

Chapter 5

State and Society

“Man is by nature a political animal,” asserts Aristotle in Book I of *The Politics*. And, a few lines later: “A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature.”¹

These axioms of political science are upheld by all human experience. The prolonged dependency of children, disproportionately long in relation to the offspring of other species, itself attests the validity of the two assumptions. So does the human gift of speech, which Aristotle cites as evidence that man is more political than the bees or other gregarious creatures. There can be no such easy agreement, however, with his simultaneous conclusion that “the State is a creation of nature.”

In the fourth century B.C., Aristotle could speak of State and Society as though they were the same. Throughout *The Politics* he uses the one word *polis* to represent that for which we have the two nouns. But we must remember that Aristotle was thinking in terms of the Greek City-State, of very limited area and population. “To the size of States,” he says, “there is a limit” and even some cities, like Babylon, are of “such vast circuit” that they must be regarded as “a nation rather than a State” (Book III). As to population, “a great city is not to be confounded with a populous one.” The ideal State should contain enough people

¹ Jowett translation, Oxford University Press, 1920, pp. 28-9.

to be self-sufficient, but not so many that citizens cannot personally know each other.

Moreover, by listing desirable conditions of statehood, Aristotle makes himself vulnerable to the charge that he has not discriminated between the political instinct and that which is its natural result. A natural result is not the same thing as a creation of nature. In the words of a thoughtful critic: "If the city comes of nature, it does not come of the deliberate will of citizens who get together for the purpose of achieving a certain advantage! There is an inconsistency between the principle first posited and the conclusion reached."²

Nevertheless, Americans should be particularly receptive to Aristotle's pioneering thought because to us, as to him, the word "State" still conveys the idea of an autochthonous political entity, with what is well described as "home rule" preserving a jealous independence or at least autonomy in the conduct of local affairs. In political science, however, this word has come to be the technical designation of the sovereign Nation-State, and in this national sense the State will be considered in this chapter.

The abiding influence of Aristotle in the field of political theory is doubtless largely responsible for the tendency to regard the State as a particular form of Society. From our differentiation between liberty and freedom, however, we have learned the importance of verbal precision in political thinking. Here again are two distinct words, representing two abstract ideas that are obviously related, but certainly not identical. In the preceding chapters State and Society have been referred to as the separate forms of human organization that they are. Now we must carefully distinguish between them, remembering Pascal's excellent advice: "I never quarrel over names, provided I am told what meanings they are given."³

We shall be the more on guard against confusing Society and State because American political thinking has in general drawn the clear distinction that is appropriate. The nature of that distinction conforms with the etymology of the words.

² Vilfredo Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. I, Sect. 272.

³ *Lettres à une provinciale*, I, p. 6.

II

The noun "society" comes to us from the Latin *socius*, meaning a companion. And, like the related noun "association," society still carries the flavor of voluntary companionship. It would be forcing language to refer to a company of conscripts, or to the prisoners in a tier of cells, as a society. Companionship in both these cases is externally enforced (by the State, as it happens). In a society, companionship between individuals of different tastes and standards is not compulsory. On the other hand, "society . . . tends to suggest a more restricted aim, a closer union of members, and their more active participation" than does the looser term "association."⁴ A common interest, a common objective, to some extent a common faith, are elements necessary to a society.

The idea of association is also involved in the noun "state," though here the association tends to be involuntary, on the basis not of free contract but of *status*, from which, of course, the word "state" derives. The place of birth determines State membership much more definitely than it does social position. In nonpolitical usage, this element of status or condition is always uppermost, as in "a state of good health" or "a state of mental depression." The same sense of subjection to circumstance applies in consideration of the political State. In Great Britain, for instance, individuals as nationals are honestly defined as "subjects," whereas the same individuals are members, not subjects, of a society like the Anglican Church.

The State, in short, subjects people; whereas Society associates them voluntarily. In a universe of rhythm and pulsation, within "the systole and diastole of Time itself," some such differentiation in human groupings is precisely what one might expect. State and Society, we shall see, are naturally and continuously in opposition. For that reason, human welfare demands the nicest balance between the appropriate functions of each.

While engaged in the important preliminary of definition, we should note that the word—and the idea—of "constitution" is

⁴ Webster's *Dictionary of Synonyms*.

connected with that of "state." The "constitution" is inherent in, or literally "stands with," the physical structure. The State "stands with" its constitution and the character of that organic law, written or unwritten, determines *how* the State shall stand.

Like "state" the word "constitution" also has a physical as well as a political meaning, encouraging such picturesque expressions as "the body politic." The political constitution provides the physical linkage between the State and its subjects, with physical connection emphasized by description of a constitution as "organic" law. Indeed, every political State *must* have a constitution—though this may be as arbitrary as the personal decrees of a dictator—because the very existence of a State implies some accepted relationship, doubtless originating in custom but invariably acquiring the force of law, between government and governed. This accepted relationship, between sovereign and subject, is provided by the constitution, and a change in the constitution, by executive edict, legislative amendment, or judicial interpretation, is momentous to all because it signifies a change in that basic relationship.

As earlier noted, the great difference between the British and American systems of government is that the former has come to vest complete sovereignty in its representative Parliament, which by contraction of the power of the House of Lords has become, in effect, the House of Commons alone. In our Republic, legal sovereignty is by intent permanently divided, so that it cannot be located in any single person or organ. "The basis of law," according to Professor Vinogradoff's searching analysis, is in the United States "provided not by one-sided command, but by agreement."

Because that unique basis can so easily be undermined, every constitutional change is of greater importance in the American federal union than in less delicate governmental systems. A seemingly innocuous move to alter the method of appointment to the Supreme Court, for instance, could easily result in making the judiciary an arm of executive power. And since the judiciary has authority to check the legislature, this could in turn mean the development of executive tyranny. The vital importance of balance in the American governmental system and the ease with

which it can be upset were well suggested by Justice Harlan F. Stone in his dissent in the A. A. A. case:

While unconstitutional exercise of power by the executive and legislative branches is subject to judicial restraint, the only check on our exercise of power is our own sense of self-restraint.

Thus a great twentieth century jurist rephrased, for members of the Supreme Court, Madison's imperative reminder that we "rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government."

III

The State, to be a State, must have a constitution. The interlocking relationship between Society and State is indicated by the fact that practically all social organizations—religious, commercial, or merely recreational—also have constitutions. These, like a national constitution, establish disciplinary rules and regulations that may be, and often are, rigorously enforced within the particular association. The difference is that the disciplinary power of the social organization is always limited and seldom physically punitive.

A Red-Headed League, for instance, could properly exclude from membership anybody whose hirsute coloration fell short of a previously determined standard. But nothing would then prevent the deficient individual from forming an Auburn Association in the same community. Of course, the penalties inflicted by Society may be much more serious than this fanciful illustration indicates. They do not, however, effectively constrain individual liberty. Penalties by the State are designed to do just that.⁵

Society, in other words, is more fluid, more flexible, less constitutionalized, and less resolutely disciplinary than the State, which because of its supremacy possesses a power of ostracism far exceeding that of the most exclusive social organization. Between the discrimination of a governmental edict directed against Jews, and that of a social covenant with the same objective, there is a differ-

⁵ Pareto points out that "Sunday idleness is enforced by law in the name of freedom." *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Sect. 1554.

ence of kind rather than of degree. The inclusive discrimination of the State is tyrannical. The exclusive discrimination of a social group is merely offensive.

Nevertheless, it cannot be asserted that Society, in any of its almost numberless groupings, is particularly interested in the enlargement of freedom. Regardless of the social institution we stop to consider—whether it be the family as the oldest known co-operative unit, or an association of atomic scientists as a modern manifestation—we see similar evidences of self-imposed restraint. Husband and wife put definite limits on their individual freedom, in order to promote certain objectives, such as the rearing of children, which they have in common. And the atomic scientists in congress assembled are making comparable individual sacrifices for their particular common end. So it seems to be the nature of human association, whether voluntary or involuntary, to limit the condition of freedom for those whose association is something more than merely casual.

But when this association for a common end is voluntary, a very interesting result is wont to ensue. Although the area of individual freedom suffers undeniable contraction from association, the act of association simultaneously permits and encourages development along the lines of deepest individual interest, to an extent that would have been impossible without association. The enlargement of personality may be as inconsequential as the pleasure afforded by a foursome of golf at the country club. It may be as momentous as a general improvement of diagnostic methods resulting from a medical conference. But whatever the case in point, ridiculous or sublime, we observe that the income derived from voluntary co-operation is expected by the participants to exceed the outlay involved in such co-operation. If that were not so, we would not have voluntary co-operation, in all its myriad forms, and man would not possess the "social instinct" to the degree that makes him "a political animal."

IV

At this point we would see a distinction arising between freedom and liberty, even if it had not already been made. Voluntary association limits freedom while it enlarges liberty. That which is limited by continuous association is the indulgence of individual appetites, passions, and animal instincts—the carnal side of Man. That which is expanded by continuous association is the perfection of individual skills, ambitions, and aspirations—the spiritual side of Man. Thus continuous voluntary association may and does limit the physical condition of freedom. But it does so to enlarge the moral endowment of liberty.

During the term of earthly life, physical condition and moral endowment can never be wholly separated, for they are like body and soul. When irrevocably separated, the result is dissolution of the individual. We may suggest that this complete termination of physical freedom simultaneously brings the complete apotheosis of spiritual liberty. That would be the logical conclusion of our thought, if we were not hesitant to consider the subject of immortality in a political study already sufficiently difficult. However, we *are* concerned to point out that the quality of liberty is spiritual, and can be advanced by voluntary association, while the condition of freedom is physical, and must be limited by voluntary association. From this it follows that the individual can happily compromise with his fellows in matters of physical adjustment, but should never compromise where spiritual sacrifice is involved.

As a generality, to which many individual exceptions could be cited, Man throughout his recorded history has preferred liberty to freedom. Left to himself, his natural tendency is to limit his freedom in order to enlarge his liberty. From this tendency the observant Aristotle reasoned, more than three centuries before the birth of Christ, that: "Man is by nature a political animal."

Aristotle "first brought to bear on political phenomena the patient analysis and unbiased research which are the proper marks and virtues of scientific inquiry."⁶ This early political scientist

⁶ Sir Frederick Pollock, *History of the Science of Politics*, p. 2.

concentrated on the problems of a closely integrated City-State, where it was not an impossible ideal for all the citizens to know each other. Nevertheless, in Book III of *The Politics*, Aristotle was forced to the conclusion that "a State is not a mere Society," and to see further that "the good citizen need not of necessity possess the virtue which makes a good man."⁷ As the State has grown in power and magnitude, to become a political aggregation that certainly would have seemed dreadful to Aristotle, the contrast between State and Society that he dimly discerned has become increasingly clear. The contrast is also increasingly important for those who assert that their national objective is to secure the blessings of liberty.

For the purpose of this study it is unnecessary to debate whether the origins of State and Society are coeval, or whether the State in primitive form was originally imposed on pre-existent social groups in order to systematize exploitation of the weak by the strong. Certain observations on the issue will be made for what they are worth. Beyond contention, however, is the obvious fact that the Nation-State has acquired characteristics that make it differ in nature as well as in degree from any voluntary social organization. The rapid extension of the authority of the State, and its increasing competence to control, discipline, and subordinate not only the individual but also all unofficial forms of social organization, was the painfully outstanding political development of the first half of the twentieth century.

V

We are now in a position to identify the components of political life as (1) the individual; (2) Society, meaning every form of voluntary association directed to the self-defined benefit of individuals; (3) the State, as the dominant organization, which has gradually acquired the power to dictate both to individuals and to social groupings under its sovereignty. From his initial entrance into family organization to his final separation from those with

⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 106 and 119.

whom he has labored, Man has for centuries fulfilled his destiny within the framework of Society. But there are many indications that he is now exchanging membership in Society for servitude to the State.

The individual, as Aristotle pointed out, is *in* Society. Regardless of his line of endeavor or interest, he fulfills himself through various forms of social organization of which the family, giving continuity to the race, is the oldest. But a celibate brotherhood, secluded on the Tibetan side of the Himalayas, is equally a form of human Society. The occasional hermit, who seeks to withdraw from Society as well as from the world, is only the exception confirming the rule that "a social instinct is implanted in all men by nature."

Although the various forms of Society overlap and interlock, none is naturally superior to another. The local chamber of commerce and the sandlot baseball team pursue their wholly distinct activities in happy separation, with father and son leaving it to mother to bring composition into the picture at the family table. In this separation lie both the strength and the weakness of Society. The division of function makes it possible for each individual to concentrate on the activity that temporarily interests or concerns him most. But the division of function also makes it necessary to have some synthetic agency that will be less transitory than every purely social unit. To achieve permanence this artificial agency must have overriding power, either seized by it or freely entrusted to it. When that effective sovereignty has been attained, this synthetic agency is called the State.⁸

In most countries the State has evolved slowly, acquiring its power now here, now there; going through numerous structural changes before taking form as the Nation-State that came to flower in the period following the French Revolution. In the American Republic, however, the federal State was created at a given moment, by a concentrated effort of mind and will. We have already examined the procedure and we can even name the date on which

⁸ Franz Oppenheimer, in his study of *The State*, defines six distinct stages which can usually be discerned in its evolution to the modern form.

the United States was legally established as a definite sovereign Power.⁹

Because its origin was not haphazard it was possible, in this Republic, to establish a boundary line between the powers of the new American State and those of the antecedent American Society. That boundary is drawn in the Constitution, and emphasized in the Ninth and Tenth Amendments, which may again be quoted:

The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

Boundaries in the field of political ideas are, and must always be, elastic. Unfortunately, the elasticity that permits improvement is equally receptive to deterioration. The Constitution makes a clear distinction between the prerogative of the State and the prerogative of Society. But it also provides procedure whereby the former can be enlarged at the expense of the latter, both by open and by insidious means. In this Republic it is more difficult than in most other countries for the State to discipline and regiment Society. But one need only survey the record to realize that here, as elsewhere, the development of the State has been that of constant aggrandizement. Necessarily, that aggrandizement has been at the expense of the two other components in political life—at the expense of Society and of the individuals who create Society because it is their nature so to do. Of course, this does not mean that the State has made no contribution to social and individual welfare.

It should be noted here that in recent years there has been concerted effort to establish what at first glance seems to be a fourth component in political life—that of official international organization. But this development, of both the League of Nations and the United Nations, has so far been one of intergovernmental cooperation. There is no right of citizenship in the United Nations,

⁹ June 21, 1788, when the ninth state (New Hampshire) gave the ratification necessary to make the Constitution effective, under the wording of Article VII.

and a national of one of its Member-States is not for that reason entitled even to cross the frontier of any other Member-State. Like its ill-fated predecessor, the United Nations does not replace the State as a political entity and does not set up a new political entity effectively depriving the State of sovereignty. Indeed, five Powers were given the right of absolute veto, precisely to prevent that development.

There was nothing accidental in the aggressive use of this veto by Soviet Russia. This Union of Soviet Socialist "Republics" does far more than the allegedly United Nations to curtail the independence of its constituent political units, and of adjacent countries within the Russian sphere of influence. And from 1945 on, the endeavor of Communist organization to break down the system of Nation-States made the U. S. S. R. a factor of transcendent political significance. To the extent that Communist organization bears directly on the individual, instead of affecting him only through the medium of his national government, the "Comintern" can properly be called a wholly new component of political life. That claim could never be made for an essentially intergovernmental organization, like the United Nations.

Whether or not Communism would triumph over Statism, in the traditional nationalistic form of the latter, had become the outstanding political question even before the close of World War II. Communism, as an antinational political party, was able, as a result of that war, to penetrate and undermine the national organization of many States to an extent which was literally "subversive." But before considering the clash between the Nation-State and the Communist International, it is necessary to give thought to the antecedent struggle between the State and Society.

The ascendancy of the Nation-State and the breakdown of Society present a pronounced coincidence. This is not fortuitous. There has been direct and causal connection between the increasing exaltation of the State and the increasing demoralization of Society. It is necessary to understand how the State has everywhere weakened Society, and how that process has in turn weakened the State, before one can intelligently consider the magnitude of the

struggle between the American Republic and its Russian antagonist.

VI

It is not surprising that the State, by some writers, is still regarded as nothing more than a particular form of Society. In origin it was exactly that. Oppenheimer even asserts: "The concept of Society, as a contrast to the concept of the State, first appears in Locke," whose philosophical influence was partly due to his skill in political diagnosis.¹⁰

Nobody has ever been able to isolate and identify with any precision the beginnings of the State. All we know for certain is that early in the line of human evolution people began to associate for purposes that today we would call political, rather than social or biological. At some prehistoric moment the dwellers in some cave united, not to hunt animals nor to safeguard their young, but to launch an attack against the denizens of another, more desirable, location. The hairy inmates of the preferable fastness undoubtedly co-operated in resistance. Here were two rudimentary States in conflict, without names, without flags, without anything that we would today call government—nevertheless offering the prototype of all the glorious wars that fill the pages of conventional history.

But, in these uncivilized and therefore relatively harmless scuffles, primitive Society and the primitive State are all mixed up. It might be said that, at this embryonic stage, sex has not been determined. The function of Society and the function of the State is indistinguishable. "Its rudimentary forms are not so much germs from which the mature State evolves as conglomerates from which it slowly frees itself. . . . It is not surprising, therefore, that contemporary enquiries into the origin of the State bear the aspect of an uncertain and inconclusive quest."¹¹

As an institution, Professor Hocking further concludes, "the State certainly did not arise in a contract," though he recognizes

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, Preface.

¹¹ William Ernest Hocking, *Man and the State*, p. 142n. and ff.

that the American Republic is exceptional in this respect. The State, he reasons, "can only arise as Man, looking forward, begins with conscious awareness to build for futurity not his tombs alone but his communal life also." Thus, the State "begins together with the historical sense." This thought of a prominent American philosopher is clearly derived from Hegel, as was that of Spengler when he wrote: "State is history regarded as at the halt; history the State regarded as on the move."

The theory becomes less metaphysical, and therefore more convincing to the unphilosophic mind, if we reduce it to particulars. At some unascertainable period the individual presumably began to reflect on what would happen, after his death, to the group with which he was associated. We may reasonably conclude that this thought was early prominent in the minds of those who in some way had acquired positions of leadership, and with that eminence the sense of responsibility that leadership tends to foster. Evidently this dawning individual awareness of a group future must have followed some definition of the group as such—in other words, Society does antedate the State. We may guess that it was the corpse of a mate that first aroused in the mind of primitive man the fearsome thought of what would happen to the helpless offspring if the survivor also were slain by a saber-toothed tiger or falling rock.

It is important to realize that this particular form of anxiety about the future was neither narrowly selfish nor superstitious. It was, on the contrary, social and mundane. Accepting his own physical extinction as an eventual certainty, Man sought some procedure whereby after his death his accomplished work could still contribute to the welfare of his group. Here was the first problem in statecraft, and its solution involved creation of the State. Moreover, the gregarious instinct that underlies Society led naturally to the formation of the State.

Because of its voluntary nature, Society is fluid. And because of its fluidity, Society could not create the desired element of permanence. The head of a primitive group, whether patriarch or matriarch, whether warrior or magician, could do something to provide shelter, weapons, bodily covering, and even fuel and food

that would be available after the individual leader's death.¹² But a nomadic organization of hunters, fishermen or even predatory herdsmen did not have the continuity necessary for significant accumulation. Like the neighborhood "gang" of modern boyhood, the primitive group was always subject to the disintegrating processes clearly characteristic of voluntary organizations, wherever or whenever found. The condition of freedom was present, but not that sense of responsibility for the future that is a concomitant of liberty. It was not until men ceased to be wholly nomadic, and began to settle down as cultivators, that the means of introducing permanence into social organization became available.

The most intractable enemy of Man is man himself. The seed of the modern State can be detected in the groupings of primitive man for offense or defense against his fellows. The seed could flower only for a season, however, prior to the agricultural stage of social development. Husbandry provided the condition of continuity that gives the State, as offspring, characteristics that Society, as parent, does not possess. And with the rise of the State, as a permanent institution, the arts of peace and those of war alike begin that tremendous development traced by recorded history. "The roots of modern civilization are planted deeply in the highly elaborate life of those nations which rose into power over six thousand years ago, in the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean, and the adjacent regions on the east of it."¹³

VII

So the State, as a human institution, has a definite and rational objective: to offset mortality by means of an agency that can be expected to go on functioning without reference to the individual

¹² Because irrelevant to present consideration, we intentionally evade argument as to the location of directive power in primitive Society. For a scholarly and searching review of the whole subject, the reader is referred to Bertrand de Jouvenel's *Du Pouvoir*, an important study of the evolution and growth of political power. Sir James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* remains fundamental.

¹³ James Henry Breasted, *History of Egypt*, p. 3. See also, Oppenheimer, *op. cit.*, Ch. II.

life span. This objective was always distinct from the will to personal aggrandizement, for at least a part of the underlying purpose was to make available to survivors those fruits of labor that men cannot take with them when they leave this world. But there were implications to this creation of the State that, as we look backward, are horrifying.

To achieve the objective of permanence it was essential, in the first place, to endow the State with a collective power far beyond that which any individual, or any ephemeral social group, could hope to exercise. As Dr. Breasted says, civilization took root as the first States of which we have definite knowledge "rose into power." But evils, as well as blessings heretofore unknown to Man, also rooted as this concentration of power took place. It is suggestive that the long history of political thought is more concerned with the restraint, than with the exercise, of power entrusted to the State.

The State, in origin, was a projection of power in the field of time. Because time and space are related, the time-projection involved a projection of power in the field of space.¹⁴ Since such spatial projections were certain to intersect, on this small planet, it was foreordained that the State system would be a war system, and that the more highly developed this system, the greater the probability of friction between its units. The fact that the State system is a war system in turn made it certain that each developing State would do everything possible constantly to enlarge its power "in self-defense." As the human source of this power was the individual, State aggrandizement necessarily pointed toward human enslavement. As Man enslaved the power of the beast, so the State proceeded to enslave the power of Man. But some beasts cannot be enslaved, and neither can some men.

Aside from its tendency to monopolize power, and its tendency to wage war with other States, the nature of the State harbors a third inherent danger to the happiness, and even the existence, of Man. This third danger arises from the bestowal of artificial im-

¹⁴ Political science, with its tendency toward ontological method, has given inadequate consideration to the implications of the Time-Space Continuum. Cf. John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, pp. 482-6.

mortality on a human institution. Because of its permanence the State has gradually established for itself a dubious moral authority. This spurious authority, which will be closely examined in the following chapter, is based on the State's assumption of the divine attribute of immortality. But while Man derives from his Creator a moral sense, the State, which is the creation of Man, has none. Power it has, and force, and techniques to make its commands effective. Through the agency of the State, also, the moral as well as the bestial side of Man can be encouraged. But with morals *as such*, as distinct from the imposed prohibitions of man-made law, the State is not, has never been, and never will be concerned. The State is a physical and not a moral instrument. It is therefore antipodean and always latently hostile to the instrument of human conscience, which is moral and not physical.

It is, of course, true that as an instrument the State may be utilized to forward morality, and to oppose immorality. It is true that administrators with the highest personal ideals may, like Marcus Aurelius, temporarily go far to meet Plato's requirement of a philosopher-king. But since the State has no conscience, and is primarily a continuing mechanism of material power, the human welfare side of State activity should blind no thoughtful person to its underlying menace. And the potential of the State for "The Abolition of Man"—to use the telling phrase employed by C. S. Lewis—is the greater because Man himself has created and directs this juggernaut that rolls over him.

Idolatry is always blind, and never more so than when it seeks to cloak a human creation with mystical significance. It was the tragedy of the German genius to carry worship of the State to the stage where Hegel could reason that: "The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on Earth."¹⁵ If literally interpreted this thought could lead logically to the assertion of Nazi Minister Robert Ley: "Truth is whatever benefits the State; error is whatever does not benefit the State."

The monstrous perversion in this axiom was not due so much to any particular national aberration as to a general tendency to

¹⁵ Introduction to Lectures on *The Philosophy of History*.

exaggerate the potential of the State for good, and to underestimate its capacity for evil. Goethe's countrymen, of all people, should have realized that it is the bargain of Faust to sell one's soul, which is one's self, for an enlargement of temporal power. Even a bargain with Mephistopheles is less surely a losing proposition than one in which the individual surrenders his soul to the State. For Satan has forbidden fruit of his own to distribute, while the State, in the last analysis, has absolutely nothing to offer that it has not already expropriated from its subjects. So, in worship of the State, men sacrifice their souls to a false god that can give them in return only what has already been placed by the worshippers themselves on this sacrilegious altar.

If this indictment seems strong, it is primarily because Americans have so largely ceased to reflect upon the implications of the unconditional surrender of power to political government. We have seen that such surrender is wholly contrary to the principles of the Republic. But even without that patriotic justification there would be good reason for men to rise in opposition to State aggrandizement. It is a case of selling the human birthright for a mess of pottage.

For the instrumentality of the State is only relatively immortal. And there is reason to believe that not only are particular States on the road to dissolution, but also the Nation-State as an institution. The State is afflicted with a disease that can be called hypertrophy of function. And the germ of this disease of overgrowth appears to be inherent in its nature.

VIII

The outstanding characteristic of the State, regardless of its place in time, its location in space, its form of government, is monopolization of physical power. To endure as a political entity the State must be in a position to enforce its laws, however adopted or decreed, on all persons and private organizations resident or operating within its boundaries or, as we say, "under its flag." While retaining social value as a symbol of fidelity and loyalty, the flag has also become increasingly emblematic of national sov-

ereignty—of the State's possession of power and its corporate will to make that power effective.

War, in which the flag is an important emotional asset, is the classic device by which the State most rapidly augments its power. There is an exhilarating gamble in the process, because war is simultaneously a device whereby a State may be utterly destroyed. Through war, again, new States have not infrequently achieved independence, our own being an example. But not every attempt to establish a new State by force of arms has succeeded, as is also illustrated in American history by the failure of the Southern Confederacy. The importance of war in the creation and development of States has been sadly neglected by many who have labored devotedly to secure stabilized peace within the State system. As already suggested, it is doubtful whether that system was ever really compatible with international peace.

We must also realize that the strength gained by a victorious State through war is in large part taken not from the enemy but from its own people. All of the private elements in Society—the family, the church, the press, the school, the corporation, the union, and other co-operatives—are subject to special discipline by the State in wartime. The pressure of this discipline depends on the urgency of the wartime emergency, which the State itself defines. The phrase "total war" accurately expresses the evolution to its logical conclusion of a State-building activity obviously antisocial to the extent that State and Society have opposing interests and objectives. Total war, arriving in our lifetime, is the perfected means for building the totalitarian State. And it is scarcely necessary to emphasize that once an emergency control has been established by the State, all sorts of arguments for making it permanent are forthcoming.

That the State moves consistently to augment its power is indicated not only by the entire course of history, but also in everyday parlance. We speak of "Great Powers" and "Small Powers," using the noun "Power" synonymously with "State," and evaluating the quality of the State by that single material attribute. Regardless of how the State originated, it has evidently developed

into a final repository of power, with the exercise of this overriding power its fundamental and characteristic function. Only that conclusion can explain the pronounced unwillingness of States to yield sovereignty, even when it is of clear social advantage that some aspect of sovereignty, such as preventive measures against epidemics, should be administered by a nonpolitical international body.

Moreover, insistence on national sovereignty grows stronger as the power of the State augments. The strong, not the weak, nations were the ones that insisted on maintaining a governmental veto in the work of the United Nations.

IX

The word "power," however, implies much more than physical supremacy. There is also moral power and intellectual power. Some individuals are also granted a magnetic power of personality that may have moral, intellectual, or physical basis, yet is nevertheless seemingly independent of all these attributes. But every form of human power, however exercised, involves some influence over others, whether that influence is positive or negative, for good or for evil, as defined by the standards of the period.

Intellectual power is obviously a higher form than the merely physical. It had been frequently harnessed to the service of the State long before Machiavelli advised Lorenzo the Magnificent that: "Whoever becomes the ruler of a free city and does not destroy it, can expect to be destroyed by it, for it can always find a motive for rebellion in the name of liberty . . ." ¹⁶

The adjective derived from Machiavelli's name reminds us that the State develops its physical supremacy with utter disregard for morality. A Machiavellian policy is simply one in which intellectual ability is wholly divorced from moral considerations. And there is no doubt that, as the State has gained in power, the inclination to follow the teaching of Machiavelli has increased. "We live today in the shadow of a Florentine, the man who above

¹⁶ *The Prince*, Ch. V.

all others taught the world to think in terms of cold political power.”¹⁷

Quite naturally, the tendency of the State to exploit intelligence for its own uses has given rise to increasing official suspicion of unregimented thinking. Instances of this are seen in the effort to suppress “dangerous thoughts” in prewar Japan, and in the disciplinary action taken in postwar Russia against writers, artists, and composers accused of “poisoning the consciousness of our people with a world outlook that is hostile to Soviet Society.”¹⁸ Incidentally, this accusation identifies Society with State, intimating that in Russia the State has definitely engulfed Society.

It is noteworthy that conscientious objection to State supremacy is still treated somewhat more tolerantly than other forms of hostility. Undoubtedly this is because conscientious objection is negative, and impartial as between rival States, while objection based on material considerations may lead to active support of another government against one’s own, which in war is defined as treason.

In her case study of *The Meaning of Treason*, Rebecca West asserts that: “All men should have a drop or two of treason in their veins, if the nations are not to go soft like so many sleepy pears.” But this defense of the individual against the State clearly bothers Miss West, for she adds immediately: “Yet to be a traitor is to be most miserable.” This generality is absurd, for there is ample evidence to show that neither George Washington nor Robert E. Lee were ever made miserable by their treason, successful in the one case and unsuccessful in the other.

Miss West’s rather muddled argument is nevertheless significant, because of the illuminating overtones in the conclusions to which she is driven. The summation of this English writer is that the unsavory traitors whom she analyzes deserved a certain sympathy because they “needed a nation which was also a hearth.” In other words, their treason was excusable to the extent that they had not been comforted and consoled by a welfare State of their

¹⁷ Max Lerner, Introduction to *The Prince and The Discourses*; Modern Library Edition.

¹⁸ Quoted by Brooks Atkinson, *New York Times*, October 6, 1946.

own. The suggestion is that the more maturely reasoned and self-sacrificial an act of treason, the less pardonable it becomes. We are not concerned with debating this belief pro or con, but merely with pointing out that it reflects the general European assumption that the higher the intelligence, the more imperative is its subordination to the service of a particular State.¹⁹

X

We owe some further consideration to the element of moral power, meaning the force that impels the individual to observe certain idealistic standards of conduct regardless of their conflict with his physical or intellectual desires. Like intellectual power, that of morality has been increasingly pre-empted by the State for political purposes. Thus we have reached the stage where an ill-assorted group of victorious governments can assert a moral basis for the indictment, trial, and execution of the leaders of a defeated nation who were responsible for "crimes against humanity." But the same governments placidly ignore the presumably equally criminal character of comparable actions by their own States against other human beings, or even reward such actions with decorations, when carried out under the direction of their own leadership.

In the Christian religion, as contrasted with the political life of nominally Christian countries, morality is regarded as an even-handed force of universal applicability; one which cannot properly be nationalized or made subservient to either physical or intellectual power. Indeed the social contribution of Christ may be summed up by saying that in the hierarchy of values he places Love first, denying merit to all forms of power centering on that hatred of other peoples which governments so often seek to stimulate.

In this Christian doctrine, of course, are found both the origin and the justification—perhaps the only valid justification—of democratic theory, dismissed by many philosophers, ancient and

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, *passim*, especially pp. 306-7.

modern, as politically impractical. The logic of Christianity has never attempted to deny that men are unequal in their physical and mental endowments. It has emphasized that such differences do not prevent them from associating in full comradeship in many social undertakings where the solidarity of the human species is more important than its differentiations. "The Idea of a Christian Society," in the words of a great poet who has thought deeply on the subject, "is one which we can accept or reject; but if we are to accept it, we must treat Christianity with a great deal more *intellectual* respect than is our wont; we must treat it as being for the individual a matter primarily of thought and not of feeling."²⁰

We have had occasion to note the profound, though declining, influence of Christianity on American political thought. Yet even in the various activities of private Society the exercise of ruthless power has been none too successfully restrained by the moral suasion of Christianity. This inclines one to reflect on the use that would be made of the almost unbelievable physical power of the United States, if its control were concentrated without restriction in a strongly centralized government. Power in the hands of the State is less inhibited morally and more destructive physically than in Society. The State, not Society, is responsible for the design, development, and utilization of the atomic bomb.

State power, no matter how well disguised by seductive words, is in the last analysis always coercive physical power. And since the Industrial Revolution this form of power, unlike that of mind or morals, has grown with increased physical wealth. The greater the material resources over which it can exercise absolute control, the greater the potential power of the State. From this arises the tendency to develop and pyramid governmental controls in order to augment power. As we come to recognize that the State is the repository of coercive power, and by its nature works ceaselessly to enlarge that power, much that seems shameful and senseless in the world today becomes intelligible, though not for that reason cheerful.

²⁰ T. S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*, pp. 4-5.

XI

Let us now briefly consider World War II as a strictly political phenomenon, isolated from its heavily encrusted emotional overtones. The hostilities were launched in the historically familiar pattern of a struggle for national power among contending States. But the duration, intensity, and bitterness of the war completed that disintegration of European Society which the war of 1914-18 previously had done much to advance. With this social collapse the entire State system of Europe was undermined. Unfortunately, American political thinking was slow to adjust itself to the fact, and still slower to realize the implications, of this unprecedented situation.

Sociologically, the essential difference between World War I and World War II was that the latter far more extensively drained the reservoirs on which the State depends both for its strength and sustenance. This drainage was only in part due to physical destruction on the "home front," a phrase itself tellingly descriptive of the modern State's wartime impingement on social institutions. Society everywhere was also weakened by National Socialist controls, which were applied universally, though not always upheld as shockingly as in the country that first made State Socialism a religion. Nevertheless, in every belligerent nation, and necessarily also among those preserving an uneasy neutrality, social welfare and governmental policy were arbitrarily assumed to be identical. Bureaucratic thinking everywhere paid the Nazis the flattery of imitation, in spite of the more guarded phraseology used by the officials of countries with a more virile heritage of individualism.

Responsibility for making the drainage of European social strength complete, however, must be said to rest on those who enunciated and enforced the doctrine of unconditional surrender, never before applied in modern warfare between sovereign States. This doctrine said, in effect, that the German people would not be allowed to admit military defeat until their government had been utterly destroyed. In practice, this meant the destruction of the society over which the enemy government had secured totali-

tarian control. Had there been any Anglo-American plan for reconstituting the social institutions of the German people, or if they had been allowed to do this for themselves, a moderate degree of European recovery could have been achieved fairly soon. As shown by the event, there was no such plan, though fortunately for ourselves the policy of social pulverization was not carried to the same extreme in the case of the other major enemies—Italy and Japan.²¹

The tragic significance of this coercive dissipation of social strength lies in the fact that Society, in all of its activities except State building, is naturally international or, to be strictly accurate, supranational. To see American and Japanese babies playing together, or French and German mathematicians discussing their professional problems, is to realize that their common social interests do not naturally divide along national lines except to the extent that the easily surmountable barrier of language may prove an obstacle. It follows that the destruction of a toy factory or a scientific library, whether located in France, Germany, or Tasmania, is in the last analysis a deprivation for children or for mathematicians as such, even though State-controlled "Ministries of Enlightenment" may insist that the loss to one "enemy national" is somehow a gain to his opposite number across a frontier. Undoubtedly this fiction can be impressed on gullible human beings, but no individual, and no society, is the healthier for being deceived as to the nature of the disease that is draining strength away.

The drainage of social strength in the course of World War II resulted, throughout nearly all of Europe, in an unprecedented national disintegration. Its effects were almost as pronounced in the victorious as in the vanquished countries. Nor was the stark and elemental picture of social degeneracy long concealed by the frantic efforts of bankrupt governments to re-establish some orderly basis for the lives of their demoralized peoples. Additional governmental controls merely added further handicaps to an economic recovery that would have been difficult at best. Along

²¹ The farrago of unworkable penalties set down by Mr. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., in *Germany Is Our Problem*, cannot be dignified as a plan.

with the structure of European Society, its State system had been so weakened that reconstitution, in anything like the nineteenth century form, was never to be expected. And restoration of this decadent system was always the less probable because of the abundant evidence that Soviet Russia did not intend to permit recovery in the old, outworn pattern.

In 1939, as in 1914, Western Europe was the seat of four "Great Powers"—Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy. In spite of the changes brought by World War I the decisions of each of these four governments continued to count, in the conduct of international relations, on the same plane as the decisions of Japan, Russia, or the United States.

Of these seven erstwhile "Great Powers" three—Germany, Italy, and Japan—have been reduced to negligible status from the viewpoint of that material strength which is the essence of statehood. The position of France is not very much better and the preposterous effort to cast China in a Great Power role could never be taken seriously. Great Britain retains the shell of its former physical vitality but actually, and even more relatively, has sunk in the scale by comparison with either Russia or the United States. These last two nations alone possessed the resources to survive the wastage of two World Wars as wholly independent sovereignties. All the remaining States have emerged as what in the last analysis must be called the willing or unwilling satellites of one or the other of the two political constellations that dominate the postwar darkness.

The wheel comes full cycle. Like Frankenstein's monster, the hydra-headed Nation-State has brought a dreadful retribution on the European Society that created it.