

**Texts for the 2016 Social Doctrine Conference (excluding *Small is Beautiful*, which must be purchased separately)**

Excerpts from Book VII of *Politics* by Aristotle

Chapter 1

He who would duly inquire about the best form of a state ought first to determine which is the most eligible life; while this remains uncertain the best form of the state must also be uncertain; for, in the natural order of things, those may be expected to lead the best life who are governed in the best manner of which their circumstances admit. We ought therefore to ascertain, first of all, which is the most generally eligible life, and then whether the same life is or is not best for the state and for individuals.

Assuming that enough has been already said in discussions outside the school concerning the best life, we will now only repeat what is contained in them. Certainly no one will dispute the propriety of that partition of goods which separates them into three classes, viz., external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul, or deny that the happy man must have all three. For no one would maintain that he is happy who has not in him a particle of courage or temperance or justice or prudence, who is afraid of every insect which flutters past him, and will commit any crime, however great, in order to gratify his lust of meat or drink, who will sacrifice his dearest friend for the sake of half-a-farthing, and is as feeble and false in mind as a child or a madman. These propositions are almost universally acknowledged as soon as they are uttered, but men differ about the degree or relative superiority of this or that good. Some think that a very moderate amount of virtue is enough, but set no limit to their desires of wealth, property, power, reputation, and the like. To whom we reply by

an appeal to facts, which easily prove that mankind do not acquire or preserve virtue by the help of external goods, but external goods by the help of virtue, and that happiness, whether consisting in pleasure or virtue, or both, is more often found with those who are most highly cultivated in their mind and in their character, and have only a moderate share of external goods, than among those who possess external goods to a useless extent but are deficient in higher qualities; and this is not only matter of experience, but, if reflected upon, will easily appear to be in accordance with reason. For, whereas external goods have a limit, like any other instrument, and all things useful are of such a nature that where there is too much of them they must either do harm, or at any rate be of no use, to their possessors, every good of the soul, the greater it is, is also of greater use, if the epithet useful as well as noble is appropriate to such subjects. No proof is required to show that the best state of one thing in relation to another corresponds in degree of excellence to the interval between the natures of which we say that these very states are states: so that, if the soul is more noble than our possessions or our bodies, both absolutely and in relation to us, it must be admitted that the best state of either has a similar ratio to the other. Again, it is for the sake of the soul that goods external and goods of the body are eligible at all, and all wise men ought to choose them for the sake of the soul, and not the soul for the sake of them.

Let us acknowledge then that each one has just so much of happiness as he has of virtue and wisdom, and of virtuous and wise action. God is a witness to us of this truth, for he is happy and blessed, not by reason of any external good, but in

himself and by reason of his own nature. And herein of necessity lies the difference between good fortune and happiness; for external goods come of themselves, and chance is the author of them, but no one is just or temperate by or through chance. In like manner, and by a similar train of argument, the happy state may be shown to be that which is best and which acts rightly; and rightly it cannot act without doing right actions, and neither individual nor state can do right actions without virtue and wisdom. Thus the courage, justice, and wisdom of a state have the same form and nature as the qualities which give the individual who possesses them the name of just, wise, or temperate.

Thus much may suffice by way of preface: for I could not avoid touching upon these questions, neither could I go through all the arguments affecting them; these are the business of another science.

Let us assume then that the best life, both for individuals and states, is the life of virtue, when virtue has external goods enough for the performance of good actions. If there are any who controvert our assertion, we will in this treatise pass them over, and consider their objections hereafter.

## Chapter 2

There remains to be discussed the question whether the happiness of the individual is the same as that of the state, or different. Here again there can be no doubt- no one denies that they are the same. For those who hold that the well-being of the individual consists in his wealth, also think that riches make the happiness of the whole state, and those who value most highly the life of a tyrant deem that city the happiest which rules over the greatest number; while they who approve an individual for his virtue say that the more virtuous a city is,

the happier it is. Two points here present themselves for consideration: first (1), which is the more eligible life, that of a citizen who is a member of a state, or that of an alien who has no political ties; and again (2), which is the best form of constitution or the best condition of a state, either on the supposition that political privileges are desirable for all, or for a majority only? Since the good of the state and not of the individual is the proper subject of political thought and speculation, and we are engaged in a political discussion, while the first of these two points has a secondary interest for us, the latter will be the main subject of our inquiry.

Now it is evident that the form of government is best in which every man, whoever he is, can act best and live happily. But even those who agree in thinking that the life of virtue is the most eligible raise a question, whether the life of business and politics is or is not more eligible than one which is wholly independent of external goods, I mean than a contemplative life, which by some is maintained to be the only one worthy of a philosopher. For these two lives- the life of the philosopher and the life of the statesman- appear to have been preferred by those who have been most keen in the pursuit of virtue, both in our own and in other ages. Which is the better is a question of no small moment; for the wise man, like the wise state, will necessarily regulate his life according to the best end. There are some who think that while a despotic rule over others is the greatest injustice, to exercise a constitutional rule over them, even though not unjust, is a great impediment to a man's individual wellbeing. Others take an opposite view; they maintain that the true life of man is the practical and political, and that every virtue admits of being practiced, quite as much by statesmen and rulers as by private individuals. Others, again, are of opinion that arbitrary and tyrannical rule alone consists with happiness; indeed, in some states the entire aim

both of the laws and of the constitution is to give men despotic power over their neighbors. And, therefore, although in most cities the laws may be said generally to be in a chaotic state, still, if they aim at anything, they aim at the maintenance of power: thus in Lacedaemon and Crete the system of education and the greater part of the of the laws are framed with a view to war. And in all nations which are able to gratify their ambition military power is held in esteem, for example among the Scythians and Persians and Thracians and Celts.

In some nations there are even laws tending to stimulate the warlike virtues, as at Carthage, where we are told that men obtain the honor of wearing as many armlets as they have served campaigns. There was once a law in Macedonia that he who had not killed an enemy should wear a halter, and among the Scythians no one who had not slain his man was allowed to drink out of the cup which was handed round at a certain feast. Among the Iberians, a warlike nation, the number of enemies whom a man has slain is indicated by the number of obelisks which are fixed in the earth round his tomb; and there are numerous practices among other nations of a like kind, some of them established by law and others by custom. Yet to a reflecting mind it must appear very strange that the statesman should be always considering how he can dominate and tyrannize over others, whether they will or not. How can that which is not even lawful be the business of the statesman or the legislator? Unlawful it certainly is to rule without regard to justice, for there may be might where there is no right. The other arts and sciences offer no parallel a physician is not expected to persuade or coerce his patients, nor a pilot the passengers in his ship. Yet most men appear to think that the art of despotic government is statesmanship, and what men affirm to be unjust and inexpedient in their own case they are not ashamed of practicing towards others; they demand just

rule for themselves, but where other men are concerned they care nothing about it. Such behavior is irrational; unless the one party is, and the other is not, born to serve, in which case men have a right to command, not indeed all their fellows, but only those who are intended to be subjects; just as we ought not to hunt mankind, whether for food or sacrifice, but only the animals which may be hunted for food or sacrifice, this is to say, such wild animals as are eatable. And surely there may be a city happy in isolation, which we will assume to be well-governed (for it is quite possible that a city thus isolated might be well-administered and have good laws); but such a city would not be constituted with any view to war or the conquest of enemies- all that sort of thing must be excluded. Hence we see very plainly that warlike pursuits, although generally to be deemed honorable, are not the supreme end of all things, but only means. And the good lawgiver should inquire how states and races of men and communities may participate in a good life, and in the happiness which is attainable by them. His enactments will not be always the same; and where there are neighbors he will have to see what sort of studies should be practiced in relation to their several characters, or how the measures appropriate in relation to each are to be adopted. The end at which the best form of government should aim may be properly made a matter of future consideration.

### Chapter 3

Let us now address those who, while they agree that the life of virtue is the most eligible, differ about the manner of practicing it. For some renounce political power, and think that the life of the freeman is different from the life of the statesman and the best of all; but others think the life of the statesman best. The argument of the latter is that he who does nothing

cannot do well, and that virtuous activity is identical with happiness. To both we say: 'you are partly right and partly wrong.' first class are right in affirming that the life of the freeman is better than the life of the despot; for there is nothing grand or noble in having the use of a slave, in so far as he is a slave; or in issuing commands about necessary things. But it is an error to suppose that every sort of rule is despotic like that of a master over slaves, for there is as great a difference between the rule over freemen and the rule over slaves as there is between slavery by nature and freedom by nature, about which I have said enough at the commencement of this treatise. And it is equally a mistake to place inactivity above action, for happiness is activity, and the actions of the just and wise are the realization of much that is noble.

But perhaps some one, accepting these premises, may still maintain that supreme power is the best of all things, because the possessors of it are able to perform the greatest number of noble actions. if so, the man who is able to rule, instead of giving up anything to his neighbor, ought rather to take away his power; and the father should make no account of his son, nor the son of his father, nor friend of friend; they should not bestow a thought on one another in comparison with this higher object, for the best is the most eligible and 'doing eligible' and 'doing well' is the best. There might be some truth in such a view if we assume that robbers and plunderers attain the chief good. But this can never be; their hypothesis is false. For the actions of a ruler cannot really be honorable, unless he is as much superior to other men as a husband is to a wife, or a father to his children, or a master to his slaves. And therefore he who violates the law can never recover by any success, however great, what he has already lost in departing from virtue. For equals the honorable and the just consist in sharing alike, as is just and equal. But that the unequal should be given

to equals, and the unlike to those who are like, is contrary to nature, and nothing which is contrary to nature is good. If, therefore, there is any one superior in virtue and in the power of performing the best actions, him we ought to follow and obey, but he must have the capacity for action as well as virtue.

If we are right in our view, and happiness is assumed to be virtuous activity, the active life will be the best, both for every city collectively, and for individuals. Not that a life of action must necessarily have relation to others, as some persons think, nor are those ideas only to be regarded as practical which are pursued for the sake of practical results, but much more the thoughts and contemplations which are independent and complete in themselves; since virtuous activity, and therefore a certain kind of action, is an end, and even in the case of external actions the directing mind is most truly said to act. Neither, again, is it necessary that states which are cut off from others and choose to live alone should be inactive; for activity, as well as other things, may take place by sections; there are many ways in which the sections of a state act upon one another. The same thing is equally true of every individual. If this were otherwise, God and the universe, who have no external actions over and above their own energies, would be far enough from perfection. Hence it is evident that the same life is best for each individual, and for states and for mankind collectively

#### Chapter 4

Thus far by way of introduction. In what has preceded I have discussed other forms of government; in what remains the first point to be considered is what should be the conditions of the ideal or perfect state; for the perfect state cannot exist without a due supply of the means of life. And therefore we

must presuppose many purely imaginary conditions, but nothing impossible. There will be a certain number of citizens, a country in which to place them, and the like. As the weaver or shipbuilder or any other artisan must have the material proper for his work (and in proportion as this is better prepared, so will the result of his art be nobler), so the statesman or legislator must also have the materials suited to him.

First among the materials required by the statesman is population: he will consider what should be the number and character of the citizens, and then what should be the size and character of the country. Most persons think that a state in order to be happy ought to be large; but even if they are right, they have no idea what is a large and what a small state. For they judge of the size of the city by the number of the inhabitants; whereas they ought to regard, not their number, but their power. A city too, like an individual, has a work to do; and that city which is best adapted to the fulfillment of its work is to be deemed greatest, in the same sense of the word great in which Hippocrates might be called greater, not as a man, but as a physician, than some one else who was taller. And even if we reckon greatness by numbers, we ought not to include everybody, for there must always be in cities a multitude of slaves and sojourners and foreigners; but we should include those only who are members of the state, and who form an essential part of it. The number of the latter is a proof of the greatness of a city; but a city which produces numerous artisans and comparatively few soldiers cannot be great, for a great city is not to be confounded with a populous one. Moreover, experience shows that a very populous city can rarely, if ever, be well governed; since all cities which have a reputation for good government have a limit of population. We may argue on grounds of reason, and the same result will follow. For law is order, and good law is good order; but a very

great multitude cannot be orderly: to introduce order into the unlimited is the work of a divine power- of such a power as holds together the universe. Beauty is realized in number and magnitude, and the state which combines magnitude with good order must necessarily be the most beautiful. To the size of states there is a limit, as there is to other things, plants, animals, implements; for none of these retain their natural power when they are too large or too small, but they either wholly lose their nature, or are spoiled. For example, a ship which is only a span long will not be a ship at all, nor a ship a quarter of a mile long; yet there may be a ship of a certain size, either too large or too small, which will still be a ship, but bad for sailing. In like manner a state when composed of too few is not, as a state ought to be, self-sufficing; when of too many, though self-sufficing in all mere necessities, as a nation may be, it is not a state, being almost incapable of constitutional government. For who can be the general of such a vast multitude, or who the herald, unless he have the voice of a Stentor?

A state, then, only begins to exist when it has attained a population sufficient for a good life in the political community: it may indeed, if it somewhat exceed this number, be a greater state. But, as I was saying, there must be a limit. What should be the limit will be easily ascertained by experience. For both governors and governed have duties to perform; the special functions of a governor to command and to judge. But if the citizens of a state are to judge and to distribute offices according to merit, then they must know each other's characters; where they do not possess this knowledge, both the election to offices and the decision of lawsuits will go wrong. When the population is very large they are manifestly settled at haphazard, which clearly ought not to be. Besides, in an over-populous state foreigners and metics will readily acquire the rights of citizens, for who will find them out? Clearly then the

best limit of the population of a state is the largest number which suffices for the purposes of life, and can be taken in at a single view. Enough concerning the size of a state.

## Chapter 5

Much the same principle will apply to the territory of the state: every one would agree in praising the territory which is most entirely self-sufficing; and that must be the territory which is all-producing, for to have all things and to want nothing is sufficiency. In size and extent it should be such as may enable the inhabitants to live at once temperately and liberally in the enjoyment of leisure. Whether we are right or wrong in laying down this limit we will inquire more precisely hereafter, when we have occasion to consider what is the right use of property and wealth: a matter which is much disputed, because men are inclined to rush into one of two extremes, some into meanness, others into luxury.

It is not difficult to determine the general character of the territory which is required (there are, however, some points on which military authorities should be heard); it should be difficult of access to the enemy, and easy of egress to the inhabitants. Further, we require that the land as well as the inhabitants of whom we were just now speaking should be taken in at a single view, for a country which is easily seen can be easily protected. As to the position of the city, if we could have what we wish, it should be well situated in regard both to sea and land. This then is one principle, that it should be a convenient center for the protection of the whole country: the other is, that it should be suitable for receiving the fruits of the soil, and also for the bringing in of timber and any other products that are easily transported.

## Chapter 6

Whether a communication with the sea is beneficial to a well-ordered state or not is a question which has often been asked. It is argued that the introduction of strangers brought up under other laws, and the increase of population, will be adverse to good order; the increase arises from their using the sea and having a crowd of merchants coming and going, and is inimical to good government. Apart from these considerations, it would be undoubtedly better, both with a view to safety and to the provision of necessaries, that the city and territory should be connected with the sea; the defenders of a country, if they are to maintain themselves against an enemy, should be easily relieved both by land and by sea; and even if they are not able to attack by sea and land at once, they will have less difficulty in doing mischief to their assailants on one element, if they themselves can use both. Moreover, it is necessary that they should import from abroad what is not found in their own country, and that they should export what they have in excess; for a city ought to be a market, not indeed for others, but for herself.

Those who make themselves a market for the world only do so for the sake of revenue, and if a state ought not to desire profit of this kind it ought not to have such an emporium. Nowadays we often see in countries and cities dockyards and harbors very conveniently placed outside the city, but not too far off; and they are kept in dependence by walls and similar fortifications. Cities thus situated manifestly reap the benefit of intercourse with their ports; and any harm which is likely to accrue may be easily guarded against by the laws, which will pronounce and determine who may hold communication with one another, and who may not.

There can be no doubt that the possession of a moderate naval force is advantageous to a city; the city should be formidable not only to its own citizens but to some of its neighbors, or, if necessary, able to assist them by sea as well as by land. The proper number or magnitude of this naval force is relative to the character of the state; for if her function is to take a leading part in politics, her naval power should be commensurate with the scale of her enterprises. The population of the state need not be much increased, since there is no necessity that the sailors should be citizens: the marines who

have the control and command will be freemen, and belong also to the infantry; and wherever there is a dense population of Perioeci and husbandmen, there will always be sailors more than enough. Of this we see instances at the present day. The city of Heraclea, for example, although small in comparison with many others, can man a considerable fleet. Such are our conclusions respecting the territory of the state, its harbors, its towns, its relations to the sea, and its maritime power.

## Excerpts from *On Kingship* by St. Thomas Aquinas

### Book I

#### Chapter 16

#### That Regal Government Should Be Ordained Principally to Eternal Beatitude

[114] As the life by which men live well here on earth is ordained, as to its end, to that blessed life which we hope for in heaven, so too whatever particular goods are procured by man's agency—whether wealth, profits, health, eloquence, or learning—are ordained to the good life of the multitude. If, then, as we have said, the person who is charged with the care of our ultimate end ought to be over those who have charge of things ordained to that end, and to direct them by his rule, it clearly follows that, just as the king ought to be subject to the divine government administered by the office of priesthood, so he ought to preside over all human offices, and regulate them by the rule of his government.

[115] Now anyone on whom it devolves to do something which is ordained to another thing as to its end is bound to see that his work is suitable to that end; thus, for example, the armourer so fashions the sword that it is suitable for fighting, and the builder should so lay out the house that it is suitable for habitation. Therefore, since the beatitude of heaven is the end of that virtuous life which we live at present, it pertains to the king's office to promote the good life of the multitude in such a way as to make it suitable for the attainment of heavenly happiness, that is to say, he should command those things which lead to the happiness of Heaven and, as far as possible, forbid the contrary.

[116] What conduces to true beatitude and what hinders it are learned from the law of God, the teaching of which belongs to the office of the priest, according to the words of Malachi (2:7): "The lips of the priest shall guard knowledge and they shall seek the law from his mouth." Wherefore the Lord prescribes in the Book of Deuteronomy (17:18-19) that "after he is raised to the throne of his kingdom, the king shall copy out to himself the Deuteronomy of this law, in a volume, taking the copy of the priests of the Levitical tribe, he shall have it with him and shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, and keep his words and ceremonies which are commanded in the law." Thus the king, taught the law of God, should have for his principal concern the means by which the multitude subject to him may live well.

[117] This concern is threefold: first of all, to establish a virtuous life in the multitude subject to him; second, to preserve it once established; and third, having preserved it, to promote its greater perfection.

[118] For an individual man to lead a good life two things are required. The first and most important is to act in a virtuous manner (for virtue is that by which one lives well); the second, which is secondary and instrumental, is a sufficiency of those bodily goods whose use is necessary for virtuous life. Yet the unity of man is brought about by nature, while the unity of multitude, which we call peace, must be procured through the efforts of the ruler. Therefore, to establish virtuous living in a multitude three things are necessary. First of all, that the multitude be established in the unity of peace. Second, that the multitude thus united in the bond of peace, be directed to acting well. For just as a man can do nothing well unless unity



within his members be presupposed, so a multitude of men lacking the unity of peace will be hindered from virtuous action by the fact that it is fighting against itself. In the third place, it is necessary that there be at hand a sufficient supply of the things required for proper living, procured by the ruler's efforts.

[119] When virtuous living is set up in the multitude by the efforts of the king, it then remains for him to look to its conservation. Now there are three things which prevent the permanence of the public good. One of these arises from nature. The good of the multitude should not be established for one time only; it should be in a sense perpetual. Men, on the other hand, cannot abide forever, because they are mortal. Even while they are alive they do not always preserve the same vigour, for the life of man is subject to many changes, and thus a man is not equally suited to the performance of the same duties throughout the whole span of his life. A second impediment to the preservation of the public good, which comes from within, consists in the perversity of the wills of men, inasmuch as they are either too lazy to perform what the commonweal demands, or, still further, they are harmful to the peace of the multitude because, by transgressing justice, they disturb the peace of others. The third hindrance to the preservation of the commonweal comes from without, namely, when peace is destroyed through the attacks of enemies and, as it sometimes happens, the kingdom or city is completely blotted out.

[120] In regard to these three dangers, a triple charge is laid upon the king. First of all, he must take care of the appointment of men to succeed or replace others in charge of the various offices. Just as in regard to corruptible things (which cannot remain the same forever) the government of God made provision that through generation one would take

the place of another in order that, in this way, the integrity of the universe might be maintained, so too the good of the multitude subject to the king will be preserved through his care when he sets himself to attend to the appointment of new men to fill the place of those who drop out. In the second place, by his laws and orders, punishments and rewards, he should restrain the men subject to him from wickedness and induce them to virtuous deeds, following the example of God, Who gave His law to man and requites those who observe it with rewards, and those who transgress it with punishments. The king's third charge is to keep the multitude entrusted to him safe from the enemy, for it would be useless to prevent internal dangers if the multitude could not be defended against external dangers.

[121] Finally, for the proper direction of the multitude there remains the third duty of the kingly office, namely, that he be solicitous for its improvement. He performs this duty when, in each of the things we have mentioned, he corrects what is out of order and supplies what is lacking, and if any of them can be done better he tries to do so. This is why the Apostle exhorts the faithful to be "zealous for the better gifts" (1 Cor 12:31).

[122] These then are the duties of the kingly office, each of which must now be treated in greater detail.

## **Book II**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **That It Belongs to the Office of a King to Found the City**

[123] We must begin by explaining the duties of a king with regard to the founding of a city or kingdom. For, as Vegetius [De Re Militari IV, prol.] declares, "the mightiest

nations and most commended kings thought it their greatest glory either to found new cities or have their names made part of, and in some way added to, the names of cities already founded by others.” This, indeed, is in accord with Holy Scripture, for the Wise Man says in Sirach (40:19): “The building of a city shall establish a name.” The name of Romulus, for instance, would be unknown today had he not founded the city of Rome.

[124] Now in founding a city or kingdom, the first step is the choice, if any be given, of its location. A temperate region should be chosen, for the inhabitants derive many advantages from a temperate climate. In the first place, it ensures them health of body and length of life; for, since good health consists in the right temperature of the vital fluids, Footnote it follows that health will be best preserved in a temperate clime, because like is preserved by like. Should, however, heat or cold be excessive, it needs must be that the condition of the body will be affected by the condition of the atmosphere; whence some animals instinctively migrate in cold weather to warmer regions, and in warm weather return to the colder places, in order to obtain, through the contrary dispositions of both locality and weather, the due temperature of their humours.

[125] Again, since it is warmth and moisture that preserve animal life, if the heat is intense the natural moisture of the body is dried up and life fails, just as a lantern is extinguished if the liquid poured into it be quickly consumed by too great a flame. Whence it is said that in certain very torrid parts of Ethiopia a man cannot live longer than thirty years. Footnote On the other hand, in extremely cold regions the natural moisture is easily frozen and the natural heat soon lost.

[126] Then, too, a temperate climate is most conducive to fitness for war, by which human society is kept in security. As Vegetius tells us [De Re Militari 1, 2], “all peoples that live near the sun and are dried up by the excessive heat have keener wits but less blood, so that they possess no constancy or self-reliance in hand-to-hand fighting; for, knowing they have but little blood, they have great fear of wounds. On the other hand, Northern tribes, far removed from the burning rays of the sun are more dull-witted indeed, but because they have an ample flow of blood, they are ever ready for war Those who dwell in temperate climes have, on the one hand, an abundance-of blood and thus make light of wounds or death, and, on the other hand, no lack of prudence, which puts a proper restraint on them in camp and is of great advantage in war and peace as well.

[127] Finally, a temperate climate is of no little value for political life. As Aristotle says in his Politics [VII, 7: 1327b 23-32]: “Peoples that dwell in cold countries are full of spirit but have little intelligence and little skill. Consequently they maintain their liberty better but have no political life and (through lack of prudence) show no capacity for governing others. Those who live in hot regions are keen-witted and skilful in the things of the mind but possess little spirit, and so are in continuous subjection and servitude. But those who live between these extremes of climate are both spirited and intelligent; hence they are continuously free, their political life is very much developed, and they are capable of ruling others.” Therefore, a temperate region should be chosen for the foundation of a city or a kingdom.

## Chapter 2

### That The City Should Have Wholesome Air

[128] After deciding on the locality of the kingdom, the king must select a site suitable for building a city.

[ 129] Now the first requisite would seem to be wholesome air, for civil life presupposes natural life, whose health in turn depends on the wholesomeness of the air. According to Vitruvius [De Architectura I, 4], the most healthful spot is “a high place, troubled neither by mists nor frosts and facing neither the sultry nor the chilly parts of the sky. Also, it should not lie near marsh country.” The altitude of the place contributes to the wholesomeness of the atmosphere because highlands are open to all the breezes which purify the air; besides, the vapours, which the strength of the sun’s rays causes to rise from the earth and waters, are more dense in valleys and in low-lying places than in highlands, whence it is that the air on mountains is rarer. Now this rarified air, which is the best for easy and natural breathing, is vitiated by mists and frosts which are frequent in very damp places; as a consequence, such places are found to be inimical to health. Since marshy districts have an excess of humidity, the place chosen for the building of a city must be far from any marshes. “For when the morning breezes come at sunrise to such a place, and the mists that rise from the swamps join them, they will scatter through the town the breath of the poisonous beasts of the marshes mingled with the mist, and will render the site pestilential.” “Should, however, the walls be built in marshes that lie along the coast and face the north (or thereabouts) and if these marshes be higher than the seashore, they would seem to be quite reasonably built, since, by digging ditches, a way will be opened to drain the water of the marshes into the sea, and when storms swell the sea it will flow back into the

marshes and thus prevent the propagation of the animals there. And if any animals come down from higher places, the unwonted saltiness of the water will destroy them.”

[130] Further provision for the proper proportion of heat and cold must be made when laying out the city by having it face the correct part of the sky. “If the walls, particularly of a town built on the coast, face the south, it will not be healthy,” since such a locality will be cold in the morning, for the rays of the sun do not reach it, but at noon will be baked in the full glare of the sun. As to places that face the west, at sunrise they are cool or even cold, at noon quite warm, and in the evening unpleasantly hot, both on account of the long-continued heat and the, exposure to the sun. On the other hand, if it has an eastern exposure, in the morning, with the sun directly opposite, it will be moderately warm, at noon it will not, be much warmer since the sun does not reach it, directly, but in the evening it will be cold as the rays of the sun will be entirely on the other side. And there will be the same or a similar proportion of heat and cold if the town faces the north. By experience we may learn that the change from cold to heat is unhealthy. “Animals which are transferred from cold to warm regions cannot endure but are dissolved,” “since the heat sucks up their moisture and weakens their natural strength;” whence even in salubrious districts “all bodies become weak from the heat.”

[131] Again, since suitable food is very helpful for preserving health, we must further judge of the salubrity of a place which has been chosen as a town-site by the condition of the food which grows upon its soil. The ancients were wont to explore this condition by examining the animals raised on the spot. For man, like other animals, finds nourishment in the products of the earth. Hence, if in a given place we kill some animals and find their entrails to be sound, the conclusion will

be justified that man also will get good food in the same place. If, however, the members of these animals should be found diseased, we may reasonably infer that that country is no healthy place for men either.

[132] Just as a temperate climate must be sought, so good water must be made the object of investigation. For the body depends for its health on those things which men more frequently put to their use. With regard to the air it is clear that, breathing it continuously, we draw it down into our very vitals; as a result, purity of air is what conduces most to the preservation of men. But of all things put to use as nourishment, water is used most frequently both as drink and food. Nothing therefore, except good air, so much helps to make a district healthy as does pure water.

[133] There is still another means of judging the healthfulness of a place, i.e., by the ruddy complexion of the inhabitants, their sturdy, well-shaped limbs, the presence of many and vivacious children, and of many old people. On the other hand, there can be no doubt about the deadliness of a climate where people are misshapen and weak, their limbs either withering or swollen beyond proportion, where children are few and sickly, and old people rather scarce.

### Chapter 3 That The City Should Have an Abundant Supply of Food

[134] It is not enough, however, that the place chosen for the site of a city be such as to preserve the health of the inhabitants; it must also be sufficiently fertile to provide food. A multitude of men cannot live where there is not a sufficient supply of food. Thus Vitruvius [I, 5] narrates that when Dinocrates, a brilliant architect, was explaining to Alexander of

Macedon that a beautifully laid out city could be built upon a certain mountain, Alexander asked whether there were fields that could supply the city with sufficient grain. Finding out that there were not, he said that an architect who would build a city on such a site would be blameworthy. For “just as a newborn infant cannot be fed nor made to grow as it should, except on the nurse’s milk, so a city cannot have a large population without a large supply of foodstuffs.”

[135] Now there are two ways in which an abundance of foodstuffs can be supplied to a city. The first we have already mentioned, where the soil is so fertile that it amply provides for all the necessities of human life. The second is by trade, through which the necessities of life are brought to the town in sufficient quantity from different places.

[136] It is quite clear that the first means is better. The more dignified a thing is, the more self-sufficient it is, since whatever needs another’s help is by that fact proven to be deficient. Now the city which is supplied by the surrounding country with all its vital needs is more self-sufficient than another which must obtain those supplies by trade. A city therefore which has an abundance of food from its own territory is more dignified than one which is provisioned through trade.

[137] It seems that self-sufficiency is also safer, for the import of supplies and the access of merchants can easily be prevented whether owing to wars or to the many hazards of the sea, and thus the city may be overcome through lack of food.

[138] Moreover, this first method of supply is more conducive to the preservation of civic life. A city which must engage in much trade in order to supply its needs also has to put up with the continuous presence of foreigners. But intercourse with foreigners, according to Aristotle’s *Politics* [V, 3: 1303a 27; VII, 6: 1327a 13-15], is particularly harmful

to civic customs. For it is inevitable that strangers, brought up under other laws and customs, will in many cases act as the citizens are not wont to act and thus, since the citizens are drawn by their example to act likewise, their own civic life is upset.

[139] Again, if the citizens themselves devote their life to matters of trade, the way will be opened to many vices. Since the foremost tendency of tradesmen is to make money, greed is awakened in the hearts of the citizens through the pursuit of trade. The result is that everything in the city will become venal; good faith will be destroyed and the way opened to all kinds of trickery; each one will work only for his own profit, despising the public good; the cultivation of virtue will fail since honour, virtue's reward, will be bestowed upon the rich. Thus, in such a city, civic life will necessarily be corrupted.

[140] The pursuit of trade is also very unfavourable to military activity.' Tradesmen, not being used to the open air and not doing any hard work but enjoying all pleasures, grow soft in spirit and their bodies are weakened and rendered unsuited to military labours. In accordance with this view, Civil Law'' forbids soldiers to engage in business.

[141] Finally, that city enjoys a greater measure of peace whose people are more sparsely assembled together and dwell in smaller proportion within the walls of the town, for when men are crowded together it is an occasion for quarrels and all the elements for seditious plots are provided. Hence, according to Aristotle's doctrine, Footnote it is more profitable to have the people engaged outside the cities than for them to dwell constantly within the walls. But if a city is dependent on trade, it is of prime importance that the citizens stay within the town and there engage in trade. It is better, therefore, that the

supplies of food be furnished to the city from its own fields than that it be wholly dependent on trade.

[142] Still, trade must not be entirely kept out of a city, since one cannot easily find any place so overflowing with the necessities of life as not to need some commodities from other parts. Also, when there is an over-abundance of some commodities in one place, these goods would serve no purpose if they could not be carried elsewhere by professional traders. Consequently, the perfect city will make a moderate use of merchants.

#### Chapter 4

##### That the City Should Have a Pleasant Site

[143] A further requisite when choosing a site for the founding of a city is this, that it must charm the inhabitants by its beauty. A spot where life is pleasant will not easily be abandoned nor will men commonly be ready to flock to unpleasant places, since the life of man cannot endure without enjoyment. It belongs to the beauty of a place that it have a broad expanse of meadows, an abundant forest growth, mountains to be seen close at hand, pleasant groves and a copiousness of water.

[144] However, if a country is too beautiful, it will draw men to indulge in pleasures,' and this is most harmful to a city. In the first place, when men give themselves up to pleasure their senses are dulled, since this sweetness immerses the soul in the senses so that man cannot pass free judgment on the things which cause delight. Whence, according to Aristotle's sentence [Eth. Nic. VI, 5: 1140b 11-21], the judgment of prudence is corrupted by pleasure.

[145] Again, indulgence in superfluous pleasure leads from the path of virtue, for nothing conduces more easily to

immoderate increase which upsets the mean of virtue, than pleasure. Pleasure is, by its very nature, greedy, and thus on a slight occasion one is precipitated into the seductions of shameful pleasures just as a little spark is sufficient to kindle dry wood; moreover, indulgence does not satisfy the appetite for the first sip only makes the thirst all the keener. Consequently, it is part of virtue's task to lead men to refrain from pleasures. By thus avoiding any excess, the mean of virtue will be more easily attained.

[146] Also, they who give themselves up to pleasures grow soft in spirit and become weak-minded when it is a question of tackling some difficult enterprise, enduring toll, and facing dangers. Whence, too, indulgence in pleasures is detrimental to warfare, as Vegetius puts it in his *On the Art of Knighthood* (*De re militari* I, 3) "He fears death less who knows that he has had little pleasure in life."

[147] Finally, men who have become dissolute through pleasures usually grow lazy and, neglecting necessary matters and all the pursuits that duty lays upon them, devote themselves wholly to the quest of pleasure, on which they squander all that others had so carefully amassed. Thus, reduced to poverty and yet unable to deprive themselves of their wonted pleasures, they do not shrink from stealing and robbing in order to have the wherewithal to indulge their craving for pleasure.

[148] It is therefore harmful to a city to superabound in delightful things, whether it be on account of its situation or from whatever other cause. However, in human intercourse it is best to have a moderate share of pleasure as a spice of life, so to speak, wherein man's mind may find some recreation.

## **The Person and Economic Society**

By Jacques de Monleon

We have already noted that, among the innumerable societies that men can form, there are two which pursue the human good in its wholeness, that is, the good of man insofar as he is man and not insofar as he is a professor or an artist or a podiatrist. The two societies which pursue the good of man insofar as he is man are domestic society and political society. We have seen the difference that exists between these two: domestic society is the society satisfying our basic needs and supplying the first formation of human life, while political society is the society in which man can be perfected as man.

### **In what kind of society do we live?**

But we are faced with another question: in what kind of society do we live today? In our day domestic society, namely, the family, seems relatively reduced compared to what it was, and the same is true of political society. In fact today we live in an intermediate society, an “economic” society which, on the one hand, has displaced the family, and on the other, has usurped political society. And what is each of us reduced to in today’s society? Today each of us is a seller of something and a buyer of everything else. That is, we are reduced to two economic functions. And we place ourselves into categories according to our professional or economic functions; we *are* salesmen, engineers, CEO’s or workers and this is the way in which we know ourselves, designate ourselves, and characterize ourselves. But these are all designations taken from economic society: in general, we are all either bourgeoisie or proletarians.

We can see that it is not just capitalism that makes economic life dominant over the rest of life; rather, the real tendency of socialism is to permanently establish this dominance of economic life over every other aspect of life, particularly over man’s social life. Thus one might characterize socialism as a system which arranges the whole of human life on the basis of economic function; everything must be determined on this basis, not only the life of man in society, but even human life as such.

Thus, it is always very important, and today particularly urgent, that we investigate the relation between the human person and economic society. But economic life has become so developed, has become a reality so complex and so cumbersome that, unless you are competent, or even an expert and specialist in this domain, you dare not speak or even begin to speak about it. You dare not even discuss it. Of course, it is right that we approach the subject with modesty, but all the same we should not be condemned to complete silence, so that only a Nobel Prize winner in economics is allowed to say anything.

And the first reason is because we have never seen someone so entirely proficient in this discipline that he has completely mastered it, either in theory or in practice. We all know something of the history of economic doctrines; those doctrines come and go, one after another: first, there was Mercantilism, then the Physiocrats, then the Liberalism of Smith, then Ricardo and Malthus, and later Marx and his followers. Finally, there are the more recent economists, such as Keynes, etc. All of these shone brightly for a moment, and

then collapsed. Each of their doctrines has manifested some aspect of economic life to us, but none has stood the test of time. Their doctrines neither embrace nor contain the whole of economic life. The economists have not produced a theory that is either complete or able to regulate concrete and practical problems. We cannot say that their achievements have been particularly brilliant.

I wanted to point this out in order to justify us and give us a good reason to talk about these problems: in the midst of the economic complexities of which we are speaking, there are always the fundamental elements of human life, the elementary and universal givens that the specialists so often leave to the side. I am not saying that they deny them, but that they leave them aside, through a kind of awkwardness, a timidity, I might even say a lack of human experience; they are very strong on theory, but human relations and human life appear to escape them: they combine their lack of human experience with an often excessive confidence in the rational elaboration of all of their beautiful theories. They are far too sure that everything can be explained by class struggle, or by purchasing power, or by the GDP. We should not have much confidence in their interpretations. Human reality is living reality and it leaks through all of these theoretical “sieves.”

So it makes sense that we attempt, with modesty, to survey the elementary regions of economic life. We will not look at every problem or try to resolve every question, but we will simply try to reflect a little on the fundamental givens. And since we cannot hope to discover everything on our own, even the elements and foundations, that is, the common conceptions, let us begin by reading those men who were nearest to them and who have first discovered them, namely the Ancients: they were occupied with economic life, economic

reality, and it is through their eyes that we should begin our study.

Of course, economic life in the ancient world was contained in an incomparably narrower framework than modern economic life. It was not so complicated and vast, so much in perpetual movement and evolution. There is no comparison between their economy and ours, if we are looking at its framework and dimensions: but the Ancients knew how to mark out the fundamental and essential; and above all else, when problems first arise and we are trying to see them clearly, we ought to have recourse to their light in order to brighten our own lantern, especially since in the end we always have to return to the light which they have furnished, the points that they have perceived and marked out, although in different circumstances and under different appearances. Likewise, in order not to make things unnecessarily complicated, we will simply adopt some of the words which they use in this matter and which they use, not as if blowing hot air, but with an authentic understanding of their meaning and having deeply considered their signification.

### **Naming Goods**

Human social life comes from *relations between persons* and implies economics *goods*, that is, possessions. *Goods* are one of the basic and essential concerns of economics. But how do the Greeks designate these goods which man needs in order to live? They use two terms: first κτήμα, *ktema* (in the plural κτήματα, *ktemata*); second, χρήμα, *chrema*, (in the plural χρήματα, *chremata*).

What does *ktema* mean? *Ktema* designates in general the goods which we possess following upon a process of



acquisition. This is what a Greek thinks of, this is what Aristotle, Plato and Socrates understand when they use this word. But *ktema* is also often used in a more particular and more determinate sense, as landed property; *ktemata*, from the point of view of economic goods, are the goods which have an immovable value and durable stability, what today we call “real estate.”

In contrast to *ktema*, with its general meaning of a good which we possess because we have acquired it and its more particular meaning of the landed property which is in our possession, there is the word *chrema* whose root is near to that of *χείρ* (*cheir*) “the hand.” *Chrema* is a good considered, not so much from the aspect of acquisition as from the aspect of use. We acquire goods, and then we use them. And since, when we use a thing, we make it movable, that is, we put it in motion, *chrema* comes to mean movable wealth. As *ktema* takes on the aspect of immovable wealth, of stable and foundational wealth, the word *chrema* takes on the aspect of movable wealth, of currency with its connotations of trade, of commercial and financial transactions, of business and exchange, of speculation, in short, of every aspect of the economic life that we have come to know so well.

These are the two aspects, the two extreme poles which are signified by these two words, and you can easily see that this distinction is a duality which always holds and which is real even today. Landed property, in the further evolution of economic life, has lost its importance in comparison to movable wealth, in comparison to currency, but the coexistence of these two kinds of wealth always poses problems. For example, the problem with which Marx is concerned occurs because there is a tension between the two. Of course for Marx

landed wealth is no longer represented by property values but by human labor: it is the latter which comes to be *ktema par excellence*. In Marxist economics capitalism is an economy in which landed wealth, founded upon human labor, is directly in conflict with currency, trade, exchange, or commerce; it is an economy which expresses itself through the exploitation of human labor by the man of money and commerce, precisely that man who uses movable wealth. Marxism hopes to be the solution to that problem.

### **The necessity of acquisition for man**

Let us leave aside for a moment this opposition and return to the first and general sense of the word *ktema*, the goods possessed through acquisition. It is on this theme of acquisition that we will first linger, in order to see how the acquisition of good fits with the human person as we have defined him.

The first thing that we need to recall is the necessity of acquisition: it is a fundamental condition of human life, but we must precisely mark out the reasons for this. We have said, “The human person is an individual substance of a rational nature.” Insofar as he has a rational nature, the human person is open to all that is, to the universality of the Good, and it is in this direction that he ought to follow real his vocation, that he ought to advance. Consequently, he should reach out for something, develop himself, and move himself toward something which transcends himself. But his individual substance is completed by being supplied with tools or instruments, resources which permit him to advance towards an end which transcends himself, which end, finally, is God.

In fact, this is true of every spiritual creature and it is very interesting to underline this. Today we are not supposed to talk about angels because they are mythological . . . but to man this seems like a mythology because he is placed between the angel and the animal. The angel, even though he is so much higher than man, still needs his substance to be completed by resources which allow him to advance into the horizon in which his intellect works. That is, he has a need for ideas because his intellect does not find in his own being the proper universality, the proper fullness of being. He is only a finite substance, he is not God; consequently, to think about the horizon of universal and infinite being, he needs to complete his intellect with representations, with ideas. Even the angel needs resources to live, although these are spiritual resources and thus belong to an entirely transcendent order.

The same thing is true, analogically, of the animal. The animal needs organs, tools which complete his nature and which allow him to move himself (it is in movement that the animal attains its perfection, comes to its completion). The bird needs wings to fly; it needs something complementary which allows it to advance towards its vocation.

We ourselves are also in the same situation; of course there is a great difference, and this difference comes from three characteristics of our nature:

First, man is certainly the creature who needs the greatest quantity of resources. Look at all the bric-a-brac of hats, toothbrushes, shoes and cars! It is incredible, all that we need to live. It is much simpler for the angel: he has no need for suitcases, nor for vehicles to move himself around. And even the animal is not encumbered with a large quantity of things: the bear is well-equipped with his fur, and he doesn't

drag around dishes and sauce pans. So, among all the things that exist, we are the ones who need the most things.

Second, among all the things that exist, we are the ones for whom these things are not provided by nature. True, the angel's intellect needs to be completed by what idealist philosophers call innate ideas; but according to the theologians, the angel receives these at the time of his creation; he does not have to acquire them. And the animal receives from nature all the equipment that he needs. Are we left entirely unprovided for? Not entirely: nature gives us reason and hands, but then she says to us: "Make do for yourself!" And this is why the proposition of Marx, that man is distinguished from the animals in this, that he produces his own means of existence, is a true proposition.

Third, in order to acquire these things necessary for our lives, we cannot be alone. A man by himself with his reason and his hands will not live very long, even if he is a genius. We can only acquire these things socially, with others; by ourselves we cannot exploit the resources that our reason and our hands give us.

Thus man occupies a very peculiar position: he needs a great number of things, he is not given them by nature, and he can only procure them if he associates himself with a group, that is, if he constructs a society for acquisition, an economic society through which he procures for himself all the things he needs in order to live. It is very important to note this: this is the basis of all economic life, its reason for being. Moreover, we should note that the process of acquisition is never finished. Man has to engage in acquisition unceasingly, under pain of falling back into his original poverty. Man is called to exercise incessantly the activity of acquisition which, understood correctly, occupies and even preoccupies him.

## **The process and the means of acquisition**

Now that we have made this clear, let us look at what kind of process and procedure acquisition is. There are two great means of acquisition: either we acquire the goods for ourselves, or we obtain them by exchange. True, nature furnishes for us our first food, milk. At first, nature puts milk right in our mouths, although afterwards she leaves us to fend for ourselves. If nature offers us other goods, it is always on the condition that we procure them for ourselves through various activities: hunting, fishing, herding and, a more stable activity, farming. When we look at the ways in which the economy has developed in human society, we witness this progression.

But we procure all these things because each thing has its own function: bread is for eating, a bed is for sleeping in, etc. But we cannot satisfy all these needs by ourselves; we can procure nourishment through hunting, fishing or agriculture; we can produce clothing by weaving; still none of these goods by itself is enough to satisfy the needs of our nature. Should we satisfy our need for wheat, we would still lack wine. Our poverty presses down on us, our reason intervenes, and then we establish a new means of acquisition, exchange.

Reason awakens. Fortunately, we are always at least a little rational. Reason does not let itself be restricted to something determinate. Instead, it is the function of reason to see a relation between one thing and another, and this is what happens in exchange: we compare one thing to another. I do not see wheat just as something that enables me to feed myself. I compare my wheat with my neighbor's wine. I say to myself: look, he has a lot of wine, but no wheat; I have a lot of wheat, but no wine. Man can exchange and acquire something through an exchange. He can compare a good which he

produces and possesses with another product which he does not possess.

Our reason is not limited there; it continues to calculate, to imagine and to elaborate. Exchanges multiply and, in order to deal with partners farther and farther away, we find a means to facilitate exchanges: money. Money was invented to permit and facilitate exchange. It is an extraordinary commodity. In place of carrying one hundred bushels of wheat to get one hundred measures of wine, you only have to pass some coins from one hand to another. It is all the more convenient because a man might not know where to put all the wheat that you want to give him. And thus we enter into realm of mobile wealth, *chrema*.

There are two basic means of acquiring the goods necessary for life: to procure them by oneself thanks to the start which nature gives, or to obtain them from others by way of exchange, with the added ease provided by money. This is the general procedure which everybody knows about, but we still need to examine it closely because it gives us the fundamental elements of the human economy. And clearly this is not just a return to elementary and obsolete things. The whole critique of Marx, his whole critique of economic society is based upon these concepts. A man like Marx returns to the elementary things, and he develops his theory using (or perhaps misusing) them.

## **The limits of natural acquisition**

Let us pass on to two more elementary considerations: the principle and the term of acquisition. On the one hand, the principle of acquisition, what provokes acquisition, is our human poverty in respect to what is necessary and useful for life. We are poor by nature (this fundamental poverty and

neediness of man should never be forgotten). On the other hand, the term of acquisition is to obtain such a sufficiency of goods that a man is able to live well, that is, to live a truly and happily human life. But in order that the acquisition of riches might be relative to real human needs (food, drink, clothing, shelter, etc.), it is necessary that it be restrained within certain natural limits. That is to say, no matter how hungry someone might be, even if he were a glutton, he could not keep on eating bread, or even chocolate, forever. There will be a moment when he has had enough. A blacksmith does not need an infinity of hammers or an infinite hammer. He might need a more or less large number of hammers, but finally only a limited number of finite hammers. Once while I was at the sea-side I met a tailor who told me about one of his customers who had three-hundred and sixty five suits. I found that extraordinary: a suit for every day of the year. There are also some men who wear the same suit every day . . . To have three hundred and sixty five suits is certainly possible. Perhaps this man has a job which requires that, perhaps he is the master of ceremonies for royal receptions or burials and so a large number of suits is a necessity of his existence. Very well, but even here there is a limit: he does not need an infinity of suits. We can acquire masses of goods, but there is always a limit to their use and consumption. Ultimately we should pursue goods insofar as they correspond, by their nature, to our needs: bread for eating, shoes for wearing. There is a material limit: we are very needy, but our neediness is not capable of consuming anything.

Moreover, the acquisition which enables us to satisfy the needs of our existence, to possess enough, ought to be subordinated to living a human life well. Of course, to live life well requires a sufficiency of material goods, but it consists in something entirely superior and of another order: for man, to

live well is to live in conformity with that which is highest in him, with that which is specific to his nature, namely, reason or spirit.

The acquisition of goods is thus comprised between two boundaries. The one boundary, the principle, comes from the fact that the necessities of our nature are limited (we cannot eat or drink indefinitely, we do not have an infinite need for umbrellas), that there are natural limits. The second boundary comes from the fact that acquisition has for a term that for the sake of which we acquire. Acquisition ought to enable us, not just to heap up the necessities of nature, but to lead a life properly human in accord with the true good for man, which really means to lead a morally good life. Such are the two boundaries between which acquisition is contained.

### **The dizziness of the infinity that starts with money**

What we have said so far is true, but we can still ask about what we see in the real economic life of men. Do we ourselves live this kind of wise and measured economic life which satisfies man's needs as abundantly as is necessary according to his circumstances and situations, all the while having in view the superior finality of man, which is to live human life well, not only his individual life but also his common life, his social and political life? Do we see an economy contained between these two measures, our needs and the finality of man? When we seek the facts, and the interpretations of the facts which are economic and social theories, it seems that reality runs contrary to this. We see that the activity of acquisition has become so developed that, on the one hand, it looks to (I am not saying, arrives at) and seeks to exceed the natural limits of our needs, particularly in seeking to awaken new needs; moreover, we see an activity of acquisition

that is not truly and seriously subordinated to the superior finalities of human life, to living well according to the moral life and to preserving the true good of society. The present tendency is to take as the principle of acquisition no longer the needs of man but his active energy (as well as the active energies of nature), and acquisition no longer has for its term a measure which is exterior or superior to itself. This activity of production develops by itself in an autonomous fashion: it tends to the unlimited acquisition of wealth through commerce, finance and industry. This is the tendency so predominant today.

The main thrust of capitalism, for example, is not just the pursuit of indefinitely increasing wealth; it also sets up a system in which humanity appropriates the very forces of production (all the productive forces which nature can give us: wood, coal, petroleum, electricity, atomic power). The development of a capitalist society consists in using these productive forces without limit, putting our hands on them in such a way that they can always produce more and more and can assure the production and acquisition of goods without measure. And the first of these productive forces is human labor. It is human labor that the economists – first Smith, the great theoretician and the prophet of the liberal economy, and then Ricardo (and he will be taken up again by Marx) – have posited as the first of the forces whose deployment enables us to pursue acquisition without limit. But it turns out that capitalism dispossesses man and strips him of his property because of the intervention of money, of exchange, of commerce: it distorts, turns aside or curbs this indefinite power of production that is human labor. It is then necessary that capitalism pass away into a new stage in which man would socially enter into the full possession of his ultimate acquisition, namely, his unlimited power of production, and

this is precisely the goal of the Marxist revolution. Such is the objective of Marx: finally, in good time, to put man in possession of his unlimited power for the production and acquisition of goods. He tells us this clearly in his *History of Economic Doctrines*, in a very striking and forceful text:

Ricardo, rightly for his time, regards the capitalist mode of production as the most advantageous for production in general, as the most advantageous for the creation of wealth. He wants production for the sake of production and this with good reason. To assert, as sentimental opponents of Ricardo's did, that production as such is not the object, is to forget that production for its own sake means nothing but the development of human productive forces, in other words, the development of the wealth of human nature as an end in itself. To oppose to this end the welfare of the individual, as Sismondi does, is to assert that the development of the species must be retarded in order to safeguard the welfare of the individual; so that, for instance, no war may be waged, since at all events some individuals perish in it. Sismondi is only right against the economists who conceal or deny this contradiction. Apart from the barrenness of such edifying reflections, they reveal a failure to understand the fact that, although at first the development of the capacities of the human species takes place at the cost of the majority of human individuals and even classes, in the end it breaks through this contradiction and coincides with the development of the individual; the higher development

of individuality is thus only achieved by a historical process during which individuals are sacrificed.<sup>1</sup>

Notice what he is trying to say: to arrive at this final state, it is necessary to sacrifice the individual, but this ultimately will be the salvation of the individual. In the final society, the individual participates in an infinite power of production and acquisition which would be liberated from all the limitations, constraints, contrarities and contradictions which he finds in capitalist society. As Marx writes elsewhere, “True riches is the full productive power of all the individuals.”<sup>2</sup> This is the ultimate *ktema*, this is the fundamental wealth that man ought to acquire. This is the end point of this evolution.

How has this state of affairs been brought into existence? A door has been opened. We have spoken of a natural economy, contained in natural limits, but a break, an opening has appeared with the creation of money; it is currency which enables man to hurl himself into an unlimited conquest of goods.

We have seen how natural goods taken in their natural specificity (the bread that we eat, the shoes that we wear, etc.) imply limits, but the advantage of currency is that we are not obliged to consume it; we consume it in a certain way, but we have another sack than our stomach for receiving it and an infinite desire to possess it. Since money is a representative of any and all goods, we can always desire more of it: “All things obey money,” “All things answer to the call of silver,” because to possess silver is to possess the infinite power of acquisition. Thus, although money has opened the door to infinite of human desires, it cannot be the definitive basis of unlimited

acquisition: it is too fluid, too inconsistent. For the Physiocrats that definitive basis would be nature itself, since for a grain of wheat she gives back an ear; nature is the principle of unlimited acquisition (this is the position of Quesnay in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and more or less that of Turgot). Smith, in contrast, asserts that the basis of unlimited acquisition of wealth is human labor, a theme taken up by the liberal economists and then by Marx. This is how these things have happened, how today it seems that we live in an economy captured by the dizziness of infinity, an economy of perpetual growth: we must always produce more, always sell and then sell some more. This tendency to the infinite absorbs all natural limits, and the finality of something superior has been completely drowned in that movement.

### The sharing of goods

The question we now need to ask is how to find the right place for this necessary acquisition of goods in society. Aristotle has already said that the whole life of business is a kind of slavery, and I believe that nearly all businessmen would agree. The activity, the occupations that we have to undertake in order to “earn our bread,” to live, are on the whole slavish. They are a constraint, and it is not there that the person can fulfill himself, even if we have the highest GDP possible . . . The systems which introduce the aforesaid point of view as fundamental and which try to establish it in the real life of society thus leave man in a slavery which does allow him to fulfill himself. This is true because, while the *ktemata*, the material goods, are surely the result of acquisition, they only exist in order to serve us. Human life is defined before all else by the activities which use them. We acquire shoes to wear them and bread to eat it.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value* in *Capital*, Book IV, Chapter 9, Section 2.

<sup>2</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 632.

This use can be a personal use, but there is also a use which corresponds more completely and perfectly to the vocation of the person, which is precisely to share these goods. In fact, it seems to me that it is in sharing that the person makes himself most perfectly real. Why? Quite simply because acquisition does not require us to go outside of ourselves, but limits us to the life of concupiscence and desire: this is a life which makes us seek the good only for ourselves. Someone might argue that we are not wishing the good just for ourselves, but for the whole world; but in reality, if we truly embrace and espouse the philosophy of acquisition, which is at the root of Marxism, for example, we wish for things insofar as they procure something that is good for ourselves. Perhaps we wish the same thing for everyone, but only on the condition that everyone has the same will, a will in which each wishes the good for himself. This is a generalized concupiscence in which I am not concerned about others. Marx tells us that the perfect society will have such an abundance that we will not have to dispute about goods; just as we do not, at least for the moment, have to dispute about the air we breathe (there is so much that everyone can enjoy it). In that day acquisition will not imply any conflict, competition or exploitation of one man by another. There will be so many things that we will only have to help ourselves. This will be the highest possible state of affairs in which all selfishness will be able to be satisfied and in which the sharing of goods between one person and another will be absolutely unnecessary. There will no longer be sharing in the sense of being able to or being obliged to “pass the dish” to another, to benefit another with such a good or such an advantage. But, I think that this does not correspond to true human nature, to the true needs of the human person.

The human person is an intelligent person; insofar as he is intelligent, he is able to know reality and being as it is in

itself, and the good as it is in itself. Thus he is capable of transcending the good, insofar as it has an interest and advantage simply for the subject who knows. My intellect is able to see that health is a good thing in itself, and not only good for me; and since the good is diffusive of itself and in itself demands that it pour itself out, the human person who discovers that something is a good sees it as a good reality in itself and thus as a reality that ought to be shared. The good physician is not the one who only wants to heal in order to receive his fee from the consultation; rather, the good physician is the one for whom health is a good which ought to be shared with the greatest possible number of men. The moment in which the human person is truly himself is not when he tries to aggrandize himself or to acquire something, but when he gives, when he shares.

But this does not mean that the person ought to cross over into a state of pure sharing, stripping himself of every selfish pursuit of acquisition in order to do nothing but give to others. This also is not human. St. Thomas shows us this in an extremely important, even metaphysical, article which touches upon the fundamental problem of sharing and acquisition. The article asks whether God is truly the Supreme Good to which the whole universe is ordered, whether He is the final cause for all beings. In the course of his argument he tells us this: God is the only being able to be a purely sharing being because only He has all of being in Himself. He is the infinite Good and there is nothing that He can acquire. God is the being Who is above every kind of acquisition and Who can give purely and simply; He takes nothing back in His sharing. St. Thomas adds: But notice, this is not true for any creature; a creature can never be elevated to that state. Every creature, through the very act of sharing something, also acquires something. Suppose that you pour out a hundred million dollars upon your Catholic college

for the defense of the truth and that you make yourself miserably poor because of this; that is certainly an extraordinary sharing, isn't it? Yes, but this beautiful act is all the same an acquisition for you; it pleases you.

This is what enables us to respond to the proposals of Fenelon, of Madame Guyon, and of Quietism (it is necessary to make all these comparisons in order to grasp the root of these problems) in their quest for an absolutely disinterested love of God. They say: I would love God even in Hell, even if I am deprived of everything, even if this love gained me nothing. St. Thomas responds: no, you are not God, you are a creature, and consequently you have to acquire, you necessarily would acquire something.

In fact, it is not at all necessary that the notion of sharing simply transforms itself into the idea of "pure" generosity. It is very necessary to see one in relation to the other. It is very necessary to see that, even if the person is more perfectly fulfilled in sharing than in acquisition, this does not prevent it being true that acquisition is a prerequisite for sharing. It is absolutely necessary that acquisition be accomplished first.

But it is also necessary to add: this necessary condition can be transcended. Because he is intelligent, because he has a spiritual appetite which we call the will, a person can, in a certain way, attain something of the divine ability to share. It is then that we most approach God, that we are truly a person in vocation and reality: we can share for the sake of sharing – even if we cannot share without by that very fact acquiring something – but our reason for sharing will be taken from the good of sharing itself. Contrary to what La Rochefoucauld thinks, who says that we can never detach ourselves from self-interest in doing good ("The virtues are lost in self-interest like rivers in the sea"), the human person can in reality detach

himself from his self-interest and in this way self-interest will not be the determining reason for his action: the sharing will be for him an acquisition, but it is not the acquisition which moves him to act.

Thus it is important to see that there are, with regard to this acquisition-sharing problem, these two extreme positions:

1) You have those who say that it is necessary to put entirely aside all acquisition (pure sharing, pure love, complete disinterestedness). To these St. Thomas responds: this is divine and not human. Because you are a creature, all of the actions that you perform result in some acquisition. 2) And you have those such as Marx for whom all human life consists in acquisition, and in this they are not fundamentally distinguished from the capitalists. They have the idea that every society has been predetermined by the productive forces which that society has as its basis, its industry, for example. We respond: these are absolutely necessary conditions, but they are not the ultimate determining principle. The human person has a higher determining principle.

Thus society must start with the activity of acquisition, of the production of goods, but the true behavior of the human person in society does not stop there.

We find the two points of view reunited in the question concerning private property as St. Thomas presents it, and you will immediately see them: the point of view of the acquisition of goods and the superior point of view of sharing. The puzzle of private property is unlocked using this double key:

I answer that two things are fitting to man in respect to exterior things. One is the power to procure and dispense them, and in this regard it is lawful for man to possess property. Moreover this is necessary to human life for three reasons.



First because every man is more careful to procure what is for himself alone than that which is common to many or to all, since each one would shirk the labor and leave to another that which concerns the community, as happens where there is a great number of servants. (*We always wait for someone else to do the work. And who puts himself out to cultivate a common field? Consequently, with regard to the acquisition of goods and the task of procuring them, private property is a useful thing.*)

Secondly, because human affairs are conducted in a more orderly fashion if each man is charged with taking care of some particular thing himself, whereas there would be confusion if everyone had to look after everything indeterminately. (*Here again, acquisition demands private property; the social good will be better assured for all.*)

Thirdly, because a more peaceful state is ensured to man if each one is contented with his own. Hence it is to be observed that quarrels arise more frequently where there is no division of the things possessed.

The second thing that is competent to man with regard to external things is their use. In this respect man ought to possess external things, not as his own, but as common, namely, in such a way that he is ready to share them with others in their need. Hence the Apostle says (1 Tim. 6:17,18): "Charge the rich of this world ... to give easily, to share with others," etc.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, private property is justified and necessary, not because of private interest alone, but ultimately because of the

superior finality of the common good. It is absolutely necessary for the effective acquisition of goods in society, but it is subordinated to a superior finality, which is sharing. It is not that you should give away everything (you are not obliged to live like St. Francis), but still it is necessary that you be prepared, when you see that it is a necessary or useful thing, to put the goods of which you are the proprietor at the disposal of others; not necessarily to give them away to others, but at least to lend them.

I believe that that the fulfillment of the person is truly found in this kind of attitude towards material goods. We are obliged to live in an economy of acquisition, but it is necessary to give it its purpose through something superior which, with respect to this good, is an attitude or a disposition of sharing with ease. We must try to develop this attitude in all areas of social life, and finally this is what all men are looking for. You know very well that when you entrust a task that serves the common good to a child, or really to anyone, he does the task willingly.

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Sharing is not an extraordinary thing. It is something so ordinary that we can stir it up in most men, and economic activity should be penetrated as much as possible by this attitude of sharing. This might be how we can solve our problems. Perhaps through an attitude of sharing we can begin to overcome class warfare. But when the forces of acquisition are so strong that they exclude all else, sharing becomes impossible, and this is not the proper situation for the person in the economic life.

In our day we talk a lot about communication, about sharing information, but we can see the ascendancy of the

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<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa, IIae, q. 66, a. 2.

purely productive conception of man even in the way we speak about communication: the communication which we want, which we so desperately need, has become the work of “producers”: television producers, movie producers and all the rest!

Modern economic society has reached a stage of indefinite and almost unlimited production and consumption, and as a result the two functions, the two finalities, of domestic society and of political society have been absorbed into it and have almost disappeared. Man does not need to return to the wheelbarrow, but he does need to uncover the ways in which, in accord with the complexity of economic mechanisms, man in society can rediscover and attend to his true end. In order to lead a truly human life, man must enter into the sharing of the goods that he needs for himself: first, bread and shoes, but more importantly, art, wisdom and friendship.