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*The
Lonely
Man
of
Faith*

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III

THE COMMUNITY of which Adam the first, majestic man, is a member, is a natural one, a product of the creative, social gesture in which Adam engages whenever he thinks that collective living and acting will promote his interests.* I term this community a natural one, because the urge for organized activity at this level is not nurtured by the singular needs and experiences of spiritual man created in God's image

*The social-contract theory is not to be interpreted in chronological terms. It never claimed that individuals ever existed outside of society. The precedence of the individual over society is to be interpreted in conceptual terms: a Robinson Crusoe existence is thinkable and morally justified. The most important practical inference to be drawn from this theory is the moral right of the individual or individuals to secede from an existing society and form a new one. This kind of thinking, as we know, played an enormous role in the American as well as in the French Revolution. Therefore, there is no contradiction between the Biblical story of the creation of Adam the first and the social-contract theory.

but by biological, instinctual pressures. It is a natural reaction on the part of man, as a biological being bent on survival, to the menacing challenge of the outside world. In fact, the root of the instinct of gregariousness which is the very foundation of the natural community is to be found already in the animal kingdom. Let cattle grazing quietly along a wide area of green pastures sense suddenly that danger is lurking somewhere, they, overcome by instinctive panic, will begin to herd together and to cling to each other as if mere physical contiguity could avert the impending catastrophe. The difference between man associating with others and animals flocking together consists, of course, in the fact that while the mute creatures *react* in a mechanical, spurious, and purposeless way, eloquent and wise man *acts* intelligently and teleologically. Yet this discrepancy does not contradict our premise that the primordial urge to come together in face of opposition is shared by both animal and biological man.

Adam the first is challenged by a hostile environment and hence summoned to perform many tasks which he alone cannot master. Consequently, he is impelled to take joint action. Helpless individuals, cognizant of the difficulties they encounter when they act separately, congregate, make arrangements, enter into treaties of mutual assis-

tance, sign contracts, form partnerships, etc.* The natural community is born of a feeling of individual helplessness. Whenever Adam the first wants to work, to produce, and to succeed in his undertakings, he must unite with others. The whole theory of the social contract, brought to perfection by the philosophers of the Age of Reason, reflects the thinking of Adam the first, identifying man with his intellectual nature and creative technological will and finding in human existence coherence, legitimacy, and reasonableness exclusively. To the thinkers of the Age of Reason man posed no problem. He was for them an understandable, simple affair. Their admiration, alas adoration, of the human mind hindered them from realizing the metaphysical dilemma and existential paradoxicality, indeed absurdity, embedded in the human "I" awareness. They saw man in his glory but failed to see him in his tragic plight. They considered the individual ontologically perfect and existentially adequate.† They admitted only that he was func-

*I am using the social-contract theory as an illustration of the functional character of the community formed by Adam the first. However, I could also demonstrate this idea by introducing organic theories of society which emphasize the primacy of society over the individual. Even, and perhaps primarily, the corporate state is of a functional character.

†The same naïveté in evaluating the role of man is to be found in the Marxist philosophical anthropology.

tionally handicapped even though he could, like Robinson Crusoe, surmount this difficulty, too. If the individual is ontologically complete, even perfect, then the experience of loneliness must be alien to him, since loneliness is nothing but the act of questioning one's own ontological legitimacy, worth, and reasonableness. In fact, according to the Biblical story, God was not concerned with the loneliness of Adam the first. Neither was Adam aware of the pronouncement *לֹא טוֹב הָיְוָה הָאָדָם לְבָדּוֹ*, "It is not good for man to be lonely." Moreover, the connotation of these words in the context of the world view of Adam the first, even if they had been addressed to him, would have been related not to loneliness, an existential in-depth experience, but to aloneness, a practical surface experience. Adam the first, representing the natural community, would translate this pronouncement into pragmatic categories, referring not to existence as such, but to productive work. If pressed for an interpretation of the pronouncement, he would paraphrase it, "It is not good for man to work (not to be) alone," *לֹא טוֹב עֲשׂוֹת הָאָדָם מְלֹאכְהָ לְבָדּוֹ*. The words "I shall make him a helpmate" would refer, in accordance with his social philosophy, to a functional partner to whom it would be assigned to collaborate with and assist Adam the first in his undertakings, schemes, and projects. *Eve vis-à-vis*

Adam the first would be a work partner, not an existential co-participant. Man alone cannot succeed, says Adam the first, because a successful life is possible only within a communal framework. Robinson Crusoe may be self-sufficient as far as mere survival is concerned, but he cannot make a success of his life. Distribution of labor, the coordinated efforts of the many, the accumulated experiences of the multitude, the cooperative spirit of countless individuals, raise man above the primitive level of a natural existence and grant him limited dominion over his environment. What we call civilization is the sum total of a community effort through the millennia. Thus, the natural community fashioned by Adam the first is a work community, committed to the successful production, distribution, and consumption of goods, material as well as cultural.

Ecclesiastes (Kohelet) has portrayed the act of grouping and coalescing as envisioned by Adam the first in unmistakable categories: "The two are better than the one because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to help him out." The natural community of Adam the first enhances man's chances for successful survival, yet does not elevate or enhance his existential experi-

ence, since the latter is in no need of redemption or catharsis. Adam the first feels safer and more comfortable in the company of Eve in a practical, not ontological, way. He will never admit that he cannot, ontologically, see himself without Eve. They, Adam and Eve, act together, work together, pursue common objectives together; yet they do not exist together. Ontologically, they do not belong to each other; each is provided with an "I" awareness and knows nothing of a "We" awareness. Of course, they communicate with each other. But the communication lines are open between two surface personalities engaged in work, dedicated to success, and speaking in clichés and stereotypes, and not between two souls bound together in an indissoluble relation, each one speaking in unique *logoi*. The in-depth personalities do not communicate, let alone commune, with each other. "And God blessed them and God said unto them be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over everything that creepeth over the earth."

Male and female were summoned by their creator to act in unison in order to act successfully. Yet they were not charged with the task of existing in unison, in order to cleanse, redeem, and hallow their existence.

THE COVENANTAL faith community, in contradistinction to the natural work community, interprets the divine pronouncement "It is not good for man to be alone," לא טוב היות האדם לבדו, not in utilitarian but in ontological terms: it is not good for man to be lonely (not alone) with emphasis placed upon "to be." Being at the level of the faith community does not lend itself to any equation. "To be" is not to be equated with "to work and produce goods" (as historical materialism wants us to believe). "To be" is not identical with "to think" (as the classical tradition of philosophical rationalism throughout the ages, culminating in Descartes and later in Kant, tried to convince us). "To be" does not exhaust itself either in suffering (as Schopenhauer preached) or in enjoying the world of sense (in accordance with ethical hedonism). "To be" is a unique in-depth experience of which only Adam the second is aware, and it is unrelated to any function or performance. "To be" means to be

faith who realizes suddenly that faith can be utilized for the acquisition of majesty and glory and who, instead of fostering a covenantal community, prefers to organize a political utilitarian community exploiting the sincerity and unqualified commitment of the crowd for non-covenantal, worldly purposes. The history of organized religion is replete with instances of desecration of the covenant.

the only one, singular and different, and consequently lonely. For what causes man to be lonely and feel insecure if not the awareness of his uniqueness and exclusiveness? The "I" is lonely, experiencing ontological incompleteness and casualness, because there is no one who exists like the "I" and because the *modus existentiae* of the "I" cannot be repeated, imitated, or experienced by others.

Since loneliness reflects the very core of the "I" experience and is not an accidental *modus*, no accidental activity or external achievement—such as belonging to a natural work community and achieving cooperative success—can reclaim Adam the second from this state. Therefore, I repeat, Adam the second must quest for a different kind of community. The companionship which Adam the second is seeking is not to be found in the depersonalized regimentation of the army, in the automatic coordination of the assembly line, or in the activity of the institutionalized, soulless political community. His quest is for a new kind of fellowship, which one finds in the existential community. There, not only hands are joined, but experiences as well; there, one hears not only the rhythmic sound of the production line, but also the rhythmic beat of hearts starved for existential companionship and all-embracing sympathy and

experiencing the grandeur of the faith commitment; there, one lonely soul finds another soul tormented by loneliness and solitude yet unqualifiedly committed.

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AT THIS POINT, the main distinction between the natural community of Adam the first and the covenantal faith community of Adam the second becomes clear. The first is a community of interests, forged by the indomitable desire for success and triumph and consisting at all times of two grammatical *personae*, the "I" and the "thou" who collaborate in order to further their interests. A newcomer, upon joining the community, ceases to be the anonymous "he" and turns into a knowable, communicative "thou." The second is a community of commitments born in distress and defeat and comprises three participants: "I, thou, and He," the He in whom all being is rooted and in whom everything finds its rehabilitation and, consequently, redemption. Adam the first met the female all by himself, while Adam the