

# Introduction

The state of the world today is a warrant to every serious thinker to try to find the answer to the enigma of man's confusion and unhappiness. Those to whom we have looked hitherto for guidance and inspiration, the economist, the sociologist, the physicist, the biologist, the psychologist and the theologian, have each contributed their quota of theory the grand result of which amounts practically to despair.

Is it not, therefore, the right, indeed the responsibility of any concerned, and even unlettered, layman to make his contribution? He can do no worse than fail, as the experts have done, to find the answer. He might, having no axe to grind, either of commerce or professional reputation, having no fear of failure, only possessed of a passion for truth and a desire to help save mankind from the consequences of folly and ignorance, come up with the *right* answer. It is surely worth the attempt.

The first step would surely be to look back over the terrain so far travelled by humanity in the hope of discovering where and when he went off the path of real progress. It may never be found, or it may be found not in any misfortune, or error of man's making; it might even be found to be due to some quality of man's own nature. Some, after all, talk of 'original sin'. As Arthur Koestler says, in his *The Ghost in the Machine*: "When one contemplates the streak of insanity running through human history, it appears highly probable that *homo sapiens* is a biological freak, the result of some remarkable mistake in the evolutionary process. The ancient doctrine of original sin, variants of which occur independently in the mythologies of diverse cultures, could be a reflection of man's awareness of his own inadequacy, of the intuitive hunch that somewhere along the line of his ascent something has gone wrong." However near the truth this guess of Koestler's may be it is intriguing to listen to the talk today of 'ecology' while realising that, for a new science, its main claim to our attention is its reliance on *natural law*. It is man's interference with natural law, with the balance which normally sustains the natural environment, the ecologist claims, that is the cause of the developing disaster which, if unchecked, will leave man derelict and starving in a stinking desert. There are those who, in their fright at the prospect thus revealed to them, run to extremes of fantasy and arrive at such conclusions as the need for 'zero growth' and 'zero population'; the 'static society'.

The lesson the ecologist presents is the need to look further in the quest for natural law, to seek its role in human affairs, in particular in those social relationships falling within the field of human activity known to the modern

world as economics. This will be found to be the basic preoccupation of this book: an attempt to indicate the structure of natural economic law underpinning human society and to demonstrate how, by ignoring the existence of this structure, mankind has substituted a rickety framework of relations, ill-designed, vulnerable to all the winds of adversity and the shocks of conflicting ideas; constantly under stress and the need of adjustment and counter-adjustment to preserve a semblance of balance — never the true balance of the well-designed, well-maintained organism on which human society depends for its material well-being.

The ecologist has disclosed that in the kingdom of nature, man, the intruder, has created havoc and must now begin to observe the rules if that kingdom is not to fall into ruin and he be destroyed with it. It seems clear that the havoc he has created in his own world, the kingdom of 'economic man', in which the phenomenon of 'poverty in the midst of plenty' still haunts him, will destroy him as surely as will the plunder of the ecological domain, just as every civilization preceding our own was destroyed, unless he learns and abides by the rules under which economic co-operation can flourish and by which alone he can save himself.

In one thing we can at once agree with the ecologist: there is not much time left in which to do it.