Foundations of Humanism

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PREFACE

This book is meant for all those who wish to know more about the life stance and range of ideas of modern humanism, whether because of their general interest or because of their professional involvement, e.g., counselors, educators, students of human sciences, philosophers, and theologians. As an introduction to humanism it does not claim to propose philosophical or scientific innovations, though humanism is dealt with in a rather unusual manner. One could fill libraries with the books that have been written about humanism, the great majority discussing it as a historical phenomenon, though meaningful for both the present and the future. There are also a number of works that develop their presentations of humanism from scientific starting points. And finally there are the writings that highlight political, social, and cultural problems from a humanist point of view. This introduction to humanism, however, intends to deal with the humanist conviction in its essence and as a coherent entity, and to do this all these approaches must be taken into account. This implies a pursuit of objectivity, though one should not expect miracles in this respect, because when selecting what is considered characteristic and then interpreting it, it is unavoidable that one's own insights play a certain role. A description always means an expression of one's personal expectations as well.

The approach intended here leads almost by itself to the arrangement of the book. Following the introduction is a chapter on the growth of the humanist range of ideas over the ages, with a review of its organizational structure in the past century. This is the historic chapter. The second chapter is slightly philosophical. Its purpose is to sketch the essential starting points of the humanist life stance and range of thought. The third chapter deals with the starting points of a humanist life in practice: basic stances with regard to politics and society, smaller groupings, and the individual. The fourth chapter deals with humanist counseling in education and personal life. The work is rounded off by a conclusion. This book therefore presents a number of characteristic facets of humanist reflection that may be expected to provide an insight into humanist concern as a whole.

Readers with different spheres of interest will presumably appreciate

particular chapters. Though the book is designed as an entity, a reader with practical interests might prefer starting with Chapter 3; those with a philosophical bias will be curious to know the content of Chapter 2, which is the most difficult to read; Chapter 4 should appeal mainly to counselors and is easier reading. Chapter 1 outlines the history of humanism for those who are historically minded.

With regard to the Bibliography, almost every paragraph might require further documentation; but the resulting amount of footnotes might easily have made the text unreadable. Therefore, the system selected consists of a concise bibliography for each section, enabling the reader, should he wish to do so, to go further into the matters dealt with. After all, little can be proved about the subject matter of this book, least of all by means of bibliographical notes. It is the reader who must make his own decisions after thorough consideration and critical reflection. The very purpose of this book is to stimulate him to do so. There is no other way of becoming aware of matters concerning life and the world.

I would like to express my gratitude to my wife for her continuous support and assistance, also to the friends who critically read some of the chapters, and last but not least to Judy Herget, whose skill and conscientiousness have made this translation possible.

J. P. VAN PRAAG

Introduction

ALIENATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

A world of electronics, automation, and organization provides unprecedented potential, yet at the same time is threatened by overpopulation, exhaustion of natural resources, and environmental pollution. The pattern of life is increasingly controlled by these problems as well as by a process of fundamental democratization. The latter means that an increasing number of people feel involved in an ever larger area of human concern. This in turn results in a growing and often overwhelming responsibility that can easily lead to impatience and, quite often, to discouragement. Therefore it is not surprising that this development puts the people of today in an alienated world. They have lost the certainties they found familiar in their relationships with their own environment and society and are searching in vain for an identity of their own. This insecurity is further strengthened by the possibilities of purposeful intervention as a result of the revolutionary growth in science and control techniques. However, the knowledge required to do this is often, and in an increasing measure, a matter for specialists, which throws obstacles in the way of the individual who is justified in wanting a say in the matter. This creates a peculiar contradiction between the increased feeling of responsibility and the widely felt sense of impotence that arises from this very sense of responsibility.

A basic problem in the present situation is that the technological revolution requires a more comprehensive organizational framework than ever before and at the same time an excessive specialization that hides the mechanism of society from our field of vision. The interdependence of technology and organization in the present phase is a basic datum that very often remains unnoticed. Young people in particular feel suffocated by an organization that keeps them from using the very freedom made available by this technology. The paradox is that it is the technology that provides us

with unprecedented possibilities which at the same time imposes a comprehensive organization that hampers the free use of it. Thus people's desire for participation is curtailed, though they are sufficiently trained and mature enough to make full use of it. This makes them suspicious, aggressive, and rebellious. It is not only the establishment outlook or the bureaucracy that creates typical short circuits in modern society, though as a matter of fact this can in many cases be a delaying factor, but the main causes of certain characteristic contradictions in the present situation are the mechanisms of an overorganized technocracy.

Yet this is not a sufficient reason for rejecting science and technology together with the organization that must accompany them. As the population of the world is now counted in billions, we could not go back even if we wanted to. But there are good reasons for taking a critical look at the environmental and organizational aspects of the type of technology we use. Some kind of technology must be the basis of prosperity. Though prosperity does not have to retain its character of overabundance and waste to which we have become accustomed in the West—although not in all strata of the population—it would be hypocritical to despise prosperity, even if its distribution is often unsatisfactory and the use made of it does not always make sense. Prosperity is also a condition for well-being, which means health and social security, for mobility and freedom of choice, for recreation and culture—in brief for real human development. And yet it is science, technology, and prosperity in their present form that take people out of a direct relationship with society, other people, and themselves. This is one of the reasons for the dissatisfaction of many young people and for the insecurity of many adults. There is hardly any room for playfulness, spontaneity, fellowship, or creativity.

Marxists will say that this is the very alienation mentioned by Marx. But one might have some reservations with regard to this point of view. According to Marx, the cause of alienation was the private ownership of the means of production. This had to be abolished by the socialization of the means of production. But, though a more socialized society might be able to create better conditions for abolishing alienation, it is not quite clear how the individual would get rid of a sense of alienation just because of the fact of socialization. Mass production, though with slightly modified targets, would continue; the division of labor, or rather rationalization and automation, although perhaps alleviated, could not be dispensed with, and a socialized industrial life would still remain very distant from the individual. This is rather clearly illustrated in the development of many socialist countries. Present-day production is as much controlled by technical and organizational circumstances as by the ownership of the means of production. The mechanisms that prevent people from relating to the world and themselves are social.

This feeling plays a considerable role in the intensity of the rebellion of

peoples, races, the young, intellectuals, and artists that occurs everywhere. The rebellion itself is obviously provoked by unjust social relationships and oppression, whether violent or not, but it has a close relationship with the contradiction between a sense of responsibility and a feeling of impotence. This challenge cannot be answered by political and social changes alone. There is also a cultural revolution at work and the cultural challenge demands an answer, as do the contradictions in society. People of today, who receive more and more education and information, increasingly detach themselves from conventional and absolutist thought and behavior. But that does not mean that they are now capable of giving a new sense to their life or that they succeed in giving substance to new social structures. Therefore, the question is: What can be done to enable people to realize their creativity in both their work and their leisure and to cooperate democratically with others in smaller groupings and in society? This requires not only consultation, participation, and self-government, but also a willingness to use these well. To do this, one needs a philosophy of life that offers perspectives of personal fulfillment and inspiration for social creativity.

Such a philosophy should not provide recipes or techniques, but should indicate a general direction by means of concrete ways of living and thinking. After all, it is not difficult to indicate lofty purposes. The problem is to indicate humane means. This requires not only emancipation, but also maturity, and maturity presupposes an understanding of the meaning of decisions. Only then will it be possible for the unavoidable changes in personal and social activities to open up a satisfactory perspective on life. Nowadays problem-solving methods are often discussed in the educational process, more particularly during professional training courses, because in a rapidly changing world it is not possible to transmit knowledge that will still be applicable in ten or twenty years, when the trainee will need it. The thing an individual has to learn is how to obtain the knowledge, skill, and team spirit that he will require to solve his problems. After basic training, problem-solving techniques must be acquired. This also applies to one's view of life. It is impossible to provide a recipe that can be used in all situations in an ever changing world. But it is possible to indicate methods or attitudes suitable for the solution of problems. Everyone looks for these, and the answers trotted out are very often presented under the colors of humanism.

Though organized humanism consists only of small groups of people, the term *humanism* is increasingly used: political, social, psychological, and medical ideas are announced as "humanistic" to indicate that they are based on the concept of the potential of people to realize their full humanity. The humanist method consists of being open to all available knowledge of man and the world and is geared to the use of this knowledge in order to live together as mature people and thus make life worthwhile. As opposed

to the traditional forms of the major religions, humanism does not provide definite answers to fundamental questions. So what can it offer in the field of purposeful life and action? First of all, it must be clear that humanism does not intend to give answers to the questions that are asked by traditional religions, because it asks different questions. It is man who shapes the world in which he lives, using his expectations and ideas and by means of the manner in which he interprets and handles his experience. A humanist is not a Christian devoid of his Christian expectations and attitudes; he simply thinks in terms other than those of sin and redemption, suffering and salvation. Obviously humanists cannot deny the existence of evil, suffering, and death, but they perceive them as the natural reverse of existence.

In the same manner in which a painting—according to H. J. Blackham—is unthinkable without the background on which it is painted, our entire experience is not simply interwoven with the threads of human existence, it is actually produced by them. It is what it is because of its precarious character. Therefore humanism does not offer another certainty instead of the certainty of the Scriptures, nor another refuge instead of the refuge of God, nor another ultimate aim instead of eternal salvation. It assumes that it is possible to lead a purposeful life by trial and error, without any other guarantee than the unquenchable aspirations of people and without any supernatural purpose. According to humanist opinion the purpose of life lies in life itself. In the humanist approach to reality, all types of humanism are based on natural and social data, without starting from any cosmic spirit or purpose. Humanists consider human values as final. Furthermore, modern humanists strive not only to interpret man and the world in a human manner, but also to provide a base for human action that fully meets human needs in daily life. In order to lead a satisfactory life and to create the social conditions for it himself, man must be able to discover a sense to life. But where can he possibly find such a sense if he is thrown back on himself?

Only now we start to understand the meaning of Nietzsche's words: "God is dead, and we have killed him" (by our secular culture). That was not a cry of triumph as has occasionally been assumed, but a cry of despair. "Do we still know what's up or down?" he added, meaning, Does life still make sense if God was not only the creator of heaven and earth but also the guarantor of life's making sense, both on earth and in the hereafter? But secular man must give his own sense to his life, and this constitutes the challenge to humanism: answering the demand for a sense to life in the present situation. Humanists have no magic spells to offer. They insist that everyone has to solve his own problems and that that really is the only possibility, because it is not a matter of words but a matter of personal experience. Yet humanists can tell where and in what manner they think they will find the sense to their life. There are experiences in life that are meaningful without any extraneous purpose. They do not serve any ulterior

purpose but carry their own value, and in that same manner we could look for a way of life that as a coherent entity also has a meaning in itself.

For this it is necessary to reinforce our self-confidence, because self-confidence is a necessary condition for self-determination, which gives meaning to life. Erich Fromm was quite right when he said that an egotist does not like himself too much but too little. He neglects his own real value and tries to cover this up by false values. There is, however, still another essential point of view of human existence. The relationship between one's self-determination and the self-determination of others. Human life means living in a community; human activities take place in a social culture. Conversely, society is held to create conditions for the well-being of its members. Progress of society is progress in freedom of choice, which means that there are more things that more people can do or not do. And this liberty is naturally closely connected to justice: equal right to the potential choices. This applies even at the global level, because humanity is not the sum total of individuals, peoples, and races, but an entity consisting of human beings, which implies that there is a common responsibility of all people for all people. Self-determination and this common bond are guidelines that enable people to face the incertitudes of existence and to escape suicide.

In a world controlled by individualism and alienation it is necessary to point the direction in which the search for meaning must go. Alienation demands self-determination, and isolation requires a bond. True self-realization requires the other as alter ego. In that sense self-determination and relatedness are inextricably linked. This view of human life presupposes a general view of human nature. It is obvious that human behavior depends on cultural patterns and social relationships. Human values change with time and place. But it is impossible to develop a guideline for men and society without starting from a basic pattern of humanity, though this does not necessarily have to be what is called the cultural pattern of our times. This view does not imply that there are eternal values, but indicates durable trends from which guidelines can be derived.

Values come from people. In any cultural or social situation they are an expression of human nature. They are expressed in human needs. Therefore, there is a subtle connection between a descriptive and a normative image of man. Each opinion on aggression, repression, liberty, or cooperation is based on a normative perception and a descriptive analysis. Otherwise it would be nothing but the expression of a personal (or group) preference representing no more than a pretext for taking justice into one's own hands. But real judgments presuppose a basis for an exchange of ideas and a confrontation. All other things being equal, purposes like self-determination and relatedness are preferable, and this is already a value judgment. The efforts of people are justified by these values and at the same time their realization is the test of the assumptions on which they are based.

It is not at all academic or utopian to underline the human values that supply the only justified starting point for structuring the existence of the individual and for reforming society—not so much as distant aims, but rather as indispensable means, because ideas are not viable if at least part of them are not brought into practice today. The nature of real "praxis" is that it unites the means with the aims.

But if humanism is over and over proposed as a symbol of inspired humanity, it must be worthwhile to consider its real content. The use of the word is sufficiently vague to wonder what it might possibly mean. On the other hand, too many "isms" have deteriorated into rigid and intolerant dogmatisms for another doctrinal definition not to be suspect. The very purpose of this book is to clarify humanism without solidifying it into an unapproachable doctrine. For this purpose we shall inquire into its origins and shades, its presuppositions, its image of man and the world, its personal and social consequences, and its function in relationships between man and man. While doing this I shall attempt to do justice as far as at all possible to the many forms of humanism, though from a personal point of view. The starting point is, then, nonreligious humanism in the form in which it has mainly developed since the eighteenth century. It will not be denied that there is also a humanist Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, and Mohammedanism, which have their own meaning and value. But clarity requires restriction to secular humanism, which has gradually presented itself as as independent philosophy of life and must as such be taken seriously. That is what the following chapters will deal with.

I

THE ORIGINS OF HUMANISM

1. THE RENAISSANCE

If one wants to take account of the historical manifestations of humanism it will be necessary to determine first what phenomena should be considered in such an investigation. From the point of view of method, the purest manner is no doubt to restrict oneself to those phenomena that in their own time were announced as humanism: statements of people calling themselves humanists or who were considered humanists by their contemporaries and of those who were, or still are, quoted as key witnesses by humanists. Only in this manner can the temptation be avoided to call everything that seems attractive in history "humanism" and to exclude anything that is less attractive. If only to adhere to this method, the investigation will have to be restricted to Western humanism. In itself there might be arguments for including certain forms of Chinese wisdom, such as the tradition of the thoughts of Lao-tse, or the philosophy of life of Buddha from Indian culture, in the scope of this investigation. In modern times these have exerted a certain influence even on Western humanist thinkers. However, this would require a separate specialization, and historically this influence has not been of a decisive importance in shaping humanism. Therefore we limit ourselves to humanism as it has appeared and developed in the Western tradition.

As a matter of fact, the word *humanism* is quite new. It was coined in 1808 by the Bavarian pedagogue F. J. Niethammer, a friend of Schiller's, in his book *Der Streit des Philanthropismus und des Humanismus in der Theorie des Erziehungsunterrichts unserer Zeit.* The adjective *humanist* was at that time already in use (since 1784); initially it was used to indicate an educational system that considered the study of classical languages and

culture to be the best education toward full humanity. Even now, particularly in Germany and France, the word is often still used in this way. It also has this meaning in George Voigt's *Die Wiederbelebung des klassischen Altertums oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus,* published in 1859. However, parallel to this, humanism obtained the meaning of a certain attitude of mind in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. When in 1860 Jacob Burckhardt published his *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien,* it seems that this meaning had already become current in scientific usage. Since then the term *humanism* has been increasingly used to indicate a vision of life in which man stands in the center. However, the concept expressed by this term is much older and the noun *humanist—umanista*—was already in use during the Renaissance.

The remarkable thing about humanism as a historical trend is that it always comes to the fore at the turn of the tide. In history one sees over and over again periods in which, because of rapid social and cultural development, traditional patterns of life are destroyed. Under the influence of fundamental sociocultural changes, conventional patterns of existence are pushed into a corner; they simply do not seem to fit the new times anymore. While conservative trends try desperately to hold on to opinions that cannot be defended anymore, modernistic movements totally demolish the old truths. It is in these circumstances that a form of humanism arises, neither to maintain old values at any price nor to destroy tradition as such. This has led to humanists being suspected of being half-hearted, where in reality its adherents had to have the courage to fight against both sides. Humanism is best understood if one recognizes this typical intermediate position. It is an inherent part of the sphere of innovation but at the same time fully appreciates the values of tradition. It opposes both conservatism and the demolition of the old to give form to the new. Its position is in between conventionalism and destruction. This can clearly be seen if one considers the humanism of the Renaissance.

This humanism began in the period of transition from the feudal to the early civic society. In medieval society want had gradually, but only slightly, diminished, partly because of some division of labor on the farms of the feudal squires. Some serfs on these feudal estates were able to specialize in various crafts and became craftsmen, for instance, carpenters or blacksmiths, and on these self-sufficient farms it became feasible to carry out some barter, though obviously only for the squire. Commercial relations began between Western Europe and the Near East. Precious articles like damask, muslin, precious stones, and metals were greatly coveted in Europe. It is known that the Crusades, some of which deteriorated into commercial wars, played a dubious role in this respect. Thus money assumed a much greater importance, and this resulted in the squires' being more prepared to permit some praedial craftsmen to buy their freedom. Those who participated in the Crusades were also freed. In this manner a class of

free citizens and craftsmen—and, later, traders—was created that settled in independent communities and tried to escape the legal power of the feudal lords. This often found favor with the ruler, the count or duke, who was not too keen on excessive power for his vassals. If on top of that the commoners could provide the ruler with money whenever he needed it, the road was clear for an exemption from the legal power of the feudal lords; and the burgher communities came directly under the emperor, who was far enough away for them not to need to fear him too much. These free communities of burghers were autonomous, which means that they laid down their own laws and administered their own justice. They were allowed to build walls to protect themselves against attack, and in this way the first modern towns were formed—towns that were created not as a center of administration around a secular or church court but as economic units of free burghers, craftsmen, and traders. These were the places where the medieval structure and relationships were eventually broken down, economic life assumed new shapes, and the rudiment of an industrial proletariat was formed. Here, too, a new perception of life occurred: for the first time one heard claims like "equality before the law" and "abolition of privilege." Though "every day great hunger and suffering was experienced by the miserable persons," this was also the first time that anyone thought of the authorities taking care of the poor. A new kind of art flourished, aiming at an understanding of nature and man in their peculiarity. A new kind of science was created that looked for new certainties; one saw the first signs of new forms of teaching and education. That was the Renaissance. It was indissolubly connected with the vitality of the modern town. Modern towns occurred first in Italy in the fourteenth century, and that was where one first found the culture of the Renaissance. Where these towns appeared last, in the sixteenth century in the northern Netherlands, the Renaissance culture flourished last too. Where no modern towns developed at all, the Renaissance perception of life was not expressed. The Renaissance was the culture of the modern town.

What was the place of humanists in this culture? Medieval thought, which fitted within a concept of life that was mainly directed toward the hereafter, had in general shown a tendency toward despising nature. Yet there were groups that were receptive to the Aristotelian perception of reality. Because of their profession, these consisted very often of medical men. Therefore we see in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that in these very circles a sense of sober natural science gained ground, obviously according to the lights of those times, which prepared the ground for totally different opinions with regard to men. Partly under the influence of Arab thinkers, of whom Averroës was one of the most important, it was thought that man was totally subject to the forces of nature. He was a kind of animal trapped in a continuous repetitive process of birth, life, and death. When dissecting the body, clandestinely, one does not find any symptom of an immortal soul, and the continuous repetition removes any sense from life, while the lack of

a soul removes the foundation from any concept of morality. In those times, however, it was unthinkable that one could openly opt out of the current Catholic opinions about man. The church had powers at its disposal to prevent this, but for most people in this authoritarian culture, which is inconceivable to us, it must also have been mentally impossible to withdraw from the authority that had its roots in this culture and covered all life and thought. This is how the doctrine of parallel truths originated, on the one hand acknowledging the truth of Averroism and, on the other, the inviolable truth of the Catholic faith.

It is not surprising that this doctrine too was regarded as a heresy by the Catholic church. The official theology—scholasticism—mobilized its troops against it but did not succeed in gaining a decisive victory, even after obtaining the assistance of Thomas Aquinas, which initially was not very much appreciated. The strength of Thomas's position as opposed to the Averroists was that he gave natural reason its due. According to him reason too was God-given and when properly used it could therefore lead to the truth of revelation. He designed a system of reasoning that could be used for this purpose. In this way he made philosophy into what has often been called the hand-maiden of theology. In this situation a third school entered the fray. The *studia scholastica* (scholastic studies) was replaced by the *studia humaniora* (the more human studies) and its members were called humanists. They wanted natural experience to be taken into full account and for this reason stressed the inherent nature of man. This was possible, because once again the fertilizing influence of classical culture revealed itself in this trend, which represented a rebirth of the classical *humanitas.* For the humanists the classical authors represented an authority that they accepted by choice, thereby initially satisfying the need to protect themselves against the prevailing authority with a new authority based on free choice.

The rediscovery of Cicero in the fourteenth century—for Petrarch, above all an aesthetic experience—became a turning point in Western cultural history. The classical authors were not unknown in the Middle Ages, albeit mostly at second hand, but now they were seen in a new light, and gradually critical studies of the texts began. Platonic thought, and Greek thought in general, were introduced through Cicero, though it would take until 1423 before even Plato could be read in Greek. The possibility of considering man's own nature, as apart from Christianity, came to be realized, though it certainly did not yet mean that in so doing Christianity itself would be abandoned. The principle that man himself can also produce values and wisdom that characterize his humanity was what distinguished this humanism from Averroism. It did not deny man's link with nature, but added the idea that there is something that manifests itself in him that can be found nowhere else in nature, namely, a desire for reflection and the recognition of values. It emphasized the divine nature of man. This had

obviously always been an element of Christian thought, but throughout the Middle Ages the notion of the sinfulness and depravity of the world prevailed. Now man was seen as an image of God with an inherent value that he can and must develop.

One of the pioneers among the humanist thinkers of that period was Nicolaus von Cues, or Cusanus (1401-1464), a student of mathematics, mechanics, and ecclesiastical, political, and legal history. He was an original philosopher. On top of this he was a cardinal, yet very often suspected of heresy. Now here we have a typical *uomo universale* of the Renaissance period. He broke with the scholastic concept that a gradual ascent from day-to-day reality through subsequent degrees of spiritualization to the pure contemplation of the essence of God was possible. His thesis was: there is an essential theoretical gap in the knowledge of God and the world. It is not possible to extend the knowledge of this world to cover anything beyond it. It is not possible for man to know God by means of his intelligence. That is the learned ignorance, because however well man knows the things of his world, he is ignorant with regard to their ultimate origin, God. But it is also ignorant knowledge, because however inexpert man may be in knowledge of the essence of the world, it is possible for him to know temporal things. There are no limits to the study of reality, and here we find the real sense of the *studia humaniora.* Yet the very frontiers of the knowable reality provide an intimation of another type of knowledge that surpasses these frontiers and to which man has access in a different manner. God is not the totally unknown, but to understand him man is dependent on his spiritual love for God under the rule of what is good, *amor dei intellectualis sub ratione boni.* But if we can only know God from our spiritual contemplation, which means by an internal process, then it must be recognized that all honest approaches have the same relative rights. Here, for the first time in history, a basis was provided for the principle of the concept of tolerance.

Yet according to Cusanus the gap between God and the world is not complete. God cannot be defined logically. The thought processes of the finite world cannot be applied to the divine infinity, but in Christ the synthesis between the two has been achieved and, as each Christian mythically shares in the redemption by Christ, some part of the divine is present in each person. And that part is man's reason, which in a way recreates the world by considering it as a harmonic order. Therefore, man is a created god; that is, he himself is created and again is a creator. In such an approach any opinions with regard to God and religion can no longer be decisive for the evaluation of man. Man has been discovered and accepted with his own nature, and this acceptance forms the psychological basis for the acceptance of the world. This is the atmosphere within which the concept of human dignity could for the first time in history be expressed in so many words. Both Lorenzo Valla, in 1452, and Pico della Mirandola, in 1487, wrote

treatises on human dignity *(De hominis dignitate).* For instance when one reads Pico, the first striking thing is the traditional and mythical character of the exposition. But one can also hear God saying to man: "All other creatures have been given a particular nature and are ruled by us within previously made laws. You, however, are not limited by any restriction unless you yourself impose it according to your own volition, which I have given to you. Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have I created you, so that you might be free according to your own will and honor, to be your own creator and builder."

In this respect all people are equal. They all are confronted with the choice: angel or predator. But only those who live according to the law, obeying the values made known to us by reason, are truly free. For the humanists of this period individualism without morality, which also occurred in the Renaissance, was in no way representative. It was no more than an extreme associated symptom of the realization of the new freedom. But the mainstream was represented by a personality, like Erasmus, who strongly underlined the requirements of practical morality expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. They met his passionate desire for tolerance and pacifism, which found their origin in respect for the spirit. During the Renaissance period humanists rarely cut off the link with Christianity completely. Though some of them were aware of being atheists—and just think of the remarkable personality of Giordano Bruno—Renaissance humanism generally remained locked within Christianity. And this in spite of the critical open-mindedness and textual criticism that reached its heyday with Erasmus. But now the character of religion itself was changing. In the fifteenth century the secretary of the papal nunciature, Poggio Bracciolini, wrote in a letter to Rome about the conviction and execution of the heretic Hieronymus of Prague: "That is how a man died who, apart from religion, was eminent in every manner." This ability to disregard religion represents the permanent value of humanism. It means that it is understood that man has his own value.

A new factor had gained preponderance in religion itself, namely, that of *conscientia,* the conscience. Without the Renaissance and humanism, Luther's influence would have been unthinkable. From then on it was psychologically possible for a person to be Catholic or Protestant, orthodox or liberal; and he was what he was, not because he thought nothing else was thinkable, but because he had a conviction, even though tradition still played a considerable role. In this manner religion basically changed not only from being authoritarian to being a matter of conviction, but also from a religion of fear into a religion of love, though it has taken many centuries for this to be fully understood. The inspiration for this development was found in the human wisdom of the Classics. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the ideas of reformation, renovation, and rebirth were in the air and created a climate for a new inspiration concerning man and his

world. This urge, however, came provisionally to an end with the Reformation and the counter-Reformation. The controversy between Luther and Erasmus revealed for the first time and very clearly the contrast that determined a further development: the polarity between obedience and self-determination, between (reformed) Christianity and (autonomist) humanism. After this one still could find all kinds of biblical humanism and Catholic humanity, but Augsburg and Trent opened a chasm between humanist inspiration and biblical revelation.

2. ANTIQUITY

The humanists of the Renaissance referred to the authority of the Classics, in particular to Cicero. As the wisdom of Cicero was almost entirely based on that of the Greeks, it is obvious that the first thing to do is to consider a few main points in the development of Greek thought. So we will have to pay particular attention to the man who is considered the father of humanist thought—he himself often used the expression "midwife"—namely, Socrates (470-399). Though he did not leave us anything directly, we can more or less construct his image from the early writings of Plato (428-347), who was his pupil—particularly from the earlier writings, because the Socrates figure in the dialogues of Plato more often represented Plato than it did Socrates. However, if we call the platonic Socrates the father of humanist thought, we must at the same time remember that there is another strand in Greek philosophy that has been particularly incorporated in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. This strand was originated by Aristotle (384-322), a philosopher whose thought was nearer to a scientific approach to reality. He created a philosophy of understanding and logic, of justice and friendship, of society and the state, and of the order of the world. It has become a comprehensive system within which man acts. For Socrates, man is the central theme on which everything else depends. And it is therefore not surprising that humanists have always been fascinated by this figure. How should we understand Socrates within the framework of his time?

In Greece the fifth century B.C. was a time of transition. The feudal Greek world encountered in the poems of Homer, written five hundred years earlier, had gradually disappeared. And as a result the traditional ideas with regard to gods and people, standards and customs were also on the wane. In the various city states of ancient Greece all kinds of mixtures of feudal-military and commercial-aristocratic regimes were found, with one exception: Athens had in the technical sense of the word become a modern city. Trades and commerce flourished, all free male inhabitants participated in public life, and the arts and science expanded. Athens was a democracy in its own right and with its own laws. *Dikê,* the legal order, and *aidôos,*

respect for others, were very important to free citizens, though it must be said that neither slaves nor women nor foreigners were recognized as citizens, so that citizenship represented a privileged position. Yet the ideas of the equal merit of people, of benevolence toward everyone, and of fairness above the formal law slowly gained acceptance. What cultural background should we assume for this development and how did the Greek ideas concerning man and the world develop?

The sixth century B.C., when feudal society was coming to an end, was the first period from which the names of the major philosophers began to filter through. For them the mythical and religious ideas of previous times had lost the power to convince. They were no longer satisfied with the explanation of phenomena as the will of the gods or as being due to divine powers; they were looking for the cause of origin and change in the nature of things themselves. To us this explanation, e.g., the reduction of all phenomena to the action of the elements water, fire, earth, and air seems primitive, but this should not detract from the fact that this was the first time an attempt was made to get a rational insight into the mysteries of nature. Initially man did not occur in this philosophy of nature. But perhaps under the influence of commercial contacts and social unrest the diversity and changeability of being human, and therefore the relativity of customs, laws, and morality, was realized. As a result of the removal of the divine from nature, the divine was also removed from values. With the *sophos,* later called *philosophos,* the tendency to demonstrate the relativity of all things came into being. The well-known statement, "Man is the measure of all things," was made by the great sophist Protagoras. He was thinking of perception and the framing of ideas, but his thesis was very soon applied to moral problems. If man is the measure, there is no reason not to enjoy life without worrying and indulge in all passions and desires irrespective of morals and laws. Some sophists, but not the best, made their often considerable talents available for the many lawsuits the Greeks engaged in. They were quite ready to prove that whoever paid them was right, as everything was relative anyway, wasn't it?

As a reaction to this attitude, the fifth century B.C. showed a new consideration of the meaning of being human, and this time not by appealing to traditional standards but by applying the critical thought of the sophists to the value of being human. And here appears the most interesting sophist of all, Socrates. It is probable that it was in the school of the physician Hippocrates that the concept of human nature, as distinct from nature as such, probably occurred for the first time; in this context it refers to all functions of man, who is an entity consisting of body and soul. But the sophists, and in particular Protagoras, were already limiting the concept to the domain of the mind. This is also what the Socratic (but really Delphic) "know yourself" refers to. If Socrates presumes not to know anything, this is first of all an appeal to consider man's own nature free from traditional

(preconceived) opinions and from all notions concerning man and the world coming from outside. In this manner he prepares the way for an autonomous vision of being human, which he finds to be dominated by obedience to an inner voice: the Socratic daimonian. But he also had great confidence in critical thought about human responsibility in the form of a game of questions and answers, the dialogue. His questions very much embarrassed his partners in the discussion, because the extent of their knowledge of standards and structures was always found to be no more than ignorance. Yet one finds in the Socratic ignorance the vague contours of a new knowledge, which, through thinking, surpasses itself in its aspiration to know its own real substance.

The Socratic approach can be compared with that of a craftsman, who needs three things for his work: an image of what he is going to make, so that it will be a sound utensil; skill in the techniques he will have to use for this; and knowledge of the material with which he works to be able to use it according to its own nature. This is how Socrates approaches his dealing with man. The material he works in is the *phúsis,* human nature. It is possible to get to know the substance of this nature and to develop it. The skill used for this is the *logos,* which is not so much practical intelligence as it is the ability to verbalize, to justify, and to evaluate. And the result is the *areté,* the soundness of man, not virtue in the Victorian sense but moral and existential efficiency. Within Greek thought an ideal of education and self-education developed on this basis. These days we would call it growth. That is the Greek *paideía. Paideía* is not just education, but general human training, and it also expresses the result of this training: a condition in which true humanity is achieved.

After Socrates, a number of schools appeared in Greece that were always in search of this *paideía.* The Academy philosophers, of whom Plato was the first, addressed the idea of the beautiful and good that should control human life. Aristotle taught in the *Lukeion* and tried to understand the bases of reality, including human reality, as a means of being able to feel at home in the world. There were other schools, like the *Kunikoi* (cynics), who looked for their salvation in independence from external circumstances and the *Kurenaikoi,* for whom the real meaning of existence consisted of the joy of living. Zeno (336-264 B.C.) is related to the first school; he gave his explanations in the *stoa* (a gallery of columns) and as a result his adherents were forever called Stoics. They had an empiric/materialistic perception of reality as an expression of the laws of the universe that man can know by means of his reason. Therefore, living according to nature is living according to reason. The virtue of man is not emotion but reason, and only reason makes him inwardly free and happy. Strictly speaking, Epicurus (341-271 B.C.) is not far removed from this at all, but he underlines the joy of living that can be derived from it. Meeting simple daily needs, depending on our body and on each other, is the source of our life and our joy. The

human condition is neither worthless nor all-powerful in a world without any specific purpose in which we can be ourselves without fear.

It is not even my intention to try to give a complete sketch of the Greek world of thought. The previous paragraph only indicates a few themes that have influenced and often inspired humanists (and others) in the course of the centuries. Taken together they form the elements of the Greek ideal of education, the *paideía.* In this connection, Panaitios, a Stoic-oriented philosopher of the second century B.C., was remarkable because in his work earlier notions from Greek thought, like *anthropinos* (human), received additional stress as elements of the *paideia.* What is even more remarkable is that very occasionally he even replaced the word *paideía* by a new word: *anthropismos* (humanity). In that sense it was also used by his pupil Poseidonios, who was to become the teacher of Cicero. This constitutes the link with the humanists of the Renaissance. With Cicero (106-43 B.C.) the Greek *paideía* appears via the notion of *anthropismos* as *humanitas.* As a matter of fact, a generation earlier Scipio the younger, who as a general had destroyed Carthage, had already stressed the concept of *humanitas* as an idea that might deepen Roman thought, which had been mainly geared to practicalities. Yet it was principally in the circle of Cicero that the *humanitas* idea developed. *Humanitas* became the expression of the possibilities derived from the value of man: generosity and fidelity, as well as culture, intellect, and art. However, this development must be understood within the framework of the aristocratic Roman life of those days, and it would be very misleading to think that the *humanitas* of Cicero might be equivalent to today's humanism.

The idea of the *humanitas* was adopted in Rome at a moment when the old Roman religious ideas were no longer considered convincing. They had always been determined by the *religio;* according to Cicero, derived from *relegare,* which means "to consider carefully," and therefore to be interpreted as being circumspect with regard to the powers in nature that cannot be controlled. But *religio* can also be connected with *religare,* "to bind," and then it is the bond preventing us from acting waywardly on what lies beyond our power; that is taboo. But the Roman state gradually changed its character: Rome gradually developed from an enclosed city state into a world power within which many peoples with their different cultures would play a role, and the result had to be that its own culture was considered of relative value. In Rome itself there was a growing proletariat, obviously not an industrial proletariat in the modern sense, but all the same a mass of people with an increasing self-confidence changing the structure of Roman society more and more. This was the basis of the future empire that was governed in an administrative/military manner. It was in this atmosphere that the Greek training ideal was linked with the Roman sense of the concrete. Cicero did not show any doubt about this derivation, which he had experienced himself, when he said: "To you, the Greeks, from whom we

have received the *humanitas,* we owe most."

This *humanitas* does not only mean gentleness, tactful behavior, and openness to people and relationships, but also a sense of joy and festivity, by all of which a refined style of life differs from a lack of culture. But one should not understand this attitude in the external sense alone. The base of it is the *pietas,* the diffident attitude by which man finds the right relationship to everyone and everything, to friends and relations, to parents and children, to people and state, which must conquer the world to let all peoples participate in its just government! But, all the same, *humanitas* means too that man overcomes what is all too human in himself by what is essentially human, i.e., his reason, which has been provided by nature itself and is the divine and human law. *Humanitas* also means a liberation from the daily grind. And it is for that reason that the study of literature is considered the most human and most liberating relaxation of the mind and that those who have been shaped by this true art of humanity are to be considered really human. Thus the Roman *humanitas* is a remarkable mixture of Greek boldness and Roman limitations, of ideal growth and aristocratic traditionalism. And it is surprising how the humanists of the Renaissance, who themselves were not free from all kinds of contradictions and elitist separatism, still managed, through Cicero, to get a taste of the bold dream of Greece.

The Roman development from city state to world power took place around the beginning of our era. And in connection with this arose a culture, cosmopolitan for those times, that was generally called Hellenism. It was a blend of many elements of Roman and Greek, but also Jewish, Eastern, and mystical origins. Hellenism contained theocratic and democratic, mythic and rationalistic ingredients. Within this culture one finds in the later stoa the Greek *paideia* and the Roman *humanitas,* but enlarged and deepened into a bond that contained all men and was based on a cosmic, pantheistic sense of life. According to Seneca, a Roman aristocrat, virtue was available to everyone, to free men and slaves, to kings and exiles. Human nature was not affected by slavery and, though juridically anything can be done to a slave, there are, all the same, things that cannot morally be done to a human being, because he has the same nature as ourselves. That understanding of an all-pervading human bond was what was new in the thoughts of Antiquity. In the second century, with emperor Marcus Aurelius, a pupil of the slave Epictetus and a convinced Stoic himself, this insight obtained an optimistic élan. He was a rationalist, like the later rationalists of the eighteenth century, who thought that morals and usefulness were linked by nature.

There was an atmosphere of high expectation around Marcus Aurelius. According to an inscription: "A new world history starts with his birth. He brings the good news (the gospel!), he has been given to the world for the salvation of men, as savior of the coming generations. He has made

pronouncements like: Love the family of man; obey the deity; do not repay evil with evil; love those who offend you, because they belong to your own race." Listening to this sounds like listening to a Christian. But in reality Marcus Aurelius was one of the fiercest persecutors of Christianity. Here the tension between ideal and reality may have played a role, from which an emperor, in spite of his unselfishness and self-denial, could not withdraw. But maybe Albert Schweitzer was right as well when he drew attention to the fact that Christianity has a pessimistic stance with regard to a bad world, while the later Stoics expressed optimism with regard to an idealized reality. Since then Christian belief and worldly conviction have always stood in an indissoluble tension as "hostile brothers," and for this very reason they had a profound influence on each other. In Western culture they are blended to such an extent that it is impossible to retrieve separate ingredients as independent components.

From the outset there was no lack of attempts to conciliate Hellenistic culture and Judeo-Christian beliefs. The Gospel of St. John is steeped in classical thought forms. After the first few centuries, early Christianity had in general a much more sympathetic attitude toward the cultivation of being human than is generally supposed, though it is obvious that the anthropocentric view was replaced by a theocratic one. The church fathers consciously attempted to lend authority to their belief by placing it on the level of philosophizing in the classic manner. That attempt culminated, but also provisionally stopped, in the fourth century with Augustine, who, at the summit of the thought of his times and at the same time going back to the apostle Paul, rejected any thought of redemption by man himself and directed full attention to God and his self-revelation in Christ as creator of the historical world and the only source of humanity. He thereby determined the position of Christianity for centuries. In the centuries after the church fathers and Augustine, philosophizing was both impressive and fundamental. But the pattern of renouncing the world remained unchanged as a principle. Only after new impulses arrived in the twelfth century from Arabic culture can real changes be detected. Aristotle, rediscovered through thinkers like Averröes, heralded renewed interest in secular reality. This direction was often adopted by Anglo-Saxon scholastics and would permanently influence Anglo-Saxon thought.

3. MODERN TIMES

It is of course out of the question to give a real history of humanism in this chapter, not even along general lines. As in the previous paragraphs, we shall here again highlight some aspects of the past with the intention of illustrating the development of important humanist themes. In this context it is advisable to discern, after the Renaissance, between the rather more

empirical approach of the Anglo-Saxon culture and the more speculative approach on the European continent. All the later Anglo-Saxon scholastics showed this preference for empiric reality. Even in the sixteenth century during the Renaissance Francis Bacon was the pioneer of empiricism as a method. English thought of the seventeenth century was based on it. In this world, dominated by experience, arbitrary divine intervention did not fit. What developed was something called a deistic belief in God, in which, though God was the creator of the world into which he also had placed his law, he desisted from arbitrary interference in his own creation. Yet these deistic empiricists were generally still believers, be it very much in their own way. However, one heard an increasing number of atheist notes, though initially these came only from individuals. In 1713 John Collins published *Discourse of Freethought,* which was an omen. After a hesitant start by a few Renaissance figures, the possibility of empirically understanding human beings, in a world in which God no longer played a role, was stated in public.

In the seventeenth century, John Locke designed a philosophy on the basis of experience, in which the happiness of everyone was posed as the purpose of human endeavor, a typically Anglo-Saxon slant based on the idea of well-understood self-interest that shows an unmistakable relationship with the thoughts of Epicurus. In his main work of 1690, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Locke makes a penetrating study of human knowledge based on experience. Prior to experience, human consciousness is like a blank piece of paper that can only be printed on by experience. That experience is the experience of the substance, which can be subdivided into substance that is capable of thought, as with people, and substance that is not capable of thought. Both forms are equally incomprehensible. The very problem is how substance that is spatial changes over into substance that is conscious. Locke has no answer to this, but it does not detract from the fact that he was one of the first who tried to understand human existence in an empirical and reasonable manner. Small wonder that Locke also found education in this sense very important. Furthermore, he requires religion—in its deistic interpretation—to be reasonable as well and, according to him, this can be found in Christianity more than anywhere else. But obviously this faith can in no way be dogmatic. Religion is an expression of the moral will of man, and that very moral will is also the measure by which religion is judged. This is the reason that for Locke there was no room for any kind of religious fanaticism, and he insistently pled for freedom and tolerance. This is linked to the Erasmic undercurrent in European culture that is occasionally, and in a derogatory sense, called Sermon-on-the-Mount Christianity, in which the revelation is interpreted mythologically and the stress is placed on the moral content of the Sermon on the Mount.

One must be aware that in the Europe of the seventeenth century the mainstream was that of religious dogmatism. There was a strong tendency

toward systematization, and this also applied to religion. Politically the seventeenth century was an era of developing absolutism within a self-contained state and society. In natural science Newton, following Galileo and Kepler, laid the foundation for a world picture based on a mathematical-mechanistic theory.

This was to some extent also reflected in a critically oriented cultural life. In the Continental trend of humanist tradition we cannot ignore the startling figure of Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza. With his *Ethica* (1677) he was the embodiment of seventeenth-century systematic thinking in a critical direction. This is the reason he is something of an outsider in historical humanism. Yet he too has contributed certain elements to the composite image of modern humanism, if only because many trends from the past and what at that time was the present converge in him. Educated as a Jew, but banished from the synagogue because of heresy, he built on the philosophy of Descartes. Methodical with a scholastic bias and, one may assume, strongly influenced by Cusanus, he designed a totally individual version of life with preponderant Stoic characteristics. This made him a typical transitionary figure, in whom much of the past took shape in a contemporary manner, even occasionally pointing to the future. That is why Spinoza's philosophizing finds admirers even today. He is capable of inspiring modern thinkers if only because of his exemplary life, acknowledged by friend and foe, which showed an impressive conformance between doctrine and life. Yet is is hardly a coincidence that in modern times Spinoza is particulary appreciated by many kinds of structuralists, for whom the individual disappears in structures.

The basis of Spinoza's thought is a fundamental pantheism that to his contemporaries seemed hardly different from atheism. "God or nature" is the essential infinite being as it appears in reality. God or nature itself cannot be defined. There is no way to God through any analogy with worldly knowledge. God is the lasting foundation of the world, perfect, absolute, infinite. Yet it is possible to have a knowledge of God, limited but adequate. It must be assumed that God has an infinite number of attributes of which only two can be known by experience, namely: consciousness (cogitation) and spatiality (*extensio*). The intellect can put the truth with regard to God and the world into a logical mathematic order. This knowledge surpasses itself in an intuitive intellectual love for God, the *amor intellectualis Dei.* In order to share in happiness—which is not a reward for virtue but virtue itself—people must be absorbed by this love and must not of their own accord indulge in emotions like greed, joy, or sadness. Whoever does this enslaves himself, while freedom within the requirements of the world is the very liberation from these emotions. But most people do not get as far as this liberty. Then much will already be gained by their succeeding in achieving a certain balance between their emotions, through which happiness, meaning virtue, will be approached. In a similar manner social liberty

cannot be anything but independence from external obstacles. That is why a system that limits external dependence as much as possible, i.e., democracy (in Holland, represented by the oligarchy of the regents), with freedom of expression and tolerance, is best. In society, the power of the state serves to balance the expression of emotions, and that in itself almost constitutes happiness.

The occasionally mystical thought of Spinoza caused quite a stir, but initially it set little in motion. This was because the climate in Europe was much too dogmatic for it. In France, the year 1685 brought the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which veritably outlawed Protestants. This would seem to have been a supreme act of power of French Catholic absolutism, but in reality it turned out to be its end. Prior to that, Frenchmen had thought like Bossuet, the apostle of the kingdom by the grace of God, but afterward they thought like Voltaire. That in itself was a revolution. That at least is how the French historian Paul Hazard described this reversal. But how did it happen? Under the influence of travel stories and similar information, the end of the seventeenth century saw the start of a recognition of the relativity of social and cultural achievements. China, Persia, and India had shown rich and impressive cultures, and even "primitive" peoples had cultures that were often more "natural" than those of the West. Nature and reason began to replace grace and dogma, because nature is reasonable and the investigation of nature leads to real knowledge, also with regard to man. Piety with a moral tinge—pietism—replaced the revealed religion. Natural religion, natural morality, and natural law are based on reason and the natural goodness of man obeying the natural law. Once again the *humanitas* of Cicero and the tolerance of Erasmus showed their influence. This was the introduction to the eighteenth century, the period of belief in progress, of enlightenment of the darkness by means of reason, and also of the respect for human dignity. To quote Hazard: Everything was ready, Voltaire could come.

But it was not so much the fierceness of Voltaire, but rather the synthetic work of Diderot, that gave expression to the real humanist tradition. Yet Diderot was no less militant when fighting against prejudice and half-heartedness, which he saw as being embodied in the religious tradition and a more or less flat deism. He was also militant in opposing arid intellectuality and standardless libertarianism, against which he underlines the demands of the heart and morality. The humanity of the *honnête homme* that he advocated was therefore certainly more comprehensive than the rationalist concept of the *homme machine.* He advocated (state) education that would run parallel with the development of the child and prepare it for citizenship. The purpose of the famous French encyclopedia, of which he was one of the editors, was the dissemination of comprehensive knowledge among adults. His militant humanism addressed itself to all who suffered and were oppressed. As a pioneer of political freedom, he prepared the way for the revolution. But he always avoided excess, he represented human modera-

tion. Though he was an atheist, he did not like mental or emotional aridity, which was insensitive to religious ceremonies; though he was a materialist, he always stressed spiritual aspects; though he was a rationalist, he expressed himself equally in literary writings; and though he was a skeptic he invariably adhered to the principle of human dignity.

In Germany the poet and thinker Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was a counterpart of Diderot. He too was a man of the Enlightenment, though he stayed perhaps just within the limits of a very liberal Protestantism. He had been much influenced by Spinoza and it might be better to call him a pantheist. By publishing part of the writings of Reimarus he laid the basis for radical historical criticism of the New Testament. He considered history as a development leading to perpetual moral perfection with which religion in its different phases keeps pace. It evolves from dark superstition toward a theory of morality. According to him there is therefore not any particular moment at which the light of reason suddenly breaks through, but it penetrates all of history as a flame of increasing brightness. In his play *Nathan der Weise* he expressed the resulting tolerance in a most fascinating manner through the history of the three rings, each of which represents one of the three monotheistic religions. One of the three is the true one, but which one it is will only be shown over time, because the true ring has the special characteristic that it will make him who wears it honorable. What constitutes the value of a human being is not the truth he possesses or thinks he possesses, it is his honest attempt to approach it. It is not the possession of truth, but the search for it, that increases the powers by which the ever growing perfection of man comes into being.

Another German poet who must be mentioned in this context is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In the first part of *Faust* he shows the image of the tragic man who, knowing everything, remains the same poor fool whose good intentions flounder because of his human deficiencies, but who in spite of this and because of his indefatigable effort finds redemption. His concept of man is surrounded by a veil of impenetrability and his world picture shows an obvious-agnostic-religious dimension. In Goethe one recognizes, more than in the aestheticizing Grecianism of his time, something of the tragic perception of life of ancient Greece. In Goethe's concept of the world, matter and spirit, body and soul, spatiality and consciousness are connected in Spinoza's sense as two aspects of the eternal God-or-nature of which man becomes conscious. In this respect he is rather fundamentally different from the greatest philosopher of his time, Immanuel Kant, with whom we shall now deal. Kant was more of a pietistic deist than a pantheist like Goethe. During his entire life he maintained a Protestant appreciation of sobriety and sense of duty. In his diffident manner he was still a progressive man with an understanding for the changes in his time. But first and foremost he was a revolutionary philosopher who changed both the thinking about and the knowledge of the world in a radical manner.

To Kant, world and reason are related by a strange tension. He solved the problem of Locke and his successors concerning the relationship between the two by proposing that we cannot know anything of the world in itself except through the senses and the mind. We must imagine that reason, prior to any observation—a priori—possesses such concepts as space and time, causality, and negation, which shape experience. All experience occurs in such concepts and all judgments of reality are based on them. This insight is the result of critical thought, which is the ultimate test of truth. It does not depend on things but on thought about experience. Outside of experience, truth in the strict sense is not possible, though Kant does leave a margin for reasonable conjecture, for instance, concerning the unity of all that is, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. The point that is particularly important for the humanist tradition is that, for instance, in his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785) Kant applied the same approach to morality as well. All external incentives to do something, like following God's commandments or striving for happiness or usefulness, find their origin outside reason. They are heteronomous. This does not provide a necessary basis for action but only random rules. Only when reason itself—autonomous and a priori—can formulate a law for moral action does it become a basic principle. And according to Kant this law is: Behave in such a manner that the guideline of your will can at all times serve as a basic principle for all. In practice this does not work particularly well, but what is good is determined by such actions. And therefore there is nothing good in the world except good intentions.

Kant tried to give his own solution for the tension between necessity and liberty contained therein, and after him many have tried to find answers in the Kantian tradition. But a solution of a totally different type for the problem of what is good—which as a matter of fact does work in this world—will be found in a completely different direction, namely, with Karl Marx. We are now in the nineteenth century and we must see this figure in the climate of thought of the French Revolution. The thoughts of Marx find their origin in Hegel and Feuerbach. Hegel had continued Kantian thought to the extent that he puts the sole emphasis on consciousness, reason, the mind. The mind creates reality out of itself, but in so doing it opposes this reality to itself. Reality seems to start leading its own life, and the mind becomes alienated from its self-created reality. Subsequently the mind tries to understand the reality it has created and to incorporate it again. Reality is denied and the mind returns to itself. This is called dialectic thought. Although this thought may be abstruse, it has exerted considerable influence through Hegel's followers. In *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), Feuerbach applied it to religion, which he considered a creation of the human mind, in which people exteriorize their own ideal of humanity. What must be done now is to reduce this exteriorized ideal to people, so that they again become themselves with their limitations and their potential. This is

what Feuerbach calls humanism.

In the "earlier writings" (1844) of Marx, which were not published initially, this philosophical humanism was changed into a "real" humanism, which started the fight against the dehumanization of man by social conditions based on selfishness. It is not the abstract idea of man that is important, but actual people in their world as it is. The philosophers gave different interpretations to the world, but what had to be done was to change the world itself. The dialectic which, according to Marx, had been put upside down by Hegel had therefore to be put right-side up again. That means that dialectic must not be understood as a thought process, but as a happening in historical reality. Marx calls this dialectical, or historical, materialism. One sees that because of the division of labor and the mass production of goods the workers are alienated from their product, from their colleagues, and from themselves. That is the reason for their misery, both in the material and ideal sense. Their humanity has been lost. This process calls up the counterforces that will alter these relationships in the production process and will abolish the alienation as a result of collective ownership of the means of production. This will not be possible without a fierce class struggle, but then true man will also appear and realize the (true) nature of the species. According to Engels, Marx's friend and collaborator, the revolution of the proletariat will make the stride from the realm of necessity into the realm of liberty, in which the free development of each individual is the condition for the free development of all. At a later stage Marx developed his theory in a scientific and economic sense, but this does not detract from the humanist inspiration that lies at its base. After Marx the demand for social justice, which always occurred in humanism, obtained a fundamental meaning in the world of humanist thought, though not always in connection with traditional Marxism.

After Feuerbach, humanism became clearly irreligious in the nineteenth century. In his book *Das Leben Jesu* (1835-36), which has had considerable influence, D. F. Strauss did not leave much of the figure of Jesus and demonstrated that the Jesus of the Gospel is a mythical figure behind which the historical Jesus almost entirely disappears. The undermining of Christianity continued in France as well. By the middle of the century Auguste Comte published his theory on Positive Philosophy. He saw three stages in the development of thought. The first one was theological, which means that supernatural forces dominate the world. The second was metaphysical, in which abstract powers are considered as the basis of the world, but "now" mankind had come to accept the Natural Laws, which are the expression of the relationship between things in their development. In this positivist era, positive science would supply the data by which mankind could develop itself further. This positivism meant more than a scientific method. It wanted to be a religion of humanity with its own worship; but Comte did not find followers for this worship, though his emphasis on

scientific thought as a solution for all problems dominated minds through the entire nineteenth century and has remained until today a characteristic trend in Western thought, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world. So that we now return to the Anglo-Saxon trend in the humanist tradition.

Nowhere were Comte's attempts so favorably received as in England. Moreover, in the middle of the century they were fertilized by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin, a retiring scholar, has permanently fertilized the thought of the West with his idea that living nature develops according to natural laws. This is a suitable completion of scientific materialism, which was a theory taught by people like Ludwig Büchner in his book *Kraft und Stoff* (1855). On the Continent, Darwinism was pioneered by Ernst Haeckel, who proposed the complete unity of mind and matter, called scientific monism. The Dutchman Jacob Moleschott in his *Kreislauf des Lebens* (1887) had a similar influence. In Great Britain, Darwinism formed the basis of the thought of Herbert Spencer. He followed Comte, but added the law of development to this positivism. This law dominates the creation of the universe, of living nature, and also of human society. Because of this latter idea he, together with Comte, was one of the precursors of sociology as a science. The emphasis in his case, as is general in English thought, was mainly on liberty, though he was not blind to the demands of social justice that he wished to further by means of a kind of production association. In this respect his thoughts ran parallel with those of the Westminster School, which at a later stage showed a similarity with the undogmatic socialist Fabians, as opposed to the Manchester School, which was in favor of unbridled liberty, also with regard to property. In the twentieth century this produced all kinds of tensions within the humanist concept of society, but we shall deal with that later in this chapter.

4. SCIENCE

Though humanism is basically a perception of life with a concomitant practice of life, it is useful to show how thoughts in this respect are connected with all kinds of directions in cultural life. In this section we shall discuss a number of trends in twentieth-century humanism that more particularly are connected with specific sciences, while in the next section a number of variants with a more contemplative background will be dealt with. When in this section we talk about sciences, it is obvious that we think mainly of the human sciences, and we shall deal with pedagogics, biology, psychology, and sociology.

In pedagogics, John Dewey is a particularly important name in the United States. He wanted knowledge not to be offered as book learning but to be obtained from practical life. In an industrial society the school must

be a workshop, a mini-society. It must enable students to obtain by trial and error the skills and disciplines necessary for a democratic social order; and this knowledge will not be obtained as valid once and for all but will be an instrument made available to the student to process his experience and thereby continue to grow, because life is a process of continuous education. The moral criterion of Dewey's thought is growth, and that is also the criterion he applied to society, in which people, again by trial and error, must acquire the skills to find a solution for their practical problems.

Philosophically Dewey belongs to the pragmatists: thought is not considered anything more than a tool for the development of man and mankind. In this respect he could also have been discussed in the next section. Thought is an organ for practical adaptation in the human species and the individual, a means to link recalcitrant reality and creative life force. Here, however, Dewey is dealt with as someone representing empirical humanism, which is an important trend, particularly in the United States and Great Britain. Confidence in the potential for development of man is implied in this train of thought, without being explicitly explained. It functions as a fundamental belief that also contains liberty, equality, and relatedness. The realization of this belief depends on the unprejudiced use made of experience. The manner in which this should be done is that of the scientific method. This must be understood as an attitude characterized by openness of mind, continuous search for factual data, and the willingness to drop ideas if this is required by the facts. Even in the development of personal life and human relationships, this method of trial and error is the basis of a development worthy of human beings. In this context the sciences dealing with man provide a great support.

In this line of thought, and that could easily be misunderstood, the realization of human and universal relatedness is always present in the background. This aspect is often indicated by the term *religion.* Dewey describes the religious attitude as a profound and deep-rooted harmonization of the I with the world. Religious experience has the power to achieve a deeper and more durable adaptation to life. Religion is the encouraging and inspiring impulse in human existence. It strives for the most complete fulfillment of life, which also encompasses the respect for and the relationship with one's fellowmen as an independent aspect of the unfolding world. This religiosity is clearly earthly in its character, geared to the happiness of man, understood as the fulfillment of his human potential in an altruistic sense. That happiness does not need any further motivation; it is its own justification. This conviction is called scientific, secular, or naturalist humanism. It is often called humanist philosophy, but in that case the term should not be understood in its technical meaning as a professional discipline, but rather in its general meaning as a vision of existence and the world, as a philosophy of life, a conviction or a concept of the world.

Science never provides complete knowledge of reality, but it does

provide a continuous increase of this knowledge, which can lead to new insights. This also occurs with regard to the humanist vision of man himself. Biology, under the influence of Julian Huxley, has supplied its own contribution to the world of humanist thought, particularly in England. The idea of evolution, which generally in modern thought is a basic element of the rationalist vision, obtains from him another special meaning in the development of the image of man. Evolutionary humanism is based on an insight into the extraordinary position of man in the totality of natural development. This uniqueness consists of the fact that the nature of man as opposed to all other living beings is in essence determined by his conceptual thought. And this kind of thought could only develop in a multi-cellular two-sided symmetrical being with a head and a circulatory system that also must be an erect vertebrate land mammal. Furthermore, it presupposes a being that lives in herds, that as a rule only produces one young at a time, that has come from the water onto the land, and that, after having lived for a long time in the trees, has returned to the ground. The particular accent in this biological conditioning is that, in this train of thought, being human is not reduced to an automatic result in a causal sequence but, to the contrary, is loaded with a sense of wonder with regard to the uniqueness of the coming together of all these requirements.

Many species have disappeared in the course of time. Others have remained stuck in their development. There is only one loophole through "the meshes of the net of evolution." The development of man is unique as its result. He is unique, not in the mundane sense of "different from others," but in the deeper sense that he is the only way through which the continuous evolution could be realized, because he carries the possibilities of further development in himself. In this opinion the appearance of man is seen as an event of world-encompassing drama, carrying a heavy responsibility. The extraordinary constitution of man is the basis of the phenomenon of language, as a product and tool of conceptual thought and as a means of communication. This has also created the possibility of an, again totally unique, accumulation of human experience and the creation of a tradition on the basis of history understood as a continuous development. This trend is intertwined with an awareness of purpose, and with Huxley this results in the conception of humanist religiousness. This must be understood as being more than a totality of moral convictions, scientific insights, or social opinions. What is meant here is a coherence of ideas and emotions relating man to his destination outside and above day-to-day life, exceeding present reality and its structures geared to the continuous ripening of life and a fuller realization of human potential.

A humanism that could be called *psychological* is related to this. It could be said that modern psychology starts with Sigmund Freud. His discovery and recognition of the natural drives of man and his attempts to give these a suitable place in culture have had a profound influence on all subsequent

psychological thought. Through this Freud has had an influence on modern humanism that cannot be ignored. Psychoanalysis is still one of the most important bases of thought concerning the human psyche. Yet this strict analytical thought can be criticized, because it carries the risk of man's disappearing behind his drives, of his personality dissolving in an area of tension between Es and Ego, eros and aggression, lust and death. That same danger is actually even more inherent in another—mainly American—trend in psychology, namely behaviorism. As an extreme form of empiricism it limits itself exclusively to behavior because innermost feelings do not have an objectively perceptible meaning. But in doing this it dissolves man into separate acts of behavior in which the totality of his personality can no longer be recognized. It can develop methods to influence human behavior in a "favorable" sense, but without any yardstick for human dignity these are alarming rather than admirable. Though from a therapeutic point of view they are in some cases not without interest, they do evoke the frightening image of a society in which people are being conditioned according to a pattern imposed from above.

In this connection it is interesting to look at a trend that started in the beginning of this century in southern Germany and in Switzerland, in which related areas of human activity, and therefore the shaping of one's existence, are also taken into consideration. Hence the name "Gestalt" psychology (not to be confused with the modern therapy of the same name, though it is based on the same principles). After the Second World War a new trend in psychology developed in the United States alongside psychoanalysis and behaviorism, within which elements of "Gestalt" thought play a considerable role, combined with psychoanalytical ideas. The totality of the healthy human personality is the starting point of this psychology. The recognition of what is essentially human is considered as a condition for achieving a satisfactory psychic integration. Ethical and religious needs are recognized as elements of the healthy human psyche. The task of psychology is to prevent neurotic disorders, because the normal force of life is capable of providing a healthy development of life. These psychologists call themselves humanist psychologists. This does not mean that they have selected a particular philosophy of life, though some of them are as a matter of fact convinced humanists in that sense, but they wish to express that the total humanity of man, his wholeness, must be the basis of psychological thought.

Thus the integration of the human personality in its totality becomes the fundamental motive of this psychological humanism. Abstract definitions detract from the totally concrete responsibility with which man over and over again must cope, using his creative potential. This again presupposes that human creativity, which is not random but directed, exists. According to Erich Fromm, man knows what is permissible to the extent to which he really exists as a human being and loves himself sufficiently, which is the

basis of love for man as such. Carl Rogers, too, urges self-acceptance without fear, because what develops then is not animal but human. Abraham Maslow urges self-realization, which becomes possible if the natural growth process is not disturbed. Once the fundamental needs for food, shelter, and recognition are fulfilled, the higher needs for knowledge and art, creation and experience, come to the fore and man opens himself to peak experiences that have a religious dimension. In this train of thought the real moral problem of our times is therefore the indifference of people toward themselves. Conscience is the appeal of our real selves, which calls us back to ourselves to become what we might already be. The duty of humanist psychology is to show the way, and that of human creativity is to do it.

A number of humanist tendencies are slowly becoming apparent in sociology as well. In the United States the behaviorist approach has also had a dominating influence in this area. People are defined by their social behavior. But it remains an open question how they develop this social behavior. It may well correspond to an innate tendency, but how does the behavior take specific forms? Is it a matter of drill, of training in purely external habits? If that is the case, how can people then show deviant behavior? In the prevailing trend of what is called functionalism, this has in reality no justifiable place. The structures of society that were originally the subject of empirical investigation easily take on the character of a standard into which deviant behavior does not fit. Only when one starts to recognize that shaping of behavior also contains a creative element will there be room for another approach to the relationship between the individual and society. With Alfred Schütz, who considers society as a reality lived and experienced by human beings, a new element enters American sociology. He replaces the functionalist method by a phenomenological one, where "understanding" from within plays an important role. In the same vein Herbert Blumer introduced symbolic interactionism, the core of which is that people enter into relationships with each other by means of (language) symbols, which, though they have been determined earlier, require a creative use. This makes room for deviant as well as critical behavior in which personal responsibility receives its due place.

Of a totally different kind is the radical humanism of Mahabendra Nath Roy, who came from Marxism to humanism. After having played a rather important role in the third Communist International, Roy came to the conclusion that, at least in India, people's awareness had to be awakened before Western political action would be possible at all. In his humanism, man is a being who springs from an ordered world of which he forms a part. Because of this very participation, there is a relationship between human consciousness and developing reality. This relationship is expressed in reason. In man, reason has in a manner of speaking become emancipated from living nature. Therefore it is closely related to emotion and will. In

historic development this will expresses itself as the most powerful factor. It is directed to freedom as a continuous abolition of all restrictions of individual development; this is the yardstick for development as a whole. This humanism is clearly geared toward society. It pleads for a reconstruction of society as a mutually supportive community of mentally emancipated and morally adult people. Without any tie with politics, it wishes to inspire all shades of politics to bring into being a society of a cooperative and federal structure, thus guaranteeing liberty, democracy, and justice, because only reflection with regard to the essential starting points can make politics serve the emancipation of the total human being.

In this connection one must now also mention the Marxist humanists, mainly in Eastern Europe. According to them, Marxism developed from a critical theory into an ideology to defend the existing (state) socialist or post-capitalist regimes. In this respect they agree with critical Marxists like Lukacs, Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Habermas. But they do differ from these, because they want to adhere to the original humanist inspiration of the young Marx. To the Marxist humanists, Marxism is not a complete system that is at the same time a philosophy of man, society, and the world, but a method of social critique intent on seeking out all forms of alienation on the basis of unequal property and power structures. Their main criticism is directed at what they call the bureaucracy, the establishment of the socialist state, which forms the greatest obstacle in the way of the continuing emancipation of the people. To this they oppose self-government in companies, municipalities, universities, and other social entities as a means of doing away with social alienation, yet without negating the necessity of central guidance and organization. They consider that in favorable circumstances it is possible to achieve socialism in a democratic manner and in general they demand great reticence in handling violence and power. They defend freedom of expression and public discussion, the rights of the individual and the development of his potential. In short, they represent socialism with a human face.

Even in the Soviet Union, which according to the Marxist humanists is the very model of bureaucratic post-capitalism, one may occasionally hear a humanist voice. Maxim Gorki said: Man, that sounds proud. According to him, the love for man is derived from a sense of admiration for his creative energy and respect for his collective working power, which creates socialist life-patterns, for love of the party and hate of the petty bourgeoisie, capitalism, and fascism—a hatred of everything that lives off the sufferings of hundreds of millions of people. And after the Second World War, Ilya Ehrenburg wrote in his *Mémoirs:* "Man is the main factor. The human spirit is basically more than a reflection of socio-economic conditions. The deepest emotions of the human soul—for good and for evil—lie beyond this. An anthropology is necessary that does not lag behind the other sciences and in which conscience and emotional life get their due place."

A. Sharow introduces similar elements in education: "The happiness to which every human being is entitled is essentially conditioned by the amount of freedom he has enjoyed during his childhood."

In literature a humanism of impenetrable man and his immense potential appears from time to time. But one should not forget that all this happened in the 1960s after the fall of Stalin, and one gains the impression that since then the struggle for humanity has hardened again and leads a half-hidden life in the fight of dissident writers and scholars.

5. PHILOSOPHY

Apart from the aspects of humanism discussed in the previous section there are trends that might be called more philosophical. It is not possible to define clear boundaries. For instance, Dewey, whom we have met as a pedagogic humanist, belonged mainly to philosophical pragmatism, which was apparent from his instrumentalism. In this context we must also mention F. C. S. Schiller as a pragmatist. One cannot say that his direct influence on later humanism was very great, but he is the only philosopher who called his philosophy humanism. He wished to express by this that, according to him, philosophy is the expression of the entire conscious human being as a social entity. It tries to comprehend a world of human experience with the means of the human mind. For this purpose consciousness makes use of postulates that are based on the needs of the human mind. They are general, necessary, and experimentally and psychologically determined. This means that truth is always related to man. An abstract truth is not yet a truth; it must come to life in concrete reality. Absolute truth would be the truth for an absolute intellect, but that does not exist. The human intellect is always directed toward targets and values and something is true if these are met. There is in a way a continuous stream of ideas and, when testing these in practice, the usable ideas remain: a natural selection of the most viable. A statement is better if what is stated is more efficient and can be tested in practice, also intersubjectively. This also applies to moral values; they are based on responsibility, which presupposes the postulate of liberty and, according to Schiller, also of immortality (of the mind?), because that alone carries the idea of completion. Though Schiller is rarely quoted, his manner of thought is common among humanists in the Anglo-Saxon countries. In Britain, it is generally called empiricism, in the United States it often goes under the name of scientific humanism. We mentioned this when discussing Dewey at the start of the last section. Here we are led to a philosophical trend based on one particular science, namely, physics. What we mean here is the trend that is generally called logical positivism or neo-positivism or general semantics. The latter term indicates that this trend began as an attempt at a more accurate definition of the meaning of words and sentences.

Subsequently the thinkers of the Vienna Circle found that statements only make sense if they can be checked or tested. It is not necessary for them to be true as such, but it must be possible to determine empirically whether they are true or untrue. Such statements are assertions. In reality, one should even be more critical, because even if an assertion has been confirmed many times it does not say anything with regard to future experiences. However, it is permissible to take an assertion for true as long as it has not been "falsified" (Popper). It is then allowed to build logical conclusions on such data provided one adheres to the rules of the scientific "language game." As logic plays an important role in this, it is also called logical positivism.

Thus a great number of problems that philosophy has often considered are proved not to be based on assertions at all and therefore are only quasi problems. An example of such a statement is: God does not (or does) exist. There is no possibility of falsifying this statement. It is not an assertion but an exclamation. But something of the kind can also be said of a statement like: Act as you would wish everyone to act. This is not an assertion either but, in this case, an exhortation. In the long run, it becomes obvious that life does require statements that are not assertions but exclamations or exhortations. One can keep this type of statement entirely outside critical thought or try to consider the rules of the related language games critically (linguistic analysis). This is often done by logical positivists who particularly deal with ethics. In any case, this trend has exerted a critical influence on other trends, much to the advantage of the careful use of language. As a matter of fact, there would not be any particular reason to pay great attention to the philosophical thought of the logical positivists from a humanist point of view if a number of prominent humanists did not adhere to this trend. Though they do not express their humanism in the form of assertions, they do express them as much as possible in the form of statements that approach assertions as closely as possible. Bertrand Russell was too much of a skeptic to be counted as belonging to this trend. But it does apply to the English philosopher Alfred Ayer and the American Herbert Feigl.

On the European continent one finds more often a point of view that though rationalist is not in the strict sense pragmatic. This trend is also called rationalism. More direct than pragmatism and even slightly more so than empiricism, which is suspicious of any abstraction, even the abstract concept of reason, this trend finds its origin in the eighteenth century Enlightenment and the belief in reason. But even this belief has obviously undergone the influence of two centuries of critical thought. It has become more conscious of the choice that is the basis of its starting point—reason. It recognizes that in the acceptance of the starting points there is as much of an element of decision as in the acceptance of any other starting point, but it refers to the universal character of human reason as the means of communication with regard to the truth. It does not pretend, nor does

pragmatism, that reason could prove or disprove metaphysic starting points like the existence of God. To the contrary, it asserts that this is not possible. Neither does rationalism state that reason could dominate human behavior unilaterally, since it is defined by both internal and external conditions. Finally, it does not assert that reason would be capable of explaining reality down to the last point so that nothing would remain to be asked. Yet rationalism recognizes reason with its logical, ethical, and aesthetic criteria as the touchstone of truth, i.e., the test that opinions must pass to claim general validity. Those criteria themselves must moreover be tested continuously by reason to determine their soundness. Reason demands the readiness to criticize and review starting points, opinions, attitudes, and decisions. Rationalists do not mean that people would or even could do that continuously, but if challenged they must be prepared to do it, not for the sake of an arid skepticism but because of a tenable and coherent picture of the world and a responsible manner of existing in it. That is the ever unfinished work of reason, which illuminates personal experience and makes it accessible to others. There is no other way to carry out this work. The purpose of it is not to erect an abstract structure but to create a foundation for our common responsibility, because it is the responsibility of man for his own fate and that of others that is the presumption contained in this humanist rationalism. It determines the definitions of the problem and the decisions that are made on the basis of the insights gained in this manner. And responsibility again presupposes freedom of thought.

Now we will have a look at another European trend: idealism, which carries this name because it takes ideas—consciousness—as its starting point. It consists, in general, of the neo-Kantists and, in particular, of the adherents of the Marburg school. The world in itself hardly plays a role in that thought. The world for them is always a reality already ordered by reason. Being has thought as its source. And these thinkers in particular have an open mind toward culture in its various expressions. One of the typical exponents is Ernst Cassirer. He focuses his attention on man as a cultural being who orientates himself in reality with the aid of (language) symbols. The symbols indicate and interpret relationships. Myth, religion, history, art, and science supply symbols through which man also explains himself as a responsible and creative being. Through this he also creates himself. Others in the Kantian tradition place the stress on the moral imperative, apart from the theory of knowledge and aesthetic aspects. Moral discernment is also contained in reason, and thus moral existence is also subject to the test of reason. In this manner, morality is basically founded on reason, irrespective of its biological, historical, psychological, or sociological "explanation." The moral responsibility becomes the definition of the esssence of being human. In the Netherlands, the most prominent representatives of this trend are G. Heijmans and Leo Polak; in the United States Felix Adler influenced humanism in this sense.

Alongside this trend and not very far removed from it, one can discern a cultural humanism. Human responsibility is the basis of culture. Albert Schweitzer dedicated his philosophical writings to this. A respect for life is his fundamental guideline. One also finds such concepts in antique civilizations, the *cultura animi,* the (higher) culture of the mind. Johan Huizinga might be considered a typical exponent of this trend. When striving to overcome the shortcomings of human existence by creative effort, one can speak of cultural humanism. This aspect can also be recognized in literature, for instance, in Thomas Mann's attempts to remain "master of the contradictions" and in an existentialist manner when Albert Camus sees man as the eternal rebel against the inclemency of existence. A more scholastic trend finds its starting point in an interest in classical authors. They look for their force in the *cultura animi,* which is deemed to be the result of the influence of the classical spirit on its followers. As a matter of fact, in France and Germany humanism is still very often understood as the study of classical literature. Under this heading one could also mention the influences that, particularly after the Second World War, came from old Asiatic thought representing a humanist inspiration: the philosophy of K'ung Fu-tse, who in his aristocratic conservatism makes one think of Cicero, and the more or less mystical wisdom of Lao-tse, for which it is not easy to find a humanist counterforce in the West; and, in India, the rational mysticism of Buddha, which occasionally still finds an echo in humanist psychology.

A totally different variant of philosophical humanism is existentialism. It breaks fundamentally with the differentiation between consciousness and reality. Consciousness is the total human being steeped in reality. It is always total existence as a reality that is at stake. Obviously existentialism does not wish to deny the capability to think, but it wishes to consider this as a function of being-consciously-physically-within-reality. Though among the existentialists Jean-Paul Sartre has exerted the greatest influence on humanism, Maurice Merleau-Ponty is now slowly replacing him and is rightly considered a more consistent and accurate thinker. Sartre's own relationship with humanism is quite unclear. He profoundly detests classicist humanism as described above. But he also speaks about humanism as atheism, as pure humanity, and calls it a form of existentialism. Sartre-does not deal with the aspect of humanism that is the focus of these chapters —humanism as a philosophy of life. He is not aware of this aspect and probably would not approve of it. The central function it gives to the responsibility for and the relatedness to the "other" does not fit into his train of thought, where these attitudes have a derived meaning. It is in this respect in particular that Merleau-Ponty takes a completely different position.

Sartre discerns the existence-in-itself of the world, and the human being, a component part thereof, shows an existence-for-himself, that is, consciousness. Consciousness *as such* is nothing, but for itself it represents a consciousness of the existence-in-itself of the world, including oneself. There is no real connection between consciousness and the world, only

contrast. The consciousness is the "negative" of the impenetrable senseless menacing existence. And in reality this also contains the freedom of the consciousness. It is the negation of all definiteness. People cannot rely on anything outside themselves; that is "bad faith." They are condemned to freedom and must create their own values. One can rely on nothing but one's own freely chosen values. But that is not an intellectual choice that one can make at a particular moment. It is a decision connected with one's entire existence and one which is raised by existence itself as a function of all previous personal choices. In that same contrast between being and consciousness the other is also incorporated. He, too, is conscious-ness, but I make him into a part of the world, into the "other" in the same way he does me. By looking at each other we make each other into an object, though each of us tries to maintain himself as a subject: the mutual relationship is one of conflict. Even in love it is a matter of dominating or being dominated, or hurting or suffering pain. Man is the greatest enemy of man: hell is the other.

One may wonder what is humanist in this picture of man and the world. First of all, it is a cry of distress about what people do to each other, a heroic attempt to face reality without illusions. But it is also a call for an unconditional acceptance of one's own responsibility in a world "which has not been made for man." Sartre's life, with his indefatigable struggle against oppression and against the underrating of human liberty, is an illustration of a man whose actions are not clearly expressed in his philosophy; he is more a man of letters than a philosopher. In his later thought he has tried to lay such a foundation, the basis for which can be found in his earlier work. Sartre does not recognize a real *we,* for which there is no place in his philosophy. In its place he puts the collective, though "collective" for each individual, attention to events in reality. This is also the basis of solidarity in the social struggle. In his Marxist period, he saw the struggle of the oppressed as a collective but individual reaction to an injustice experienced by everyone, in which one recognizes the co-oppressed as colleagues or as belonging to the same class. It was impossible for Marxists to accept this as an improvement of their own theory, but it must be recognized that Sartre has, for some Marxist humanists, created a greater understanding of the irreplaceable value of the individual.

Merleau-Ponty continued Sartre's thought and modified it. His starting point is a complete unity of being and not being—the conscious individual is one with the world in a lived experience *(expérience vécue).* There is a "blind cohesion" between man and the world that precedes all subsequent differentiations. In his initially inarticulate experience man discovers himself as a conscious physical entity by reference to the world, which also means by reference to other people. The difference between consciousness and the world is an objectivization with hindsight that yet cannot cancel the unity of the lived experience. Being human is being physically conscious,

and this develops with reality. As a result Merleau-Ponty's idea of liberty is less absolute, though not less fundamental, than Sartre's. Freedom is the foundation of being human, also and particularly when it meets the resistance of the situation. It can in fact approach zero without being fundamentally destroyed. Even in a concentration camp it remains the determining factor of being human. But this implies that it is necessary to prevent situations in which actual freedom is hampered or destroyed. In this manner Merleau-Ponty sees a connection between liberty as an existential moment and the possibilities for liberty in society. It creates an unavoidable requirement that social man must realize. He makes his own choice by choosing in a caring manner for others. Because freedom can only be realized collectively; it is a collective responsibility. The responsibility for one another forms an essential part of Merleau Ponty's view of life.

Finally, there is Karl Jaspers, who is a totally different type of existentialist. In spite of his frequent use of religious language, he has influenced humanist thought. According to Jaspers, all experience is a manifestation of an all-embracing existence *(das Umgreifende)*; but when one looks more closely at this concept, it disintegrates into subject and object, into internal and external world, into self-consciousness and reality, idea and comprehension, existence and transcendence. Philosophical (humanist) belief is therefore the realization that one exists within these tensions. This liberates man from humdrum life and narrowness and allows him to have roots in his basic existence. This means that he can investigate reality with a more open mind, which is the only way to knowledge. However, he should not think that in this manner he can still gain access to knowledge of the all-embracing existence. He will still see only some aspects of it and grasp only fragments. It is his reasonable consciousness that will prevent him from considering any partial truth as the absolute truth, because reason is the total readiness for understanding with his fellow human beings, which is weakened if any partial truth is considered to be absolute. This basic incompleteness of knowledge is also applicable to man himself. He cannot be fully known; he has his roots in the all-embracing being from which he develops endlessly. Therefore, it is not possible to speak about perfect man, because man is in a continuous state of gestation. In his existence he tries to realize the sense of his being, in freedom and restraint, in belief in his potentialities and in a living contact with human tradition, which in many respects gives us access to the sources of the experience of existence.

6. ORGANIZATION

From the previous sections one could easily gain the impression that humanism is only a matter for thinkers. But one must assume that philosophers think through and express what lives in a wider circle.

Humanism is in essence not a philosophy but an often unspoken perception of life and a practice of living that has been put into words in a philosophical manner by thinkers, though they are often also pioneers in changing the cultural pattern. There have always been people who lived according to this pattern and who also thought accordingly, though they did not put their thoughts into writing. It is a distortion in the history of the life of the mind that it is mainly dependent on documents, which are nothing but the tip of an iceberg. Yet, particularly since the Renaissance, there have been statements and letters by people who were not prominent that expressed a humanist perception of life. On the other hand, thinkers have exerted a considerable influence on run-of-the-mill citizens. There is therefore, particularly since the eighteenth century, a process of mental emancipation in being that often leads to humanist convictions. As we have seen, these convictions are often still interwoven with religious opinions, but since the nineteenth century humanist ideas have obtained an increasingly atheist character. This does not necessarily mean that they no longer show any general religious characteristics. On the contrary, religiousness in the agnostic sense has remained more or less linked with the humanist world and represents a permanent element in the humanist trend.

What does become clear from history is that humanism did not just appear ready-made at a certain moment. It represents a process of mental emancipation that has taken place throughout the ages in different cultural circumstances. Already in antiquity human nature had been discovered to be something different from the remainder of living reality. The differentiating element is reason, the capacity to acknowledge one's own place in the world. That is the outstanding resource for leading people to design their existence "soundly." This never-ending attempt is a process of education, and education has remained throughout the ages a key word in humanism. During the Renaissance new elements were added. Renaissance man discovered a new freedom. He had no fixed pattern of life but had to shape his life by means of decisions. This was accompanied by a particular responsibility, also with regard to society. The idea of human dignity appeared as an expression of the special possibilities of man. Furthermore, he could not as easily as in the Middle Ages talk about God, his essence and intentions, because now there was a gap between knowledge of the world and knowledge of God, and as a result the concept of tolerance appeared.

In modern times all kinds of other elements have been added. The worthlessness of man is opposed by his perfectability; dogmatic certainty by the relativity of the standards and values created through culture. The obviousness of the world and morality is opposed by the criticism of one's own observing and moral capabilities. The proper laws of human nature, the autonomy of thought and appreciation, are considered. Science is recognized as a means of learning to discover man and the world and as a starting point for correct action. One learns to see man in concrete social relation-

ships and tries to formulate his social responsibility. The results of the awakening of humanist consciousness come up for discussion, e.g., the empirical trend, scientific orientation, and social foundation. In the more philosophical area, rationalism, idealism, and existentialism, with their stress, respectively, on reason, morality, and freedom, provide impulses. One should in this context not lose sight of social change. Industrialization caused the breaking up of traditional structures, reinforcement of "earthly" thought, emancipation of all kinds of groups, and in the long run also more education and greater maturity. In this emancipation process free thought during the nineteenth century became for many a means to free themselves from the traditionalistic religious orthodoxy.

Only in the second half of the nineteenth century did irreligiosity start to spread, and by the twentieth century it became a kind of mass trend. Yet one finds throughout the entire nineteenth century quite a few conscious freethinkers, and in the second half of the century there were organizations of freethinkers. Initially it was mainly a form of expression of progressive sectors of the bourgeoisie, but eventually it included the more conscious workers and radical members of the middle class. For many, religion was the symbol of the social system under which they labored, while the atheism of free thought represented the idea of emancipation *(ni Dieu ni maître).* Hence one occasionally finds a close relationship between social criticism and free thought. The leaders were often preponderant in rational thought about man and society, but one should not be surprised that their followers often understood their ideas in a rather simplified form, often characterized by an unlimited trust in science. Yet one always finds at the same time a considerable stress on the moral responsibility of man, mainly socially, and a great belief in the individual being able to shape his life independently and without help from outside.

One must not assume that free thought can be found somewhere in a pure form and clearly distinguished from humanist ideas. This is obvious if one looks at the Dutch freethinkers organization, *De Dageraad,* which was founded in 1856. In this association the inspiring figure was Franz Junghuhn, a German naturalist in service in the Dutch East Indies. The membership consisted mainly of radical members of the lower middle-class, who at that time certainly were not yet atheists. Rather, they dreamed of an undogmatic church of the future. Only twenty years later, because of the influence of figures like Multatuli, a well-known Dutch author, the word atheism was no longer taboo; but it consisted more of a humanist view of life than of a hatred of religion, and was full of love for humanity. As a matter of fact, in 1919 arguments were again brought up for a positive atheism that did not reject religious inspiration. The main point was the moral development of man and society and a number of practical points as well, like separation of church and state, general suffrage, cremation, emancipation of women, and education.

As early as 1880 an international federation of freethinkers had met in Brussels, and after congresses in London and Paris an international freethinkers congress took place in Amsterdam in 1883. This was a high point in the freethinkers movement in the Netherlands. As a matter of fact, *De Dageraad* did not join the International Federation until 1907.

In Germany the well-known writer of *Kraft und Stoff,* Ludwig Büchner, was the driving force in setting up the *Deutsche Freidenkerverband* in 1855, only a few years after it had become legally possible to leave the church. As a socialist movement was legally almost impossible (until 1890), ideas about socialism and the education of workers found a welcome means of expression among the freethinkers. In 1906 the *Deutsche Monistenbund* came into being under the influence of Ernst Haeckel. In 1911 they organized an international *Monistencongress* in Hamburg. After the Second World War, the *Deutsche Monistenbund* was revived as the *Freigeistige Aktion,* but its high tide had passed. Shortly after the creation of the *Monistenbund,* in 1908 the *Zentralverband Proletarischer Freidenker* (Central Association of Proletarian Freethinkers) was founded. It had a Marxist base, which over the years gave rise to all kinds of different trends and internal fights and breakaways. As a matter of fact the *Zentralverband* operated also as a burial society, which was typical for those times. In its heyday it had as many as 650,000 members. After the Second World War the *Deutsche Freidenkerverband* was revived. It had obviously been prohibited during Hitler's time, but subsequently it had also been forbidden in the American and French occupation zones (!).

The Anglo-Saxon world shows a totally different development. Here was the very source of free thought, and empiricist trends in Anglo-Saxon thought provided a fertile soil for freethinkers, though traditionalist religiosity was as entrenched here as anywhere. As late as 1842, George Jacob Holyoake was condemned to six months' imprisonment for atheism. At a later stage he used the term *secularism,* and in 1852 he founded the Secular Society. In 1858 Charles Bradlaugh became president of the National Secular Society. Its journal, the *National Reformer,* later called *The Freethinker,* still appears. Until the Second World War the secularists appeared as public speakers under different labels; they were sometimes called agnostics or rationalists, though according to the secularists they were just up-market atheists.

The *Agnostic Annual,* later the *Rationalist Annual,* started publication in 1884. The year after that the *Literary Guide* was launched, which became well known as a rationalist magazine. In 1899 a small committee working with its publisher, C. A. Watts, became the Rationalist Press Association. In the beginning of the twentieth century it began publishing a series of sensational paperbacks in editions of hundreds of thousands. Some of these were mainly anti-dogmatic, but most were geared toward spreading science and furthering education. The purpose was the application of scientific

methods to all problems of personal and social life. In 1956, the *Literary Guide* was renamed *The Humanist,* and later the *New Humanist,* and developed into one of the publications most representative of humanism in the world. Books were published in the "Humanist Library" under the sponsorship of a supporting body—Pemberton Books. The Rationalist Press Association also organized conferences and other meetings, and thus gained a role in the personal life of its members and sympathizers.

It is not feasible to mention here all of the free thought organizations everywhere. As already mentioned, the World Union of Freethinkers was founded in 1880 and many freethinkers' organizations joined: *Giordano Bruno* in Italy; the *Fédération des Libres Penseurs* and the *Fédération des Cercles de Libres Pensees* in France; Francisco Ferrer and the *Union Rationaliste* in Belgium; the Rationalist Press Association, the National Secular Society, and the British Ethical Union, to be mentioned later, in the United Kingdom; the National Liberal League in the United States; the Rationalist Association in Australia and New Zealand; *De Dageraad* in the Netherlands; as well as Swiss and Austrian freethinkers, too many to mention. Congresses were regularly held and received much attention, particularly before the First World War. After the Second World War the free thought movement generally did not exert the influence it had earlier. The accent apparently changed and other organizations geared to reflection and practice received greater attention.

Apart from the free thought movement, "free-religious," ethical, and humanist trends took on organizational shape after the middle of the nineteenth century. They were slightly different from freethinkers, because of their more reflective background and their interest in small-scale social activities, though the boundaries between them and the freethinkers cannot be drawn clearly. The adherents of these trends often belonged to the middle classes, of which they represented progressive elements with a strong sense of social responsibility. The concept "free religion" means an undogmatic experience of life that does not base itself on revelation but has some existential aspects. The typically nineteenth-century term "ethical" indicates the importance of a nonreligious morality as opposed to the idea that unreligious people have neither God nor morals. Initially, and particularly in the United States, the term *humanist* was used as an indication of the empirically human; with that connotation, it was closely linked to free-thought opinions. But accents derived from humanist tradition also become meaningful in the use of this word. Particularly under Dutch influence and only after the Second World War, the term *humanist* regained quite generally its comprehensive meaning as an indication of a nonreligious conviction rooted in tradition and fed by science on a broad philosophical basis.

When in Treves, Germany, in 1844, the "holy cloak" of Christ was exhibited once again, a Catholic priest, Johannes Ronge, wrote an open letter to protest this "idolatry." It became a sensation, and tens of thousands of

Catholics agreed with Ronge. They formed "communities" and were soon applauded by Protestants who also joined. Very soon there were as many as 350 communities, but after the unsuccessful rebellions of 1848 these groups were persecuted and most of them broke up under the combined pressure of church and state. Only in 1859 the one-hundred-odd communities that still existed managed to merge in the *Bund Freireligiöser Gemeinden in Deutschland* on the basis of a liberal religion that no longer had anything in common with Christianity. From then on they formed an essential part of the spiritual life of Germany, and toward the end of the century they had about 150,000 members. After Hitler, the Bund was revived and joined the freethinkers in the *Volksbund für Geistesfreiheit,* in which the biologist Gerhard von Frankenberg played an important role. In West Germany the *Freireligiöse Gemeinden* were recognized as having equal rights with the churches and were likewise subsidized for the spiritual care of their members. This group champions freedom of expression and opposes intolerance. Some *Freireligiöse Wohlfartsverbände* are particularly involved in social work and community relations. In the north and west the association shows a strongly rationalist bias, in the south the stress is more religious.

A similar, yet in some aspects different, development occurred in the United States. In 1873 the young Felix Adler gave a talk in his father's synagogue in New York City. When he had finished he was asked if he believed in God, and he answered: "Yes, but not in yours." With that his chance to succeed his father in his very liberal synagogue was lost. But Felix Adler was a missionary. Because of his studies in Heidelberg he was steeped in Kantian thought: An unequivocal knowledge of God is not possible, but morality has its own laws, which are not dependent on divine revelation. On that basis in 1876 Adler created, with some hundred like-minded people in New York, the Ethical Society. Soon there were societies in other large cities, and thus the American Ethical Union came into being. Professional leaders took care of the tasks that in a church would be carried out by the pastors. Regular Sunday morning meetings were held, but a program of moral education, the Sunday schools, was also developed, which met a typically American social need. The Ethical Union also showed a definite social interest. Ethical Culture schools developed and, at a later state, summer camps for education toward democracy. Initiatives were taken for nursery shcools and professional training colleges and also for public housing programs and district nursing. The Union was involved in the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The American Ethical Union is still active in the fields of civil liberties, race relations, mental health, prison reform, and capital punishment.

The American Ethical Union also had quite a considerable international influence. In 1887 Felix Adler sent his associate Stanton Coit to London, where Coit became minister of the still existing South Place Ethical Society.

Soon after this the West London Ethical Society and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ethische Kultur* in Berlin came into being. In 1893 an international association of Ethical Societies was founded. A year later a group was formed in Vienna. In 1896 the British Ethical Union came into being, with independent societies in dozens of cities. At a certain point it had 20,000 members. After the Second World War, Harold Blackham, who had for a long time been Stanton Coit's collaborator, became the driving power. He published many books and was secretary of the British Ethical Union for many years. In 1963 the name of the organization was changed to the British Humanist Association. It has provided a service of voluntary counselors and has founded organizations like the Humanist Housing Association and the Independent Adoption Society. It closely cooperates with the National Council for Civil Liberties, the Howard League for Penal Reform, the National Peace Council, and similar organizations in Britain. In general one can say that the ethical movement has been one of the most challenging attempts to give shape to spiritual and social life outside the churches.

A totally different and much later American initiative, more rationalist oriented and related to the Rationalist Press movement, found its origin in Chicago. In that town a number of students had since 1927 published a mimeographed journal called the *New Humanist.* A few years later, the Humanist Association was founded, which published a printed magazine. In 1933 a number of prominent intellectuals, including John Dewey, published an appeal that is still known as the Humanist Manifesto. The group gained in importance, and during the Second World War the American Humanist Association was created and began publication of *The Humanist* magazine. With its tens of thousands of subscribers it became, together with the British *New Humanist,* one of the most representative humanist publications. In the 1960s Prometheus Books began the publication of an interesting range of books on humanist philosophy. The American Humanist Association counted many professors of philosophy and very radical theologians among its members. The sciences concerning man and his world were of central interest to them and in 1973 they expressed this again with the publication of Humanist Manifesto II. Dissemination of humanist knowledge also led to the foundation of local groups and broadened the base. The organization now deals with human rights, the United Nations, birth control, environmental problems, and humanist education and counseling.

Now we have reached the organizations that were founded after the Second World War. The Indian humanist movement has a pre-history. It arose out of a political independence movement created by M. N. Roy with the weekly *Independent India.* In 1940, Roy founded a radical democratic party, but the party was dissolved in 1948 because it did not seem that a political party was an efficient instrument to promote basic democracy. The

party was transformed into the Indian Radical Movement, and in 1969 it became the Indian Radical Humanist Association and *Independent India* became the *Radical Humanist.* The aims of the Indian movement are education based on values essential for democracy, creation of new opinions on existence, and promotion of the spreading of power to a broader base. The important points are personal freedom, social equality, rationality, and morality. The association strives for broad participation by the population in local institutions and new forms of democracy and cooperation as a basis for a cooperative economy. As one can see—and it is not surprising in view of their past—the Indian Radical Humanists are socially oriented and try to be a leaven in the traditionalist pattern of their country.

The *Humanistisch Verbond* in the Netherlands also was founded after the Second World War. Though in the twentieth century and earlier there had been various small humanist groups, during the war the idea of a broad humanist movement, one that would contain many philosophical insights and carry out many practical activities, came to fruition. It would have to champion equal rights for people outside the churches and be a center of mental resistance and social responsibility. In 1945 and 1946 *Humanitas,* an organization for social work, and the *Humanistisch Verbond,* as a spiritual movement, were created independent of each other. In the course of the year a number of related groups were formed, such as the Socrates Foundation, which published the journal *Rekenschap,* the *Humanistisch Thuisfront,* the *Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking* and the *Humanistische Stichting voor Huisvesting van Bejaarden.* The *Humanistisch Verbond* is active in many fields: for example, influencing public opinion with regard to legislation, environmental questions, and development problems; thinking through and experiencing the humanist conviction; and humanist education and care. For this purpose it has trained a great number of volunteer and professional workers. Following the example of the Netherlands, a *Humanistisch Verbond* was soon set up in Belgium (Flanders) with more or less the same aims and activities, although it was perhaps slightly more rationalistic and anti-clerical. Humanist education received great attention and the Parents Association for Morality provided it with a broad base.

I am not going to try to describe all of the humanist groups that came into being after the Second World War. In 1948, the idea of forming an independent international humanist organization arose, and in 1952 a congress took place in Amsterdam under the honorary presidency of Julian Huxley. The International Humanist and Ethical Union was founded at this conference. The member organizations were the American Ethical Union, the American Humanist Association, the British Ethical Union, the *Bund Freireligiöser Gemeinden Deutschlands,* the *Humanistisch Verbond van Nederland en België,* and the Indian Radical Humanist Movement. They were joined at a later stage by other humanist groups, large and small, in

Europe and other parts of the world. The IHEU holds congresses every four years and is involved in the activities of the United Nations, Unesco, and the Council of Europe. Occasionally, international dialogues are organized that include Marxists and Catholics. A particularly interesting phenomenon is the development of a real Marxist humanism in Eastern Europe, which can find a meeting point in the IHEU. Obviously this organization also champions human rights in the world, which it thinks is a field where a significant influence can be exerted. Finally it attempts to be a platform for the exchange of ideas among its member organizations about matters of particular interest to humanists.