important to bear in mind the meaning of the polar opposition between form and content within the object of volition and intention. Consider this object, i.e., the end willed (as a thing absolutely good) and intended (as a term of means). It can be willed and intended in two ways. I may will and intend what is good without knowing what the thing is that is good. The daily life of a man of good will is made of problems of content stated on the basis of a satisfactory answer to a problem of form. The man of good will, by definition and hypothesis, wills that which is good, and firmly adheres to the form of goodness. If only he knew what the thing is in which the form of goodness resides, he would do the good thing and all would be perfect. There is an evil harmony in the sinful will which adheres to evil things known to be evil—i.e., known to bear the form of evil—and there is a blessed harmony in the good will which, for the sake of goodness, adheres to things that are actually good. And between these two harmonies there is the daily problem of the man of good will who indeed adheres to the form of the good but feels uncertain about the thing in which this form resides, in other words, the matter or content of this form.

So far as community life is concerned, the problem of matter and form within the end can be posed as follows:

Is it desirable that the common good be willed and intended, both with regard to matter and with regard to form, by private persons acting in a private capacity? In order to be sure that we reach the root of the issue, let us consider the case of a society with no distinct governing personnel. Here are a few hundred farmers who gather periodically into a people's assembly, and this assembly is the only government of their community. Assuming that the order of virtuous intention obtains, I recognize in each farmer a dual capacity. Between the sessions of the assembly, he is Philip or Bartholomew, a private person, the husband of Ruth or Patricia, the father of these children, and the owner of this particular land unmistakably distinguished by a fence from the rest of the world. His duties are unique. A good neighbor and companion, he wants all fields to bear abundantly; yet he is responsible, in a unique way, for the plowing of the field described as his. A good-hearted man, he is ready to help any child that God places in his path, yet there would be dire subversion of order if he did not show special dedication to the children who are his, and prefer them, in intention and in action, to other children who, though equally lovely, are not in equal degree entrusted to his love. In the relation of man and wife, a

12 Evil is a privation, not a form, but this privation is understood after the pattern of a form and cannot be understood otherwise.
dedication unique in all respects is the essence of indis- 
soluble marriage.

When the assembly meets, every citizen is expected to 
assume a new capacity. A man who yesterday was admired 
for his industry on his family farm would today be blamed 
if his devotion did not belong entirely to the community. 
Between the private and the common welfare, the rela-
tion is often one of harmony. But conflicts may arise at 
any time and a public person, say, a member of the peo-
ple's assembly, is bound to uphold the public welfare, 
regardless of how his private interest is affected. For 
instance, a certain method of taxation, plainly beneficial 
to the community as a whole, may cause serious difficulty 
to the kind of enterprise that he is managing. If a mem-
ber of a people's assembly is known to have opposed a 
beneficial taxation law for no other reason than the 
threat of increased difficulty for his own enterprise, we 
consider him, according to the seriousness of the circum-
cstances, either a weak person or a despicably bad citizen. 
At any rate, this accident of private interest interfering 
with public service in the discharge of a public function 
is inconceivable in the community of virtuous and en-
lightened persons which remains the principal subject 
of our inquiry. Considering, thus, the citizen of a direct 
democracy who, by the very fact that there is no distinct 
governing personnel, is the bearer of two capacities— 
the public and the private, according as the people's as-
sembly is or is not in session—and assuming, further, 
that this person acts blamelessly in each capacity, I 
recognize what difference there is between these two re-
lations.

The problem would certainly be overlooked if we were 
satisfied with the contrast between the private and the 
common. Again, this virtuous citizen is dedicated to the 
common good at all times, whether or not the assembly 
is in session, and, unmistakably, the difference that we 
are trying to express concerns, not the common good and 
its opposite, but two relations to the common good. The 
private person, inasmuch as he is morally excellent, wills 
and intends the common good, and subordinates his 
private wishes to it. He may not know what action the 
common good demands, but he adheres to the common 
good formally understood, to the form of the common 
good, whatever may be the matter in which this form 
resides; as far as content or matter is concerned, it is his 
business to will and intend private goods. But the public 
person is defined by the duty of willing and intending 
the common good considered both in its form and in its 
matter. And because the service of the common good 
normally involves an arrangement of things private, and 
sometimes requires the sacrifice of private interests, the 
subject of the public capacity exercises authority over the 
private person, whose business it is to look after par-
ticular matters.

In spite of appearances, the essence of authority and 
that of obedience are integrally preserved in a community 
practicing government by majority vote without any 
distinct governing personnel. The decisive question is 
not whether the content or matter of the common good 
is entrusted to distinct persons; it is whether, by reason 
of the common good's primacy, the volition and inten-
tion of that in which the common good resides must be 
expressed by a rule of action binding on all. The citizens 
of a direct democracy are inclined to boast of having no
other masters than themselves. This attitude may mean merely that they like to do without a distinct governing personnel. But the same boastful words may express the will to eliminate, through constitutional contrivance, the essence of authority and that of obedience. The soul of the system is revealed by the interpretation of majority, minority, and opposition. A citizen who, whenever the assembly meets, finds himself in the majority, may believe that he obeys only himself. How is he going to feel when the majority votes against his preference? If he considers that the law he voted against is just as obligatory, and for the same reasons, as any law that he voted for, he is a law-abiding and obedient citizen for whom personal preference is altogether accidental. But if a person considers himself free from obligation to a law which he opposed, we understand that he has always been a rebel. True, he gave no signs of rebellion so long as the law was to his liking; but his later attitude discloses that having his own way has always been for him the thing essential, and obedience to the law a mere appearance.

There are, in the history of mankind, only a few communities governed exclusively by the methods of direct democracy. But every democracy, no matter how important the part that a distinct personnel plays in its operation, embodies direct democracy in some of its political processes. These processes may either pertain to the written constitution, e.g., plebiscite, or to the unwritten one, e.g., the influence of public opinion. In all cases the citizens of a democracy are tempted to boast of having no masters except themselves, for they truly exercise much political power besides the electing of their leaders. The United States Constitution mentions two assemblies: the House and the Senate. There is a third one which does not need to be mentioned because its existence is obvious and which could hardly be mentioned in a written document, because of the indefiniteness of its role and power: it is the People of the United States.

### The Most Essential Function of Authority

Thus, bringing about unity in common action is not, among the functions of authority, the only one which should be described as essential. Again, the problem of how to unify action—whether by unanimity or by authority—arises only on the ground of an already determinate volition and intention of the common good. Such volition and intention involve an antecedent function of authority, and this function, inasmuch as it is relative to the very end of common action, is more essential than anything pertaining to means. The most essential function of authority is the issuance and carrying out of rules expressing the requirements of the common good considered materially.

This theory implies that two capacities are normally and desirably distinguished in every community. With reference to the best known case, i.e., that of the body politic versus its components—individuals, families, etc.—these capacities have been called public and private. But in the present inquiry they should rather, by the rule of strict appropriateness, be designated as common and particular. Indeed, the capacity thus far called public exists in all communities, whether actually public, like a township, a county, and a state, or private, like a family. On the other hand, we shall soon see that the basic opposition is not between the common and the private but, more precisely, between the common and the particular for privateness is but one mode of particularity. The common capacity is defined by a relation to the common good considered not only in its form but also in its matter or content. As to the particular capacity, it involves a rela-
tion to the form of the common good but not to its matter. Clearly, if the particular capacity were related to both the form and the matter of the common good, it would cease to be particular: the problem of authority would disappear, as far as at least as the volition and intention of the common good are concerned. The whole theory stands or falls upon the answer to this simple question: Is it desirable that there should exist, in every community, persons whose business it is, within the order of material consideration, to look after goods particular rather than after the common good? It almost irresistibly seems that a disposition concerned with the form of the common good but not with its matter is just about half a virtue. A person determined to serve the common good but unconcerned with the matter of its requirements seems to stop half way, and it looks very much as if a “full measure of devotion” would extend to the matter of the common good as well as to its form.

Let us refer, once more, to a community governed by majority vote. According to a project under deliberation, a certain road, so far a very quiet one, would be paved and opened to fast-moving traffic. Large families live on this road, and the parents are worried about increased danger to their children. But, in spite of the risk involved, the good of the community demands that the road should be paved, and worried fathers, acting as members of the people's assembly, support the project. By the terms of the preceding description, these good citizens, exercising the capacity of particular persons between the sessions of the assembly, should oppose the project as dangerous to their children, with a firm determination, however, to abide by the decision of the majority. Here, the twofold capacity described in the foregoing seems irrelevant. These citizens, though lovingly concerned with danger to their children, will and intend the form of the common good. Consequently, they refrain from any rebellious act against the decision to pave the road, although they do their best under all circumstances to reduce the danger. If these good people can do so much, why should they not do a little more and, without waiting for the emergence of a new capacity at the assembly's session, confess that the road should be paved? The construct of a community made of ideally enlightened and virtuous persons seems to imply, over and above adherence to the common good formally considered, the determinate volition of the things that the common good actually requires or contains. But then, the volition and intention of the common good, both with regard to form and with regard to matter, are adequately guaranteed by enlightened virtue. As far, at least, as the volition and intention of the common good are concerned, an ideally perfect community seems able to do without authority.

Thus, according to a plausible hypothesis, the perfection of virtue causes the capacity described as particular to disappear into the common capacity. A single capacity is left, which is altogether relative to the common good. The particular capacity, by taking in hand the matter of the common good, has indeed become common. Such
transmutation is precisely what was suggested when we voiced the conjecture that excellent citizens, fully prepared to make all sacrifices required by the common good, should take one more step and, without assuming any new capacity, should will and intend the common good materially considered. It remains to be decided how the common good itself is affected by the disappearance or impairment of the particular capacity.

The Function and the Subject

Let us first analyze particularity into its main types. Every community exercises several functions—e.g., in the case of the state, justice, defense, diplomacy, public works, etc.—and in relation to the whole life of the community each function obviously has the character of a part. But in what specific sense does the notion of particularity apply here? Take, for instance, national defense. It is aimed at protecting all the national territory, all its wealth, all its counties, townships, families, and citizens. This function is altogether relative to the common good, yet it retains the character of a part inasmuch as its object is not the total good of the community but only one aspect of it. The object of a function is a certain aspect of a whole, and this is what defines particularity in the case of the function. The subject whose good is sought may be an individual organism—indeed the concept of function is basic in biology; it may be a person, and it may just as well be a community of any rank and description. Whether the subject considered is an organism, a person or a community, the successful exercise of one function is only an aspect and a part of its good condition; if other functions are defective, disaster is not ruled out. A function may be public in an unqualified sense, as in the case of the functions pertaining exclusively to the body politic, without ceasing to be particular, inasmuch as its object is but one aspect of a complex good.

In sharp contrast to the particularity of the function, a good may be particular by reason of its subject. Consider the activities involved in the upbringing of a child: taken together, they intend the whole good of the child, not one aspect of it. But because the child is part of the community, his is a particular good. Private communities, as the family, and such public communities as the township, the county, and the units of a federal organization are also related to the larger communities of which they are members as particular subjects. The state is the community which is so complete and self-sufficient that its good is not that of a particular subject—individual, family, township, etc.—but, unqualifiedly, the common good of men assembled for the sake of noble life.18

Let us now examine the question of the excellence of the particular in the two ways of particularity just defined. Familiar experiences suffice to show how desirable it is that functions should be clearly distinguished, and that each of them should be exercised with a special eag-

18 If the word state is supposed to designate the most complete temporal society, the questions “Where is the center of the state” and “What are the boundaries of the state” may raise difficulties in federal organizations. In the American Union, for instance, it may be wondered whether the philosophic essence of the state is found in each of the fifty component units, or in the Federal Union itself. Where is the center of the “complete temporal community” to which a Canadian citizens belongs? Is it the capital of the province, that of the Dominion or that of the Commonwealth? The answer to such questions may not be unanimous. Whether it is or not, it is not determined exclusively by constitutional law, but also by history, and it may change without any change occurring in the letter of the constitutions.
erness for what is unique about it. It is good for the community that military men be devoted with a passion to national defense, bridge builders to the building of bridges, foresters to the preservation of forests, physicians to public health, and classicists to the study of the classics. The particularity of the function removes confusion and opens the way to the advantages of specialization. It is hardly possible that both the task of building bridges and that of conserving forests should be successfully fulfilled by the same persons; but even if a team happened to be expert both in bridge building and in forestry, a division of social labor would still be necessary with regard to place and time. One reason why we keep rereading the Republic of Plato is that it expresses better than any other book the ideal of a community from which confusion is removed, and in which justice is achieved, through wise division of labor and dedication to specific tasks. A most enjoyable clarity pertains to the distinctness of the function, for every function is relative to an object, and, in human affairs at least, every object is definable. When the object of a social function no longer can be defined, the function itself becomes meaningless: this is when reformers step in. The administration of justice, the conduct of foreign relations, the management of public finances, etc., are so many functions defined by perfectly intelligible objects.

Since functions are concerned with distinct aspects of the common good, functional diversity causes a need for an agency relative to the common good as a whole. Bringing about order among functions is the job of this central agency. What ratio of public funds can be allocated to agricultural projects without jeopardizing national defense or public health? This is an issue on which the function of promoting agriculture, the function of defending the national territory and the function of procuring good health conditions have nothing to say, except in purely preparatory and indecisive fashion. Decision pertains to a power which, inasmuch as it is responsible for order among the functions, necessarily controls all of them and commands all the functionaries.

The particularity of the function, as ground of authority, has a negative feature of major significance: it does not, in any essential manner, set limits to the authority that it grounds. In fact, authority is commonly restricted, and often crippled, by the resistance of its functionaries: but this is an entirely accidental occurrence. Such resistance is foreign and opposed to the concept of function. True, it may be held desirable that functionaries be possessed of some autonomy, and it may be a matter of fact that they always are. But their autonomy is caused by a particularity which is not that of the function. This simple remark sums up many products of political theory as well as many facts pertaining to the history of government. Because the functionary, as such, is an instrument, the particularity of the function is a thing that despots do not dread. They know that, all other things being equal, the clear division of social labor into functions increases the efficacy of their power.

Let us now ask whether the particularity of the subject possesses an excellence of its own. No doubt, it helps to remove confusion. A good way to make sure that every farmer knows what piece of land he is supposed to till is to divide the land into homesteads. This is indeed a result of considerable value, and it may constitute an everlasting argument in favor of private ownership. However, the power of removing confusion does not belong to the
particularity of the subject in strict appropriateness, since it also belongs to the particularity of the function. A factory where rigorous discipline obtains and whose workers, for the most part, can be easily replaced, has but minimum recourse to the particularity of the subject. The feats of order accomplished by the modern organization of industry have given a new appeal to the old ideal of a state which would keep free from confusion without releasing the suspicious energies of such powers as privately owned land, privately conducted schools, strongly organized families, and citizens protected by inalienable rights.

The decisive fact is that the particularity of the subject, in all its forms and degrees, involves autonomy. To use a simple example, let us imagine that all the parts of a vast plain, by reason of homogeneity in all relevant respects, produce the same crops. Within such functional unity, farming can be administered according to the diversity of the tasks (plowing, fertilizing, sowing, etc.); then it is a public affair, entrusted, say, to a branch of the Department of Agriculture. But the cultivation of this plain can also be entrusted to a multiplicity of farms each of which is governed by its individual proprietor. For the comparison to be meaningful, we must, of course, assume that other things are equal. Under definite circumstances, one system of management may insure a much higher yield than the other. In the assumption that the production is about the same in either system, let us ask whether it is better that the job be done by a multitude of self-ruling agents or by mere instruments of a central agency.

To ask this question is like asking whether there is more perfection in life than in lifelessness, in activity than in mere instrumentality, in plenitude than in emptiness. Clearly, a whole is better off if its parts are full of initiative than if they are merely traversed by an energy which never becomes their own. Much can be learned from the fact that social thinkers and metaphysicians conduct, on the subject of plenitude versus vacuum, parallel dialogues. The book of William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, forcefully expresses the metaphysical sentiment that genuine plurality, in the world of our experience, is the condition of meaning and plenitude. A totality which does not admit of autonomous parts disappears into the vacuum caused by its imperialistic arrogance. But the particularity of the subject, in the social as well as in the metaphysical world, harbors mysteries that are extremely un congenial to the rationalistic mind. Whenever it has its own way in social affairs, rationalism exalts the clarity of the function and crushes the particularity of the subject.

To be sure, choice and contingency often make it impossible to explain the distinction between communities of the same functional type. What reasons could we bring forth if we had to say why two states or nations remain separated by a borderline instead of merging into one unit? The notion of natural boundary is not absurd, and sometimes a fence built by nature serves quite reasonably to distinguish one community from another. Spain is south of the Pyrenees Range and France north of it. But in many other cases, the most famous of which is the great East European plain, nations remain stubbornly distinct although they cannot claim any natural boundary. Sometimes language supplies reasonable principles of unity and diversity, but it also happens that peoples refuse to merge in spite of linguistic unity (e.g., the French-speaking Swiss and Belgians do not want to be one nation with
the French) and it also happens that the unity of a nation (e.g., Switzerland) is in no way jeopardized by diversity of language. After having probed all such causes of unity and diversity, we must confess that the final power of determination belongs to the choices of men and to the accidents of history. Whatever is accidental is, as such, unexplainable, but in the world of action a thing can be significant, worthy, treasurable, without having any character of essentiality or intelligibility: it just is, it has been, it tends to keep being, and this is why it is significant, without any further explanation. The precise location of the borderline between Canada and the United States is, in a number of places, entirely conventional, but by the decision of history the community centered about Ottawa is something else than the community centered about Washington, D.C. Again, there may be no good reason why the borderline between Colorado and New Mexico should be where it is rather than a few miles farther north or farther south. Yet it is hardly questionable that the community whose main centers are Colorado Springs and Denver is, by the decisions of history, different from the community whose main centers are Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Any rationalist, if in the position of philosopher-king, would erase the borderline between Colorado and New Mexico and reduce the fifty States to a smaller number of more rational units. Such operations, which would sweep away a great deal of mystery, would also destroy much historical substance and, in a number of cases, leave only deceptive clarity where there used to be historical plenitude. No doubt, existent particularities may be dead remnants and their suppression may prove beneficial. But it also happens that the works of the past, no matter how contingent, are so full of life that their disappearance would involve great destruction. In a profound sense a “survival” is a thing which maintains in the present some of the life which was that of the past. Such life is not clearly intelligible, for an important part of it results from the successful management of contingent occurrences over a long time.

The Person

It is in the individual subject of human existence that we can best observe the relation between the mysteries of contingency and those of free choice. As a member of a species, distinguished within the species by the material components of his being, a human subject is more properly designated as an individual. Considered as a complete substance which owes to its rationality a unique way of being a whole and of facing the rest of the universe, he is more properly designated as a person. The fortune of “personalism” in the ideologies of our time is clearly traceable to the promises held by the notion of person, as distinct from that of individual, in the working out of difficulties which, though of all times, have assumed extraordinary significance in the last generations. Indeed, the word personalism often stood for doctrines and attitudes that “individualism” would designate with equal or greater accuracy. Such a confusing change in expression bears witness to the power that the idea of person came to possess in minds confronted by problems which, some time before, were not held so obvious and momentous. Many, who would have been satisfied with the language of individualism half a century ago, were necessitated by the spirit of the age to speak a personalistic language. But what is it that caused, in such a large variety of doctrinal contexts, the decline of individualistic rhet-
oeric, and a new attention to the meaning of the person? With due allowance for profound diversities among the so-called personalistic schools of thought, it can be said that the displacement of "individualism" by "personalism" generally expressed the following insights:

(1) As recalled in the foregoing, the philosophy of individualism implies that whatever is called common good is merely useful, that things common are but means, and that the character of end belongs exclusively to the individual. "Means" and "end" must be understood here rigorously: a mere means is a thing which has no desirability of its own and which would not be desired at all if it did not lead to a thing desirable in its own right. The mere means, in other words, the thing that is merely useful, is just traversed by the goodness of the end. To treat the common good as a thing merely useful becomes the critical periods, but as soon as the possibility of a new organic period is strongly felt, to represent the common good as sheer utility without any dignity of its own is unbearably paradoxical. Only the pressures and appeals of a critical period can make men blind to the character of the common good as an autonomous good, bonum honestum, and to the primacy that it enjoys as long as the common and the particular are contained within the same order. When such pressures and appeals have become things of the past, the sense for the eternal worth of the human individual is not necessarily weakened, but why should we keep using the language and the ways of a philosophy committed to treating the common good as a thing with no excellence of its own?

(2) Another aspect of classical individualism concerns the rule of material causality in human affairs. The features involved belong both to economic and political theory. The individualism of the economists proceeds, in part, from the stubborn belief that the best state of affairs is brought about by the independent operation of ultimate units, viz., the independent money-maker, the individual supplier of labor-force, the individual consumer, the individual organizer, etc., all moved by the power of individual well-being. Likewise, some democratic polities embody the postulate that what is best for the state is steadily brought about by the solitary determination of its individual components. These polities, famously associated with the teaching of Rousseau and with Jacobinism, strive to maintain the isolation of the citizen. The best state would emerge from the sheer multitude of its citizens and be confronted by nothing but such a multitude. Again, we are dealing here with a disposition marked by the characteristics of the critical periods.

The use of the word organic, as in "organic period," suffices to conjure up the danger of attributing to society
a unity of primary character. Likening society to an organism may be useful as long as we remain in control of our analogies and understand that society is not one after the fashion of an organic body. Its individual members are not organs or cells but primary subjects of human existence. What we need is a concept expressive of the unique way in which an individual exercises membership in a set when the set is a community of intelligent beings. This concept is that of person rather than that of individual. True, the person is sociable by essence and it is capable of playing the role of part (the persons who make up the Senate are parts of the Senate), and the individual, inasmuch as it is a thing “undivided in itself and divided from all the rest,” 18 implies a character of wholeness and separation. But when the being which is an individual and a person is considered as member of a set (and this is the relevant way of considering it in the theory of society, for the unity of society is that of an ordered set), the concept of person restricts the character of part whereas the concept of individual expresses no such restriction. As member of a set the individual is purely and simply a part. But because personality, in every possible connection, expresses a universe of reason and freedom, emphasis on the person implies emphasis on the privileges of this universe. In its most intelligent forms at least, personalism, with all its ambiguities, had the merit of tracing to the unique kind of totality which results from rationality and liberty effects that the individualism of the critical period used to trace to the spontaneity of the part. If atoms were persons, their arrangements would account for many wonders that Epicurean imagination leaves unaccounted for.

18 Sum. Theol., i.29.4.

(3) Above all, the autonomy of the individual man, as fact of nature and as moral requirement, is incomparably better expressed by the notion of person than by that of individual. 19 Just as it is desirable, in all respects and most precisely in relation to the common good, that the affairs of the state be not managed by the federal power but by the state itself, and the affairs of the county by the county, and the affairs of the township by the township, and the affairs of the family by the family, so it is ultimately desirable that the affairs of the individual man, as long as he is free from important deficiency, be managed by himself. But when the individual man is precisely considered as a being possessed of integrity and rationality, when he is considered as an agent in control of his destiny, when he is considered as an agent which contains its own law not merely by way of natural constitution, but also and principally by way of understanding, voluntariness and freedom, the aspect brought forth is that of personality. On the level of individual existence, autonomy belongs to the person more properly than to the individual. Such greater propriety makes much difference both in terms of explanation and in terms of appeal. The most

19 When individuation originates in matter, as it does in all composite substances, man included, to speak of the “autonomy of the individual” involves a degree of inappropriateness. To be sure, individuals are possessed of autonomy, but the principle of their autonomy is not the same as the principle of their individuality. Matter is that which has no law of its own. In a composite substance all that has the character of a law comes from the form. But the form is specific and consequently all the law of the material individual is the law of its species. In order to reach the principle of a norm concerned with what is unique in the individual substance, we have to turn to the concept which results from the union of completeness in substantial constitution and rationality in specific nature: this is, by the celebrated definition of Boethius, the concept of person.
valuable contribution of personalism is the general theory that the particularity of the human individual, in ultimate contradistinction to that of the function, is a privilege of personality.

Indeed, it is historically absurd to speak of personalism in the singular, as if the various personalistic movements were possessed of doctrinal unity. Endless variety is found in the positive content of their programs, and, whereas each of them is marked by sharp opposition to some general feature of the modern world, the objects of their oppositions may not coincide and may even contrast with each other. Yet there is more unity in the aversions of the personalists than in their assertions, and of all their aversions the most steady concerns the predominance of function in the order of society. If the use of one word to designate such a variety of doctrines, attitudes, inspirations and moods can be justified at all, it should be justified by the central significance, in all personalistic movements, of the conflict between person and function.

The Subject and the Person

Thus, in terms of most essential necessity, authority is needed because it is desirable that particular goods should be taken care of by particular agencies. Some of these agencies are defined by their functions, others are constituted by subjects of various kinds. Along the line which goes from the broader to the more narrow, a particular subject may be a state in a federal union, a county in a state, a township in a county, a family in a township. The ultimativeness of the individual is accompanied by the emergence of significant features: this whole, the individual man, is possessed of substantial unity, whereas the other subjects, state, township, family, are not. And by reason of its rational nature, this whole, the individual man, is, in a way, all things, adheres to the absoluteness of the good, and thereby achieves mastery over its own acts. Extreme amplitude arises just when the most narrow unit is attained, for it is not in a merely metaphorical sense that a complete substance of rational nature is said to be a universe. As soon as this is understood, a new light is shed on the particularity of the antecedent subjects. A family, for instance, is not just a smaller group within a township: each of its members is all things; a family is a whole made of universes, each of which is in control of its own operations—a perfection that no solar system can achieve. Owing to the unique character of totality which belongs to the individual substance of rational nature, the whole system of the subjects is transfigured: a family, a township, a county are particular subjects, they are particular after the fashion of the subject, they are parts indeed, but of these parts the ultimate components are wholes which in a way comprehend all things. At all levels of human association the presence of the person causes the energies of totality and liberty to be present.

Looking again at the series of the particular subjects, but from the opposite standpoint, let us now remark that the most particular of them, the person, comes to exist, by virtue of its own sociability, in subjects that are less and less particular, up to the level of a community describable as complete. With regard to the social character of the person, much confusion would be spared if some attention were given to the difference between (1) sociability

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20 It is obvious that no human community is unqualifiedly complete, but insular as the most comprehensive of our communities remains incomplete, we keep struggling toward something beyond the least incomplete of the existent communities.
as such and (2) the tendency to exist in a society as a part in a whole. To be sure, the notion of person expresses wholeness and opposes the character of part, just as the notion of freedom expresses dominating indifference and opposes contingency, and just as the notion of being expresses actuality and opposes potency. But just as finite being cannot exist without an admixture of potency, and just as our freedom cannot exist without harboring some amount of passive indifference, so the person of man, by reason of all the limitations which place it at an infinite distance from absolute personality, demands to exist in a community as a part in a whole. Yet certain features of sociability belong to the human person qua person, and in all the system of human relations, nothing is more determining, more decisive, more distinguishing and more final than the acts traceable to the sociability of the person considered as such. In the small area of concentrated energy where these acts take place, the disinterestedness of tendencies and the other-centeredness of needs are more than facts of nature: they involve a commitment of the self in its distinct existence. No doubt, disinterested tendencies and other-centered needs are present in animals, but so long as the reason is not at work the individual agent contributes only a tendency toward its own satisfaction. Disinterestedness and other-centeredness are contributed by nature; in other words, they are caused by a dynamism antecedent to individual activity. The experience of human disorder shows that a tendency which, by nature, is disinterested and which, in fact, serves another subject, may involve no generosity on the part of the agent. Thus, some mothers love their children in a selfish way: out of selfish love they would do many things beneficial to the child, expose themselves to great dangers and inflict upon themselves great sacrifices. Here, other-centered needs are satisfied and some acts demanded by disinterested tendencies are elicited. But the way of acting remains interested and self-centered. Effects of generous love are brought into existence without generosity. Much is given, and yet action does not proceed by way of gift. When the devotion of a mother to her child bears these characteristics, it is commonly interpreted as an animal passion, and thereby we mean that it is nature—that is, a dynamism antecedent to reason and voluntariness—which places the effect of love in another rather than in the acting self. It is only where reason, voluntariness, and free choice are at work that the subject takes care of transcending its subjectivity: then actions that are gifts also proceed by way of gift. Such disinterestedness, which concerns both the content and the ways of action, originates in rationality, but inasmuch as it implies the actual transcending of the self by itself, it is traceable, in strict appropriateness, to the way of subsisting and to the way of acting which belong to a complete substance of rational nature. In short, it is traceable to personality. Qualities are transcended and the rela-

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21 In contemporary discussions about individual and person some obscurity may have been caused by a tendency to consider personality as the proper cause of features which actually originate in rational nature, more precisely, in rationality as man's specific difference. To be sure, individuality proceeds from the material component of things composite, and personality from what is most formal in man, viz., the rationality of his nature. It remains that rationality and personality are distinct principles of explanation. The former belongs to the constitution of a nature, the latter belongs to the way of subsisting and to the subsequent way of acting that are proper to a nature constituted in its species by rationality. Whether or not we have any use for the word "personalism," only propositions referring in strict appropriateness to personality can
tion of friendship is established on its true basis. As long as it is directed to quantities, friendship remains uncertain: it achieves complete genuineness only when it exists between person and person, regardless of what happens to the qualities of the beloved. Then, the question why one loves is best answered—if this can be called an answer—by pointing to what is unique and unutterable about a person. This state of affairs is well described in a celebrated essay of Montaigne. "If I am entreated to say why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed except by answering 'Because it was he, because it was I.' Beyond all my discourse and whatever I can say distinctly about it, I do not know what unexplainable and overwhelming force is instrumental in such a union." 22 In all likelihood Pascal was commenting on Montaigne when he wrote these words: "But if one loves another one because of his beauty, does he love him? No: for smallpox, which kills the beauty without killing the person, will put an end to love. And if one loves me for my judgment, for my memory, does one love me? No, for I can lose these qualities without losing myself. But where is this self, if it is neither in the body, nor in the soul? and how would it be possible to love the body and the soul, except for these qualities, which do not constitute the self, since they are perishable? should one love the substance of the soul of a person abstractly, and regardless of the qualities in it? that

be meaningfully considered parts of a personalistic doctrine. If a proposition relative, say, to the rights of man, derives all its truth and power from a relation to the rationality of man's nature, it does not belong to any variety of personalism, but can be held by any philosophy able to recognize the image of God in man.

22 *Essays*, Bk. 1, ch. 27.

cannot be, and that would be unfair. Thus, one never loves any person, but only qualities."

The last sentence will be misunderstood unless it is held to express the sorrowful perplexity of a man who does not see the answer to a question that he has stated with extreme keenness. Pascal knows that the object of genuine love cannot be anything else than the self. Then, perhaps with some bitterness, he turns to the fact that people are liked and loved because of their qualities, which seems to imply that they never are loved genuinely and that they are bound to remain unhappy. Both in terms of natural possibility and in terms of justice, he sees no way out of this fateful state of affairs. Apparently, he is not unaware of the difference between "being an object of love," and "being a ground of love": on the one hand, he speaks of loving a person because of his beauty, for his judgment, for his memory; on the other hand, he speaks of loving qualities, not persons. To get more out of the distinction between ground and object of love, let us see in what sense friendship can make itself independent of its own grounds. Indeed, the only thing that human love cannot do is to create out of nothing the goodness, the desirability of its object. Divine love alone causes the beloved to be good, independently of any goodness antecedent to love. In order to be an object for the love of a creature, a thing must already be good: in that sense it is true that no one is loved or liked by his fellow men except for his qualities. But, although many of these qualities are subject to destruction—the first example of Pascal is beauty—a human being will never be totally devoid of qualities.

There will always be in him a ground, or a multiplicity of grounds, for disinterested love. Even though a lady has been loved for her beauty, smallpox does not necessarily cause her to be neglected. Under the worst of circumstances, the excellence of human nature, considered in actual existence and in relation to its end, would still be a perfect ground for loving a person without measure. And this excellence of man becomes an infinitely more powerful ground of love when man is considered in the mystery of his supernatural relation to God. Pascal seems to have missed, at least in the present fragment, this ability of love to transcend qualities and be concerned with persons. But without such ability, the other-centered needs which bind men together would be sheer facts of nature and in no way pertain to reason and freedom. Friendship would be impossible. And civic virtue would be impossible.

To sum all up, let us again imagine that the members of a community, in a supreme act of boundless dedication, resolve to will and intend, under all circumstances, the matter of the common good as well as its form. By this resolution the particular capacity is abolished; from now on, it will be up to the common capacity to take care of the most particular business.

As far as the function is concerned, the disappearance of the particular capacity results in a loss of order, and among the forms which make up order those are more directly and seriously damaged which are rational in character. As far as the subject is concerned, the disappearance of the particular capacity entails also a loss of order, and this damage is greater where order is mostly made of historical settlement. If the particularity of the subject alone were impaired, and its ordering power transferred to the function, as in the Republic of Plato, whatever is historical in the arrangement of the state would be replaced by a rational disposition, and this would make a great deal of difference, for any impairment of particularity, in the case of the subject, entails a loss of autonomy.

It is the excellence of autonomy which vindicates the particularity of the subject and whatever forms of authority are needed for the preservation of this particularity. Here, familiar contrasts are transcended, authority and autonomy no longer conflict with each other and no longer restrict each other. They cause and guaranty one another. But a rebel cannot perceive the great unity, the great peace which obtains at this very deep level of social reality. Autonomy implies the interiority of the law, a condition which, for human agents at least, is not native, but has to be achieved through arduous progress. Rebels hate the sacrifices that the interiorization of the law requires. It is bad enough for them that the law should exist outside man, and hover around after the fashion of a threat. Autonomy will never lead them to the understanding of authority, for their notion of autonomy is itself a counterfeit.*

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