

I

We can begin, like the Scholastic masters, with an objection: *videtur quod non ...* "It seems *not* to be true that ..." And this is the objection: a time like the present [i.e., a few years after the Second World War, in Germany] seems, of all times, *not* to be a time to speak of "leisure". We are engaged in the re-building of a house, and our hands are full. Shouldn't all our efforts be directed to nothing other than the completion of that house?

This is no small objection. But there is also a good answer to it. To "build our house" at this time implies not only securing survival, but also putting in order again our entire moral and intellectual heritage. And before any detailed plan along these lines can succeed, our new beginning, our re-foundation, calls out immediately for ... a defense of leisure.

For, when we consider the foundations of Western European culture (is it, perhaps, too rash to assume that our re-building will in fact be carried out in a "Western" spirit? Indeed, this and no other is the very assumption that is at issue today.), one of these foundations is leisure. We can read it in the first chapter of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. And the very history of the meaning of the word bears a similar message. The Greek word for leisure (*σχολή*) is the origin

of Latin *scola*, German *Schule*, English *school*. The name for the institutions of education and learning means "leisure".

Of course, the original meaning of the concept of "leisure" has practically been forgotten in today's leisure-less culture of "total work": in order to win our way to a real understanding of leisure, we must confront the contradiction that rises from our overemphasis on the world of work. "One does not only work in order to live, but one lives for the sake of one's work," this statement, quoted by Max Weber¹, makes immediate sense to us, and appeals to current opinion. It is difficult for us to see how in fact it turns the order of things upside-down.

And what would be our response to another statement? "We work in order to be at leisure." Would we hesitate to say that here the world is really turned upside-down? Doesn't this statement appear almost *imorral* to the man and woman of the world of "total work"? Is it not an attack on the basic principles of human society?

Now, I have not merely constructed a sentence to prove a point. The statement was actually made - by Aristotle². Yes, Aristotle: the sober, industrious realist, and the fact that *he* said it, gives the statement special significance. What he says in a more literal translation would be: "We are *not-at-leisure* in order to *be-at-leisure*." For the Greeks, "not-leisure" was the word for the world of everyday work; and not only to indicate its "hustle and bustle," but the work itself. The Greek language had only this negative term for it ($\acute{\alpha}\text{-}\sigma\chi\omicron\lambda\acute{\iota}\alpha$), as did Latin (*neg-otium*, "not-leisure").

The context not only of this sentence but also of another one from

¹ *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [transl. by Talcott Parsons] (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, p. 264, note 24). Weber is quoting Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

² *Nicomachean Ethics X*, 7 (1177b4-6).

Aristotle's *Politics* (stating that the "pivot" around which everything turns is leisure³) shows that these notions were not considered extraordinary, but only self-evident: the Greeks would probably not have understood our maxims about "work for the sake of work". Could this also imply that people in our day no longer have direct access to the original meaning of leisure?

Of course, we can expect an objection here too: how seriously must we take Aristotle anyway? We can admire the ancient writers, of course, but that doesn't mean we are obliged to follow them.

On the other side, consider the following: the Christian concept of the "contemplative life" (the *vita contemplativa*) was built on the Aristotelian concept of leisure. Further, the distinction between the "Liberal Arts" and the "Servile Arts" has its origin precisely here. But is not such a distinction of interest only to the historian? Well, at least one side of the distinction comes to the fore in everyday life, when the issue of "servile work" arises, the kind of activity that is deemed inappropriate for the "holy rest" of the Sabbath, Sundays, or Holidays. How many are aware that the expression "servile work" can not be fully understood without contrasting it with the "Liberal Arts"? And what does it mean to say that some arts are "liberal" or "free"? This is still in need of clarification.

This example might suffice, if we wanted to show, at least, that Aristotle's words do have some relevance to our times. And yet this is still not enough to "oblige" us in any way.

The real reason for mentioning it was to show how sharply the modern valuation of work and leisure differs from that of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The difference is so great, in fact, that we can no longer understand with any immediacy just what the ancient and medieval mind understood by the statement, "We are *not-at-leisure*

³ *Politics* VII, 3 (1337b33)

in order to *be-at-leisure*.”

Now, the very fact of this difference, of our inability to recover the original meaning of ”leisure,” will strike us all the more when we realize how extensively the opposing idea of ”work” has invaded and taken over the whole realm of human action and of human existence as a whole; when we realize, as well, how ready we are to grant all claims made for the person who ”works.”

In the following discussion, the word ”worker” will not be used in the sense of a distinct kind of occupation, with the sociological and statistical sense of the ”proletarian worker,” although the ambiguity is not coincidental. ”Worker” will be used in an anthropological sense: as a general human ideal. It is with this meaning in mind that Ernst Niekisch⁴ spoke of the ”worker” as an ”imperial figure,” and Ernst Jünger⁵ sketched a portrait of that ”worker”-type which has already begun to determine the future of humanity.

An altered conception of the human being *as such*, and a new interpretation of the meaning of human existence *as such*, looms behind the new claims being made for ”work” and the ”worker.” And as we might expect, the historical evolution which resulted in this changed conception is difficult to follow, and almost impossible to recover in detail. If something of real import is going to be said on the matter, it will be achieved not by reconstructing a historical narrative, but by digging more deeply to the very roots of a philosophical and theological understanding of the human person.

⁴ Ernst Niekisch, *Die dritte imperiale Figur* (Berlin, 1935).

⁵ Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt* (Hamburg, 1932).

II

"Intellectual work," "intellectual worker" - these terms characterize the latest stretch of the road we have traveled, bringing us at last to the modern ideal of work in its most extreme formulation.

Up until this time (at least from the point of view of someone who worked with his hands) the province of intellectual enterprise tended to be looked upon as a kind of paradise, where nobody needed to work; at the heart of this privileged province lay "philosophy," something at furthest remove from the working world.

Now, the takeover of this region of intellectual action (including the province of philosophical culture) and its exclusive possession by the realm of "total work," forms only the most recent phase of a whole series of conquests made by the "imperial figure" of the "Worker." And the concepts *intellectual worker* and *intellectual work* (with the evaluative claims that go with them) make the fact of that conquest especially clear and especially challenging to our times.

In this last part of the journey, however, the significance of the whole historical process has gathered itself together to form an expression of utmost precision and clarity. For, in fully explicating the inner structure of the concept "intellectual work," we come face to face with the "world of total work" and its real meaning.

The concept of intellectual work has a number of historical antecedents, which can serve to clarify it.

First, it is based on a certain interpretation of the human knowing process.

What happens when our eye sees a rose? What do we *do* when that happens? Our mind does something, to be sure, in the mere fact of taking in the object, grasping its color, its shape, and so on. We have to be awake and active. But all the same, it is a "relaxed" looking, so long as we are merely looking at it and not *observing* or *studying* it, counting or measuring its various features. Such observation would *not* be a "relaxed" action: it would be what Ernst Jünger termed an "act of aggression."¹ But simply looking at something, gazing at it, "taking it in," is merely to open our eyes to receive the things that present themselves to us, that come to us without any need for "effort" on our part to "possess" them.

There would scarcely be any dispute about this, if we were speaking about an act of sense perception.

But what about an act of knowing? When a human being considers something imperceptible to the senses, is there then such a thing as mere "looking"? Or, to use the scholastic technical terminology, is there such a thing as "intellectual vision"?

The ancient and medieval philosophers answered, "Yes." Modern philosophers have tended to say, "No."

To Kant, for instance, the human act of knowing is exclusively "discursive," which means *not* "merely looking." "The understanding cannot look upon anything."² This doctrine has been characterized,

¹ *Blätter und Steine* (Hamburg, 1934), p. 202.

² I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. R. Schmidt (Leipzig, 1944) p. 91.

in brief, as "one of the most momentous dogmatic assumptions of Kantian epistemology."³ In Kant's view, then, human knowing consists essentially in the act of investigating, articulating, joining, comparing, distinguishing, abstracting, deducing, proving - all of which are so many types and methods of active mental effort. According to Kant, knowing — (*intellectual* knowing, that is, by the human being) is *activity*, and nothing but activity.

It is no wonder that, starting from this basis, Kant was able to conclude that all knowing, even philosophy itself (since philosophy is at the greatest remove from sense perception), should be understood as a form of *work*.

And he said so expressly: in 1796, for example, in an article written to refute the Romantic "vision" and "intuitive" philosophy of Jacobi, Schlosser, and Stolberg⁴. In philosophy, Kant objects, "the law of reason is supreme, whereby property is possessed through labor." And this Romantic philosophy cannot truly be a philosophy because it is not "work." This accusation he directs even against Plato, that "Father of all raving enthusiasm in Philosophy," while, Kant says with recognition and approval, "Aristotle's philosophy is truly work." From such a perspective, originating from the exaltation of a "philosophy of work," the "recently exalted, privileged tone of Philosophy" is branded as a false philosophy, in which one "does not work but merely listens with delight to the oracle within oneself, in order to come into complete possession of the whole wisdom promised by philosophy." And such a "pseudo-philosophy" thinks itself superior to the strenuous labor of the true philosopher!

³ Bernhard Jansen, *Die Geschichte der Erkenntnislehre in der neueren Philosophie bis Kant* (Paderborn, 1940), p. 235.

⁴ "Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie," *Akademie-Ausgabe* 8, pp. 387-406.

Now, ancient and medieval philosophy had quite the opposite view, without, of course, justifying any charge that philosophy was something "easy." Not only the Greeks in general - Aristotle no less than Plato - but the great medieval thinkers as well, all held that there was an element of purely receptive "looking," not only in sense perception but also in intellectual knowing or, as Heraclitus said, "*Listening-in to the being of things.*"⁵

The medievals distinguished between the intellect as *ratio* and the intellect as *intellectus*. *Ratio* is the power of discursive thought, of searching and re-searching, abstracting, refining, and concluding [*cf.* Latin *dis-currere*, "to run to and fro"], whereas *intellectus* refers to the ability of "simply looking" (*simplex intuitus*), to which the truth presents itself as a landscape presents itself to the eye. The spiritual knowing power of the human mind, as the ancients understood it, is really two things in one: *ratio* and *intellectus*, all knowing involves both. The path of discursive reasoning is accompanied and penetrated by the *intellectus*' untiring vision, which is not active but passive, or better, *receptive* - a receptively operating power of the intellect.

And something else must be added: the ancients likewise considered the active efforts of the discursive *ratio* to be the essentially human element of human knowing; *ratio* as the decisively human activity was contrasted with the *intellectus*, which had to do with what surpasses human limits. Of course, this "super-human" power nevertheless does belong to man, and what is "essentially human" alone does not exhaust the knowing power of human nature; for it is

⁵ Diels-Kranz, ed., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, frag. 112.

essential to the human person to reach beyond the province of the human and into the order of angels, the truly intellectual beings.

”Although human knowing really takes place in the mode of *ratio*, nevertheless it is a kind of participation in that simple knowing which takes place in higher natures, and we can thus conclude that human beings possess a power of intellectual vision.” These are the words of Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*.⁶ This statement means that human knowing is a partaking in the non-discursive power of vision enjoyed by the angels, to whom it has been granted to ”take in” the immaterial as easily as our eyes take in light or our ears sound. Human knowing has an element of the non-active, purely receptive seeing, which is not there in virtue of our humanity as such, but in virtue of a transcendence over what is human, but which is really the highest fulfillment of what it is to be human, and is thus ”truly human” after all (in the same way, again according to Thomas Aquinas, the *vita contemplativa* as the highest form of human living is not ”properly human, but superhuman”: *non proprie humana, sed superhumana*).⁷

For the ancient and medieval philosophers the ”laboring” nature of the human *ratio* was likewise a mark of its humanness. The operation of the *ratio*, its discursive thinking process, really is work, and a difficult activity.

But the simple act of the *intellectus* is not work. And whoever thinks, along with the ancients, that human knowing is a mutual interplay of *ratio* and *intellectus*; whoever can recognize an element of intellectual vision within discursive reasoning; whoever, finally, can retain in philosophy an element of contemplation of being as a whole - such a person will have to grant that a characterization of knowing

⁶ Q.XV,1.

⁷ *Quaestio disputata de virtutibus cardinalibus 1.*

and philosophy as "work" is not only not exhaustive, but does not even reach the core of the matter, and that something essential is in fact missing from such a definition. Certainly, knowing in general and philosophical knowing in particular cannot take place without the effort and activity of discursive reasoning, without the "nuisance of labor" (*labor improbus*) involved in all "intellectual work." Even so, there is something else in it, and something essential to it, that is *not* work.

The statement, "knowing is work," or "knowing is an activity," is a statement with two sides to it. It implies a demand on the human being, and a demand *made* by the human being. If you want to understand something, you have to work; in philosophy, Kant's "Law of the Human Reason," that property is acquired through labor,⁸ holds true - and that is a claim *on* man.

The other, hidden, side of the same dictum - the side that does not immediately show itself - is the claim *made by* man: if knowing is work, exclusively work, then the one who knows, knows only the fruit of his own, subjective activity, and nothing else. There is nothing in his knowing that is not the fruit of his own efforts; there is nothing "received" in it.

To sum up the argument: thanks to a certain underlying assumption, the concept of "intellectual work" has gained a great deal of influence - the assumption that human knowing is accomplished in an exclusively active/discursive operation of the *ratio*.

And when we look into the face of the "worker," it is the traits of "effort" and "stress" that we see becoming more pronounced there

⁸ Kant, *op. cit* (see note 4 above), p. 393.

and, so to speak, permanently etched. It is the mark of "absolute activity" (which Goethe said "makes one bankrupt, in the end"⁹); the hard quality of *not-being-able-to-receive*; a stoniness of heart, that will not brook any resistance - as expressed once, most radically, in the following terrifying statement: "Every action makes sense, even criminal acts ... all passivity is senseless."¹⁰

But it is simply not the case that "discursive thinking" and "intellective vision" are as exclusively opposed to one another as "activity" to "receptivity," or as active effort to receptive absorption. Rather, they are related to each other as effort and struggle, on the one hand, are related to effortlessness and calm possession, on the other.

From the contrast just mentioned - between effort and effortlessness - appears a *second* source of emphasis on the concept "intellectual work." We speak here of a peculiar criterion for determining the value of action as such. When Kant spoke of philosophy as a "Herculean labor,"¹¹ he was only using a convenient figure of speech. For, in this laborious aspect, he saw a kind of legitimation of philosophy: philosophy is genuine, *insofar* as it is a "Herculean labor." The fact that "intellective vision" didn't *cost anything* is what made it so suspicious to him. Kant expected no real gain in knowledge from intellectual vision, *because* it is the very nature of vision to be effortless.

Would not such a viewpoint bring us to the conclusion, or at least, close to the conclusion, that the truth of what is known is determined by the *effort* put into knowing it?

⁹ *Maximen und Reflexionen*, ed. Günther Müller (Stuttgart, 1943), no. 1415.

¹⁰ Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler* (Zurich/New York, 1940), quoted according to the selections published in the journal *Die Wandlung* (I, 1945/6), pp. 684 ff.

¹¹ Kant, op. cit., p. 390.

Now, this is not so very distant from the ethical doctrine that holds that whatever someone does by inclination - and that means, without effort - is a betrayal of true morality. Indeed, according to Kant, the moral law by definition is opposed to natural inclination. It is simply part of the nature of things that the Good is difficult and that the voluntary effort put into forcing oneself to do something becomes the standard for moral goodness. The more difficult thing must be the higher Good. Schiller's ironic verses point out the problem:

*I help my friends, and it feels nice
Until I fear that it's a vice.*¹²

So, effort is good. This was a thought formulated long ago by the Cynic philosopher Antisthenes¹³, one of Plato's friends and a fellow disciple of Socrates. Antisthenes, by the way, was a surprisingly "modern" figure. He was responsible for the first paradigm of the "worker" - or rather, he represented it himself. He not only came up with the equation of effort with goodness, he also extolled Hercules as the Accomplisher of Superhuman Actions.¹⁴ Now, this is an image that still (or, once more?) has a certain compelling attraction: from the motto of Erasmus¹⁵ to the philosophy of Kant, who used the word "Herculean" to praise the heroism of philosophers, and on to Thomas Carlyle, the prophet of the religion of Work: "You must labor like Hercules ..."¹⁶ As an ethicist of independence, this Antisthenes had

¹² "Die Philosophen" (Gewissenskrupel): *Gerne dient' ich den Freunden, doch tu ich es leider mit Neigung /Und so wurmt es mir oft, dass ich nicht tugendhaft bin.*

¹³ Antisthenes' statement is found in Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Teachings of the Philosophers*, VI, 1, 2.

¹⁴ Ibid.; a work of Antisthenes (no longer extant) bore the title, *The Greater Hercules, or On Power*.

¹⁵ Anton Gail told me of a portrait of Erasmus, painted by Hans Holbein, in which Erasmus has his hands resting on a book with the title *Herakleou Ponoï* [Greek for "the Labors of Hercules"] - *Erasmii Roterodami*.

¹⁶ Carlyle, as quoted by Robert Langewiesche (in an anthology of Carlyle's writings, in German translation

no feeling for cultic celebration, which he preferred attacking with "enlightened" wit;¹⁷ he was "a-musical" (a foe of the Muses: poetry only interested him for its moral content);¹⁸ he felt no responsiveness to Eros (he said he "would like to kill Aphrodite");¹⁹ as a flat Realist, he had no belief in immortality (what really matters, he said, was to live rightly "on this earth").²⁰ This collection of character traits appear almost purposely designed to illustrate the very "type" of the modern "workaholic."

"Effort is good": objecting to this thesis in the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas wrote as follows: "The essence of virtue consists more in the Good than in the Difficult."²¹ "When something is more difficult, it is not for that reason necessarily more worthwhile, but it must be more difficult in such a way, as also to be at a higher level of goodness."²² The Middle Ages had something to say about virtue that will be hard for us, fellow countrymen of Kant, to understand. And what was this? That virtue makes it possible for us ... to master our natural inclinations? No. *That* is what Kant would have said, and we all might be ready to agree. What Thomas says, instead, is that virtue perfects us so that we can *follow* our natural inclination in the right way.²³ Yes, the highest realizations of moral goodness are known to be such precisely in this: that they take place *effortlessly* because it is of their essence to arise from love. And yet the overemphasis on effort and struggle has made an inroad even on

[Königstein, n.d.], p. 28).

¹⁷ Cf. Wilhelm Nestle, *Griechischen Geistesgeschichte von Homer bis Lukian* (Stuttgart, 1944), pp. 313 ff.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹⁹ Transmitted by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, II, 107, 2. In the same passage it is also reported that "He considered the desire of love as an evil of nature."

²⁰ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, VI, 1, 5.

²¹ *Summa theologiae* II-II, Q. 123, a. 12, ad 2um.

²² *Ibid.*, II-II, Q. 27, a. 8, ad 3um.

²³ *Ibid.*, II-II, Q. 108, a. 2.

our understanding of love. Why, for instance, in the opinion of the average Christian, is the love of one's enemies the highest form of love? Because here, the natural inclination is suppressed to a heroic degree. What makes this kind of love so great is precisely its unusual difficulty, its practical impossibility. But what does Thomas say? "It is not the difficulty involved that makes this kind of love so worthy, even though the greatness of the love is shown by its power to overcome the difficulty. But if the love were so great, as completely to remove all difficulty *that* would be a still greater love."²⁴

It would follow, then, that the essence of knowing would lie, not in the effort of thought as such, but in the grasp of the being of things, in the discovery of reality.

Just as in the realm of the Good, the greatest virtue is *without* difficulty, so in knowing, the highest form would be the lightening-like insight, true contemplation, which comes to one like a gift; it is effortless and not burdensome. Thomas speaks of *contemplation* and *play* in a single breath: "Because of the leisure of contemplation" [*otium contemplationis*] the Scripture says of the Divine Wisdom itself that it "plays all the time, plays throughout the world" [*Wisdom* 8, 30].²⁵

Surely, such highest realizations of knowing would be preceded by an exceptional effort of thought, and perhaps *must* be so prepared (otherwise, such knowledge would be grace in the strict sense); but in any case, the effort would not be the cause but rather a necessary condition for it. And the holy effortlessness of the action of charity would also be connected with previous, and heroic, exercise of the will. "Knowing" means that the reality of existing things has been

²⁴ *Quaest. disp. de caritate* 8, ad 17um.

²⁵ *Commentary on the Sentences* I, d. 2 (*expositio textus*).

reached; it does not consist in the effort of thought, or "intellectual work."

This aspect too of the concept of "intellectual work" - the over-valuation of the "difficult" as such - presents itself in the deeply etched visage of the "worker": those mask-like, stony features, ready to suffer pain, no matter what the reason. The *un-related nature* of this readiness to suffer is the decisive difference because in this case someone does not ask why. Such readiness to suffer (in which the ultimate meaning of all "discipline" has been seen to consist)²⁶ is radically different from the Christian understanding of self-sacrifice: in the latter, one does not intend the painful as such, nor seeks exertion for the sake of exertion, nor the difficult simply because it is difficult; rather, what one seeks is a higher bliss, a healing, and the fullness of existence, and thereby the fullness of happiness: "The goal and the norm of discipline is happiness."²⁷

The innermost meaning of this over-emphasis on effort appears to be this: that man mistrusts everything that is without effort; that in good conscience he can own only what he himself has reached through painful effort; that he refuses to let himself be given anything.

We should consider for a moment how much the Christian understanding of life is based on the reality of "Grace"; let us also recall that the Holy Spirit Himself is called "Gift";²⁸ that the greatest Christian teachers have said that the Justice of God is based on Love;²⁹ that something given, something free of all debt, something

²⁶ Ernst Jünger, *Blätter und Steine*, p. 179.

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II-II, Q. 141, a. 6, ad 1um.

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, IV, 23: "It is the role of the Holy Spirit, to be given"; and *Summa theologiae* I, Q. 38, a. 2 ad 1um: "The Holy Spirit, Who comes forth as Love from the Father, is truly called a "gift."

²⁹ *Summa theologiae* I, Q. 21, a. 4.

undeserved, something not-achieved - is presumed in every thing achieved or laid claim to; that what is first is always something received - if we keep all this before our eyes, we can see the abyss that separates this other attitude from the inheritance of Christian Europe.

We have been inquiring into the origin of the concept of intellectual labor, and we have found that the concept has its origin above all in two theses: 1) the view that all human knowing is accomplished exclusively in the manner of discursive activity; and 2) the view that the effort that goes into thought is the criterion of its truth. But there is a third element involved as well, which appears to be even more crucial than the first two and seems to comprehend both of them within itself. This is the social doctrine that lies concealed in the concepts of "intellectual labor" and "intellectual worker."

Understood in this way, work means "contribution to society." And "intellectual work" is intellectual activity as social service, as contribution to the common utility. But that is not all that the terms "intellectual work" and "intellectual worker" say. The contemporary use of the words includes as well a reference to the "working class," and something like the following is implied: not only the wage earner, the hand-worker, and the proletarian are workers; even the learned man, the student, are workers; they too are drawn into the social system and its distribution of labor. The intellectual worker is also bound to his function; he too is a functionary in the total world of work, he may be called a "specialist," he is still a functionary. And something else, something even more pointed is being said: nobody - whether he be "intellectual" or "hand" worker - nobody is granted a "free zone" of intellectual activity, "free" meaning *not* being subordi-

nated to a duty to fulfill some function. With this, our inquiry meets the very nub of the issue. Is it not clear to everyone how much the problem has gone beyond the merely theoretical stage, to threaten drastic implications?

And yet the "social" - by which we understand the relationships of social classes and groupings with one another - the "social" is only the foreground, and we will have more to say about it later.

The real question, however, is a metaphysical one. It is the old question about the justification and sense of the *artes liberales*. What are "liberal arts"? Thomas Aquinas provides some conceptual clarification in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*: "Every art is called *liberal* which is ordered to knowing; those which are ordered to some utility to be attained through action are called *servile* arts."³⁰ Six hundred years later, John Henry Newman said as follows: "I know well," Newman says, "that knowledge may resolve itself into an art, and seminate in a mechanical process and in tangible fruit; but it may also fall back upon that Reason which informs it, and resolve itself into Philosophy. For in one case it is called Useful Knowledge; in the other, Liberal."³¹

"Liberal arts," therefore, are ways of human action which have their justification in themselves; "servile arts" are ways of human action that have a purpose outside of themselves, a purpose, to be more exact, which consists in a useful effect that can be realized through *praxis*. The "liberality" or "freedom" of the liberal arts consists in their not being disposable for purposes, that they do not need to be legitimated by a social function, by being "work."

To many people, the question about the justification and meaning

³⁰ *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* I, 3.

³¹ Newman, *Idea of a University*, V, 6.

of the liberal arts will seem to be an already answered question, an issue now put behind us. To translate the question into contemporary language, it would sound something like this: Is there still an area of human action, or human existence as such, that does not have its justification by being part of the machinery of a "five-year plan"? Is there or is there not something of that kind?

The inner tendency of the concepts "intellectual work" and "intellectual worker" point to the answer: No, the human being is essentially, and with his whole existence, a functionary, even in the most noble forms of his activity.

We can relate the question to philosophy and philosophical education. Philosophy can be called the most liberal of the liberal arts. "Knowledge is most truly free when it is philosophical knowledge," Newman said.³² And philosophy, in a certain sense, gave its name to the liberal arts, for the "Arts Faculty" of the medieval university is today [in Germany] called the "Philosophical Faculty."

For our inquiry, then, philosophy, and how it is valued, becomes an indicator of particular importance.

For there is not much to dispute about whether, or to what extent, the natural sciences, medical science, jurisprudence, or economics should have a circumscribed place for themselves in the functioning unity of the modern social system, and thus be capable of being classed as "work" in social-scientific usage. It is of the nature of the individual sciences to be related to purposes that exist apart from themselves. But there is also a philosophical manner of treating these special sciences, and then our question about philosophy as such would apply to them also. "The theoretically treated special science" - that means that a science is being pursued in the original, "academic" sense - (for "academic" means "philosophical" or it

³² Ibid.

means nothing!).

Thus, if we are speaking about the place and justification for philosophy, then at the same time, we are speaking, no more and no less, about the place and justification for the University, for academic education, and for education [*Bildung*] in the genuine sense - in the sense in which it differs from and transcends, in principle, all mere career training.

The functionary is trained. Training is distinguished by its orientation toward something partial, and specialized, in the human being, and toward some one section of the world. Education is concerned with the whole: who ever is educated knows how the world as a whole behaves. Education concerns the whole human being, insofar as he is *capax universi*, "capable of the whole," able to comprehend the sum total of existing things.

But this is not to say anything against professional training, or against the functionary. Of course, the vocationally specialized exercise of a function is *the* normal form of human activity; what is normal is work, and the normal day is a working day. But the question is this: can the world of man be exhausted in being the "working world"? Can the human being be satisfied with being a functionary, a "worker"? Can human existence be fulfilled in being exclusively a work-a-day existence? Or, to put it another way, from the other direction, as it were: Are there such things as liberal arts? The architects of the total world of work would have to answer, "No." In the world of the worker, as Ernst Jünger put it, there is a denial of free research.³³ In the consistently planned working-state there can be neither genuine philosophy (to whose nature it belongs, not to be at the disposal of purposes, and in this sense "free"), nor can the special sciences be treated in a philosophical manner (and that

³³ *Blätter und Steine*, p. 176.

means, "academically" in the original sense of the word).

Now it is in the term "intellectual worker," above all, that this very situation is established and proclaimed. It is thus symptomatic, and painfully so, that linguistic usage, and especially academic usage, has been so influenced by all this talk of "intellectual worker" or "mental laborer."

But the ancients said that there rightly exist non-useful forms of human activity, that there are such things as liberal arts. There are not only functionary sciences, there is also the knowledge of a "gentleman," as J. H. Newman so happily translated the old term *artes liberales* in his *Idea of a University*?³⁴

It should go without saying that not everything that cannot exactly be categorized as "useful" is useless. And thus it is not at all without significance for a people and the realization of a nation's common good that room be allowed, and respect be granted, for what is not "useful work" in the sense of immediate application. As Goethe the Minister of State wrote to Friedrich Soret [Oct. 20, 1830]: "I have never asked... how do I use the whole? - rather, I have only attempted to speak out what I understood as good and true. Of course, this was made use of... in a wider circle, but that was not its purpose, only a necessary result."³⁵

According to Hegel's fine formulation, there is not only use, there is also blessing?³⁶

In just such a sense can the medieval statement be understood,

³⁴ *The Idea of a University*, V. 5.

³⁵ Taken from Goethe's *Conversations with Eckermann*.

³⁶ Taken from the preface to Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*, where the fuller context says that "the contemplation of the Eternal and of a life that serves it alone" is motivated "not for the sake of use, but for the sake of blessing."

that it is "necessary for the perfection of the human community, that there be persons who devote themselves to the [useless] life of contemplation."³⁷ To which I would only like to add that this is necessary not only for the perfection of the individuals themselves, who devote themselves to the *vita contemplativa*, but also for the perfection of the whole human community! Would anyone who thinks only in terms of the "intellectual worker" be willing to say that?

³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences* IV, D. 26, 1, 2.