

In order to be present everywhere, as it should, religion must not only not be totalitarian, but it must limit itself strictly to the plane of supernatural love which alone is suitable for it. If it did so it would penetrate everywhere. The Bible says: "Wisdom penetrates everywhere on account of its perfect purity."

Through the absence of Christ, mendicity, in the widest sense of the word, and penal action are perhaps the most frightful things on earth—two things that are almost infernal. They have the very color of hell. Prostitution might be added to them, for it is to real marriage what almsgiving and punishment without charity are to almsgiving and punishment which are just.

Men have received the power to do good or harm not only to the body but to the souls of their fellows, to the whole soul of those in whom God is not present and to all that part of the soul uninhabited by God of the others. A man may be indwelt by God, by the power of evil or merely by the mechanism of the flesh. When he gives or punishes, what he bears within him enters the soul of the other through the bread or the sword. The substance of the bread and the sword are virgin, empty of good and of evil, equally capable of conveying one or the other. He who is forced by affliction to receive bread or to suffer chastisement has his soul exposed naked and defenseless both to evil and to good.

There is only one way of never receiving anything but good. It is to know, with our whole soul and not just abstractly, that men who are not animated by pure charity are merely wheels in the mechanism of the order of the world, like inert matter. After that we see that everything comes directly from God, either through the love of a man, or through the lifelessness of matter, whether it be tangible or psychic, through spirit or water. All that increases the vital energy in us is like the bread for which Christ thanks the just. All the blows, the wounds, and the mutilations are like a stone thrown at us by the hand of Christ. Bread and stone both come from Christ and penetrating to our inward being bring Christ into us. Bread and stone are love. We must eat the bread and lay ourselves open to the stone, so that it may

sink as deeply as possible into our flesh. If we have any armor able to protect our soul from the stones thrown by Christ, we should take it off and cast it away.

### *Love of the Order of the World*

The love of the order and beauty of the world is thus the complement of the love of our neighbor.

It proceeds from the same renunciation, the renunciation that is an image of the creative renunciation of God. God causes this universe to exist, but he consents not to command it, although he has the power to do so. Instead he leaves two other forces to rule in his place. On the one hand there is the blind necessity attaching to matter, including the psychic matter of the soul, and on the other the autonomy essential to thinking persons.

By loving our neighbor we imitate the divine love which created us and all our fellows. By loving the order of the world we imitate the divine love which created this universe of which we are a part.

Man does not have to renounce the command of matter and of souls, since he does not possess the power to command them. But God has conferred upon him an imaginary likeness of this power, an imaginary divinity, so that he also, although a creature, may empty himself of his divinity.

Just as God, being outside the universe, is at the same time the center, so each man imagines he is situated in the center of the world. The illusion of perspective places him at the center of space; an illusion of the same kind falsifies his idea of time; and yet another kindred illusion arranges a whole hierarchy of values around him. This illusion is extended even to our sense of existence, on account of the intimate connection between our sense of value and our sense of being; being seems to us less and less concentrated the farther it is removed from us.

We relegate the spatial form of this illusion to the place where it belongs, the realm of the imagination. We are obliged to do so; other-

wise we should not perceive a single object; we should not even be able to direct ourselves enough to take a single step consciously. God thus provides us with a model of the operation which should transform all our soul. In the same way as in our infancy we learn to control and check this illusion in our sense of space, we should control and check it in our sense of time, values, and being. Otherwise from every point of view except that of space we shall be incapable of discerning a single object or directing a single step.

We live in a world of unreality and dreams. To give up our imaginary position as the center, to renounce it, not only intellectually but in the imaginative part of our soul, that means to awaken to what is real and eternal, to see the true light and hear the true silence. A transformation then takes place at the very roots of our sensibility, in our immediate reception of sense impressions and psychological impressions. It is a transformation analogous to that which takes place in the dusk of evening on a road, where we suddenly discern as a tree what we had at first seen as a stooping man; or where we suddenly recognize as a rustling of leaves what we thought at first was whispering voices. We see the same colors; we hear the same sounds, but not in the same way.

To empty ourselves of our false divinity, to deny ourselves, to give up being the center of the world in imagination, to discern that all points in the world are equally centers and that the true center is outside the world, this is to consent to the rule of mechanical necessity in matter and of free choice at the center of each soul. Such consent is love. The face of this love, which is turned toward thinking persons, is the love of our neighbor; the face turned toward matter is love of the order of the world, or love of the beauty of the world which is the same thing.

In ancient times the love of the beauty of the world had a very important place in men's thoughts and surrounded the whole of life with marvelous poetry. This was the case in every nation—in China, in India, and in Greece. The Stoicism of the Greeks, which was very wonderful and to which primitive Christianity was infinitely close,

especially in the writings of Saint John, was almost exclusively the love of the beauty of the world. As for Israel, certain parts of the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Book of Job, Isaiah, and the Book of Wisdom, contain an incomparable expression of the beauty of the world.

The example of Saint Francis shows how great a place the beauty of the world can have in Christian thought. Not only is his actual poem perfect poetry, but all his life was perfect poetry in action. His very choice of places for solitary retreats or for the foundations of his convents was in itself the most beautiful poetry in action. Vagabondage and poverty were poetry with him; he stripped himself naked in order to have immediate contact with the beauty of the world.

Saint John of the Cross also has some beautiful lines about the beauty of the world. But in general, making suitable reservations for the treasures that are unknown, little known, or perhaps buried among the forgotten remains of the Middle Ages, we might say that the beauty of the world is almost absent from the Christian tradition. This is strange. It is difficult to understand. It leaves a terrible gap. How can Christianity call itself catholic if the universe itself is left out?

It is true that there is little mention of the beauty of the world in the Gospel. But in so short a text, which, as Saint John says, is very far from containing all that Christ taught, the disciples no doubt thought it unnecessary to put anything so generally accepted.

It does, however, come up on two occasions. Once Christ tells us to contemplate and imitate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, in their indifference as to the future and their docile acceptance of destiny; and another time he invites us to contemplate and imitate the indiscriminate distribution of rain and sunlight.

The Renaissance thought to renew its spiritual links with antiquity by passing over Christianity, but it hardly took anything but the secondary products of ancient civilization—art, science, and curiosity regarding human things. It scarcely touched the fringe of the central inspiration. It failed to rediscover any link with the beauty of the world.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there had been the beginning of a Renaissance which would have been the real one if it had been able to bear fruit; it began to germinate notably in Languedoc. Some of the Troubadour poems on spring lead one to think that perhaps Christian inspiration and the beauty of the world would not have been separated had it developed. Moreover the spirit of Languedoc left its mark on Italy and was perhaps not unrelated to the Franciscan inspiration. But, whether it be coincidence or more probably the connection of cause and effect, these germs did not survive the war of the Albigenses and only traces of the movement were found after that.

Today one might think that the white races had almost lost all feeling for the beauty of the world, and that they had taken upon them the task of making it disappear from all the continents where they have penetrated with their armies, their trade, and their religion. As Christ said to the Pharisees: "Woe to you, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves and them that were entering in ye hindered."\*

And yet at the present time, in the countries of the white races, the beauty of the world is almost the only way by which we can allow God to penetrate us, for we are still farther removed from the other two. Real love and respect for religious practices are rare even among those who are most assiduous in observing them, and are practically never to be found in others. Most people do not even conceive them to be possible. As regards the supernatural purpose of affliction, compassion and gratitude are not only rare but have become almost unintelligible for almost everyone today. The very idea of them has almost disappeared; the very meaning of the words has been debased.

On the other hand a sense of beauty, although mutilated, distorted, and soiled, remains rooted in the heart of man as a powerful incentive. It is present in all the preoccupations of secular life. If it were made

\*Luke 11:52.

true and pure, it would sweep all secular life in a body to the feet of God; it would make the total incarnation of the faith possible.

Moreover, speaking generally, the beauty of the world is the commonest, easiest, and most natural way of approach.

Just as God hastens into every soul, and immediately it opens, even a little, in order through it to love and serve the afflicted, so he descends in all haste to love and admire the tangible beauty of his own creation through the soul that opens to him.

But the contrary is still more true. The soul's natural inclination to love beauty is the trap God most frequently uses in order to win it and open it to the breath from on high.

This was the trap which enticed Cora. All the heavens above were smiling at the scent of the narcissus; so was the entire earth and all the swelling ocean. Hardly had the poor girl stretched out her hand before she was caught in the trap. She fell into the hands of the living God. When she escaped she had eaten the seed of the pomegranate which bound her forever. She was no longer a virgin; she was the spouse of God.

The beauty of the world is the mouth of a labyrinth. The unwary individual who on entering takes a few steps is soon unable to find the opening. Worn out, with nothing to eat or drink, in the dark, separated from his dear ones, and from everything he loves and is accustomed to, he walks on without knowing anything or hoping anything, incapable even of discovering whether he is really going forward or merely turning round on the same spot. But this affliction is as nothing compared with the danger threatening him. For if he does not lose courage, if he goes on walking, it is absolutely certain that he will finally arrive at the center of the labyrinth. And there God is waiting to eat him. Later he will go out again, but he will be changed, he will have become different, after being eaten and digested by God. Afterward he will stay near the entrance so that he can gently push all those who come near into the opening.

The beauty of the world is not an attribute of matter in itself. It is a relationship of the world to our sensibility, the sensibility that de-



pend upon the structure of our body and our soul. The *Micromegas* of Voltaire, a thinking infusorian organism, could have had no access to the beauty on which we live in the universe. We must have faith that, supposing such creatures were to exist, the world would be beautiful for them too; but it would be beautiful in another way. Anyhow we must have faith that the universe is beautiful on all levels, and more generally that it has a fullness of beauty in relation to the bodily and psychic structure of each of the thinking beings that actually do exist and of all those that are possible. It is this very agreement of an infinity of perfect beauties that gives a transcendent character to the beauty of the world. Nevertheless the part of this beauty we experience is designed and destined for our human sensibility.

The beauty of the world is the co-operation of divine wisdom in creation. "Zeus made all things," says an Orphic line, "and Bacchus perfected them." This perfecting is the creation of beauty; God created the universe, and his Son, our first-born brother, created the beauty of it for us. The beauty of the world is Christ's tender smile for us coming through matter. He is really present in the universal beauty. The love of this beauty proceeds from God dwelling in our souls and goes out to God present in the universe. It also is like a sacrament.

This is true only of universal beauty. With the exception of God, nothing short of the universe as a whole can with complete accuracy be called beautiful. All that is in the universe and is less than the universe can be called beautiful only if we extend the word beyond its strict limits and apply it to things that share indirectly in beauty, things that are imitations of it.

All these secondary kinds of beauty are of infinite value as openings to universal beauty. But, if we stop short at them, they are, on the contrary, veils; then they corrupt. They all have in them more or less of this temptation, but in very different degrees.

There are also a number of seductive factors which have nothing whatever to do with beauty but which cause the things in which they are present to be called beautiful through lack of discernment; for

these things attract love by fraud, and all men, even the most ignorant, even the vilest of them, know that beauty alone has a right to our love. The most truly great know it too. No man is below or above beauty. The words which express beauty come to the lips of all as soon as they want to praise what they love. Only some are more and some less able to discern it.

Beauty is the only finality here below. As Kant said very aptly, it is a finality which involves no objective. A beautiful thing involves no good except itself, in its totality, as it appears to us. We are drawn toward it without knowing what to ask of it. It offers us its own existence. We do not desire anything else, we possess it, and yet we still desire something. We do not in the least know what it is. We want to get behind beauty, but it is only a surface. It is like a mirror that sends us back our own desire for goodness. It is a sphinx, an enigma, a mystery which is painfully tantalizing. We should like to feed upon it but it is merely something to look at; it appears only from a certain distance. The great trouble in human life is that looking and eating are two different operations. Only beyond the sky, in the country inhabited by God, are they one and the same operation. Children feel this trouble already, when they look at a cake for a long time almost regretting that it should have to be eaten and yet are unable to help eating it. It may be that vice, depravity, and crime are nearly always, or even perhaps always, in their essence, attempts to eat beauty, to eat what we should only look at. Eve began it. If she caused humanity to be lost by eating the fruit, the opposite attitude, looking at the fruit without eating it, should be what is required to save it. "Two winged companions," says an Upanishad, "two birds are on the branch of a tree. One eats the fruit, the other looks at it." These two birds are the two parts of our soul.

It is because beauty has no end in view that it constitutes the only finality here below. For here below there are no ends. All the things that we take for ends are means. That is an obvious truth. Money is the means of buying, power is the means of commanding. It is more or less the same for all the things that we call good.

Only beauty is not the means to anything else. It alone is good in itself, but without our finding any particular good or advantage in it. It seems itself to be a promise and not a good. But it only gives itself; it never gives anything else.

Nevertheless, as it is the only finality, it is present in all human pursuits. Although they are all concerned with means, for everything that exists here below is only a means, beauty sheds a luster upon them which colors them with finality. Otherwise there could neither be desire, nor, in consequence, energy in the pursuit.

For a miser after the style of Harpagon,\* all the beauty of the world is enshrined in gold. And it is true that gold, as a pure and shining substance, has something beautiful about it. The disappearance of gold from our currency seems to have made this form of avarice disappear too. Today those who heap up money without spending it are desirous of power.

Most of those who seek riches connect the thought of luxury with them. Luxury is the finality of riches. Moreover luxury itself represents beauty for a whole class of men. It provides surroundings through which they can feel in a vague fashion that the universe is beautiful; just as Saint Francis needed to be a vagabond and a beggar in order to feel it to be beautiful. Either way would be equally legitimate if in each case the beauty of the world were experienced in an equally direct, pure, and full manner; but happily God willed that it should not be so. Poverty has a privilege. That is a dispensation of Providence without which the love of the beauty of the world might easily come into conflict with the love of our neighbor. Nevertheless, the horror of poverty—and every reduction of wealth can be felt as poverty, even its failure to increase—is essentially a horror of ugliness. The soul that is prevented by circumstances from feeling anything of the beauty of the world, even confusedly, even through what is false, is invaded to its very center by a kind of horror.

\*Harpagon is a character in Molière's *L'Avare*.

The love of power amounts to a desire to establish order among the men and things around oneself, either on a large or small scale, and this desire for order is the result of a sense of beauty. In this case, as in the case of luxury, the question is one of forcing a certain circle into a pattern suggestive of universal beauty; this circle is limited, but the hope of increasing it indefinitely may often be present. This unsatisfied appetite, the desire to keep on increasing, is due precisely to a desire for contact with universal beauty, even though the circle we are organizing is not the universe. It is not the universe and it hides it. Our immediate universe is like the scenery in a theater.

In his poem *Sémiramis*, Valéry succeeds very well in making us feel the connection between tyranny and the love of beauty. Apart from war, the instrument for increasing his power, Louis XIV was only interested in festivals and architecture. Moreover war itself, especially as conducted in the old days, stirs man's sense of beauty in a way that is vital and poignant.

Art is an attempt to transport into a limited quantity of matter, modeled by man, an image of the infinite beauty of the entire universe. If the attempt succeeds, this portion of matter should not hide the universe, but on the contrary it should reveal its reality to all around.

Works of art that are neither pure and true reflections of the beauty of the world nor openings onto this beauty are not strictly speaking beautiful; their authors may be very talented but they lack real genius. That is true of a great many works of art which are among the most celebrated and the most highly praised. Every true artist has had real, direct, and immediate contact with the beauty of the world, contact that is of the nature of a sacrament. God has inspired every first-rate work of art, though its subject may be utterly and entirely secular; he has not inspired any of the others. Indeed the luster of beauty that distinguishes some of those others may quite well be a diabolical luster.

Science has as its object the study and the theoretical reconstruction of the order of the world—the order of the world in relation to

the mental, psychic, and bodily structure of man. Contrary to the naïve illusions of certain scholars, neither the use of telescopes and microscopes, nor the employment of most unusual algebraical formulae, nor even a contempt for the principle of noncontradiction will allow it to get beyond the limits of this structure. Moreover it is not desirable that it should. The object of science is the presence of Wisdom in the universe, Wisdom of which we are the brothers, the presence of Christ, expressed through matter which constitutes the world.

We reconstruct for ourselves the order of the world in an image, starting from limited, countable, and strictly defined data. We work out a system for ourselves, establishing connections and conceiving of relationships between terms that are abstract and for that reason possible for us to deal with. Thus in an image, an image of which the very existence hangs upon an act of our attention, we can contemplate the necessity which is the substance of the universe but which, as such, only manifests itself to us by the blows it deals.

We cannot contemplate without a certain love. The contemplation of this image of the order of the world constitutes a certain contact with the beauty of the world. The beauty of the world is the order of the world that is loved.

Physical work is a specific contact with the beauty of the world, and can even be, in its best moments, a contact so full that no equivalent can be found elsewhere. The artist, the scholar, the philosopher, the contemplative should really admire the world and pierce through the film of unreality that veils it and makes of it, for nearly all men at nearly every moment of their lives, a dream or stage set. They ought to do this but more often than not they cannot manage it. He who is aching in every limb, worn out by the effort of a day of work, that is to say a day when he has been subject to matter, bears the reality of the universe in his flesh like a thorn. The difficulty for him is to look and to love. If he succeeds, he loves the Real.

That is the immense privilege God has reserved for his poor. But they scarcely ever know it. No one tells them. Excessive fatigue, ha-

assing money worries, and the lack of true culture prevent them from noticing it. A slight change in these conditions would be enough to open the door to a treasure. It is heart-rending to see how easy it would be in many cases for men to procure a treasure for their fellows and how they allow centuries to pass without taking the trouble to do so.

At the time when there was a people's civilization, of which we are today collecting the crumbs as museum pieces under the name of folklore, the people doubtless had access to the treasure. Mythology too, which is very closely related to folklore, testifies to it, if we can decipher the poetry it contains.

Carnal love in all its forms, from the highest, that is to say true marriage or platonic love, down to the worst, down to debauchery, has the beauty of the world as its object. The love we feel for the splendor of the heavens, the plains, the sea, and the mountains, for the silence of nature which is borne in upon us by thousands of tiny sounds, for the breath of the winds or the warmth of the sun, this love of which every human being has at least an inkling, is an incomplete, painful love, because it is felt for things incapable of responding, that is to say for matter. Men want to turn this same love toward a being who is like themselves and capable of answering to their love, of saying yes, of surrendering. When the feeling for beauty happens to be associated with the sight of some human being, the transference of love is made possible, at any rate in an illusory manner. But it is all the beauty of the world, it is universal beauty, for which we yearn.

This kind of transference is what all love literature expresses, from the most ancient and well-worn metaphors and comparisons to the subtle analyses of Proust.

The longing to love the beauty of the world in a human being is essentially the longing for the Incarnation. It is mistaken if it thinks it is anything else. The Incarnation alone can satisfy it. It is therefore wrong to reproach the mystics, as has been done sometimes, because they use love's language. It is theirs by right. Others only borrow it.



If carnal love on all levels goes more or less directly toward beauty—and the exceptions are perhaps only apparent—it is because beauty in a human being enables the imagination to see in him something like an equivalent of the order of the world.

That is why sins in this realm are serious. They constitute an offense against God from the very fact that the soul is unconsciously engaged in searching for God. Moreover they all come back to one thing and that is the more or less complete determination to dispense with consent. To be completely determined to dispense with it is perhaps the most frightful of all crimes. What can be more horrible than not to respect the consent of a being in whom one is seeking, though unconsciously, for an equivalent of God?

It is still a crime, though a less serious one, to be content with consent issuing from a low or superficial region of the soul. Whether there is physical union or not, the exchange of love is unlawful if, on both sides, the consent does not come from that central point in the soul where the yes can be nothing less than eternal. The obligation of marriage which is so often regarded as a simple social convention today, is implanted in the nature of human thought through the affinity between carnal love and beauty. Everything that is related to beauty should be unaffected by the passage of time. Beauty is eternity here below.

It is not surprising that in temptation men so often have the feeling of something absolute, which infinitely surpasses them, which they cannot resist. The absolute is indeed there. But we are mistaken when we think that it dwells in pleasure.

The mistake is the effect of this imaginary transference which is the principal mechanism of human thought. Job speaks of the slave who in death will cease to hear the voice of his master and who thinks that this voice harms him. It is but too true. The voice does him only too much harm. Yet he is mistaken. The voice is not harmful in itself. If he were not a slave it would not hurt him at all. But because he is a slave, the pain and the brutality of the blows of the whip enter his soul by the sense of hearing, at the same time as the voice, and penetrate to its

very depths. There is no barrier by which he can protect himself. Affliction has forged this link.

In the same way the man who thinks he is in the power of pleasure is really in the power of the absolute which he has transferred to it. This absolute is to pleasure what the blows of the whip are to the master's voice; but the association is not the result of affliction here; it is the result of an original crime, the crime of idolatry. Saint Paul has emphasized the kinship between vice and idolatry.

He who has located the absolute in pleasure cannot help being dominated by it. Man does not struggle against the absolute. He who knows how to locate the absolute outside pleasure possesses the perfection of temperance.

The different kinds of vice, the use of drugs, in the literal or metaphorical sense of the word, all such things constitute the search for a state where the beauty of the world will be tangible. The mistake lies precisely in the search for a special state. False mysticism is another form of this error. If the error is thrust deeply enough into the soul, man cannot but succumb to it.

In general all the tastes of men from the guiltiest to the most innocent, from the most usual to the most peculiar, are related to a combination of circumstances or to a set of people or surroundings which they imagine can give them access to the beauty of the world. The advantage of this or that group of circumstances is due to temperament, to the memories of a past life, to causes which are usually impossible to recognize.

There is only one case, which moreover is frequent, when the attraction of the pleasure of the senses does not lie in the contact it offers with beauty; it is when, on the contrary, it provides an escape from it.

The soul seeks nothing so much as contact with the beauty of the world, or at a still higher level, with God; but at the same time it flies from it. When the soul flies from anything it is always trying to get away, either from the horror of ugliness, or contact with what is truly pure. This is because all mediocrity flies from the light; and in all souls,

except those which are near perfection, there is a great part which is mediocre. This part is seized with panic every time that a little pure beauty or pure goodness appears; it hides behind the flesh, it uses it as a veil. As a bellicose nation really needs to cover its aggression with some pretext or other if it is to succeed in its enterprises, the quality of the pretext being actually quite indifferent, so the mediocre part of the soul needs a slight pretext for flying from the light. The attraction of pleasure and the fear of pain supply this pretext. There again it is the absolute that dominates the soul, but as an object of repulsion and no longer as an attraction. Very often also in the search for carnal pleasure the two movements are combined; the movement of running toward pure beauty and the movement of flying far from it are indistinguishably tangled.

However it may be, in every kind of human occupation there is always some regard for the beauty of the world seen in more or less distorted or soiled images. As a consequence there is not any department of human life which is purely natural. The supernatural is secretly present throughout. Under a thousand different forms, grace and mortal sin are everywhere.

Between God and these incomplete, unconscious, often criminal searchings for beauty, the only link is the beauty of the world. Christianity will not be incarnated so long as there is not joined to it the Stoic's idea of filial piety for the city of the world, for the country of here below which is the universe. When, as the result of some misapprehension, very difficult to understand today, Christianity cut itself off from Stoicism, it condemned itself to an abstract and separate existence.

Even the very highest achievements of the search for beauty, in art or science for instance, are not truly beautiful. The only true beauty, the only beauty that is the real presence of God, is the beauty of the universe. Nothing less than the universe is beautiful.

The universe is beautiful as a beautiful work of art would be if there could be one that deserved this name. Thus it contains nothing constituting an end or a good in itself. It has in it no finality beyond universal beauty itself. The essential truth to be known concerning this

universe is that it is absolutely devoid of finality. Nothing in the way of finality can be ascribed to it except through a lie or a mistake.

If we ask why such and such a word in a poem is in such and such a place and if there is an answer, either the poem is not of the highest order or else the reader has understood nothing of it. If one can rightly say that the word is where it is in order to express a particular idea, or for the sake of a grammatical connection, or for the sake of the rhyme or alliteration, or to complete the line, or to give a certain color, or even for a combination of several reasons of this kind, there has been a seeking for effect in the composition of the poem, there has not been true inspiration. In the case of a really beautiful poem the only answer is that the word is there because it is suitable that it should be. The proof of this suitability is that it is there and that the poem is beautiful. The poem is beautiful, that is to say the reader does not wish it other than it is.

It is in this way that art imitates the beauty of the world. The suitability of things, beings, and events consists only in this, that they exist and that we should not wish that they did not exist or that they had been different. Such a wish would be an impiety toward our universal country, a lack of the love of the Stoics. We are so constituted that this love is in fact possible; and it is this possibility of which the name is the beauty of the world.

The question of Beaumarchais: "Why these things rather than others?" never has any answer, because the world is devoid of finality. The absence of finality is the reign of necessity. Things have causes and not ends. Those who think to discern special designs of Providence are like professors who give themselves up to what they call the explanation of the text, at the expense of a beautiful poem.

In art, the equivalent of this reign of necessity is the resistance of matter and arbitrary rules. Rhyme imposes upon the poet a direction in his choice of words which is absolutely unrelated to the sequence of ideas. Its function in poetry is perhaps analogous to that of affliction in our lives. Affliction forces us to feel with all our souls the absence of finality.



If the soul is set in the direction of love, the more we contemplate necessity, the more closely we press its metallic cold and hardness directly to our very flesh, the nearer we approach to the beauty of the world. That is what Job experienced. It was because he was so honest in his suffering, because he would not entertain any thought that might impair its truth, that God came down to reveal the beauty of the world to him.

It is because absence of any finality or intention is the essence of the beauty of the world that Christ told us to behold the rain and the light of the sun, as they fall without discrimination upon the just and the unjust. This recalls the supreme cry of Prometheus: "The heavens, where the common orb of day revolves for all." Christ commands us to imitate this beauty. Plato also in the *Timæus* counsels us through contemplation to make ourselves like to the beauty of the world, like to the harmony of the circular movements that cause day and night, months, seasons, and years to succeed each other and return. In these revolutions also, and in their combination, the absence of intention and finality is manifest; pure beauty shines forth.

It is because it can be loved by us, it is because it is beautiful, that the universe is a country. It is our only country here below. This thought is the essence of the wisdom of the Stoics. We have a heavenly country, but in a sense it is too difficult to love, because we do not know it; above all, in a sense, it is too easy to love, because we can imagine it as we please. We run the risk of loving a fiction under this name. If the love of the fiction is strong enough it makes all virtue easy, but at the same time of little value. Let us love the country of here below. It is real; it offers resistance to love. It is this country that God has given us to love. He has willed that it should be difficult yet possible to love it.

We feel ourselves to be outsiders, uprooted, in exile here below. We are like Ulysses who had been carried away during his sleep by sailors and woke in a strange land, longing for Ithaca with a longing that rent his soul. Suddenly Athena opened his eyes and he saw that he was in Ithaca. In the same way every man who longs indefatigably for his

country, who is distracted from his desire neither by Calypso nor by the Sirens, will one day suddenly find that he is there.

The imitation of the beauty of the world, that which corresponds to the absence of finality, intention, and discrimination in it, is the absence of intention in ourselves, that is to say the renunciation of our own will. To be perfectly obedient is to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Among men, a slave does not become like his master by obeying him. On the contrary, the more he obeys the greater is the distance between them.

It is otherwise between man and God. If a reasonable creature is absolutely obedient, he becomes a perfect image of the Almighty as far as this is possible for him.

We are made in the very image of God. It is by virtue of something in us which attaches to the fact of being a person but which is not the fact itself. It is the power of renouncing our own personality. It is obedience.

Every time that a man rises to a degree of excellence, which by participation makes of him a divine being, we are aware of something impersonal and anonymous about him. His voice is enveloped in silence. This is evident in all the great works of art or thoughts, in the great deeds of saints and in their words.

It is then true in a sense that we must conceive of God as impersonal, in the sense that he is the divine model of a person who passes beyond the self by renunciation. To conceive of him as an all-powerful person, or under the name of Christ as a human person, is to exclude oneself from the true love of God. That is why we have to adore the perfection of the heavenly Father in his even diffusion of the light of the sun. The divine and absolute model of that renunciation which is obedience in us—such is the creative and ruling principle of the universe—such is the fullness of being.

It is because the renunciation of the personality makes man a reflection of God that it is so frightful to reduce men to the condition of inert matter by plunging them into affliction. When the quality of hu-

man personality is taken from them, the possibility of renouncing it is also taken away, except in the case of those who are sufficiently prepared. As God has created our independence so that we should have the possibility of renouncing it out of love, we should for the same reason wish to preserve the independence of our fellows. He who is perfectly obedient sets an infinite price upon the faculty of free choice in all men.

In the same way there is no contradiction between the love of the beauty of the world and compassion. Such love does not prevent us from suffering on our own account when we are in affliction. Neither does it prevent us from suffering because others are afflicted. It is on another plane from suffering.

The love of the beauty of the world, while it is universal, involves, as a love secondary and subordinate to itself, the love of all the truly precious things that bad fortune can destroy. The truly precious things are those forming ladders reaching toward the beauty of the world, openings onto it. He who has gone farther, to the very beauty of the world itself, does not love them any less but much more deeply than before.

Numbered among them are the pure and authentic achievements of art and science. In a much more general way they include everything that envelops human life with poetry through the various social strata. Every human being has at his roots here below a certain terrestrial poetry, a reflection of the heavenly glory, the link, of which he is more or less vaguely conscious, with his universal country. Affliction is the tearing up of these roots.

Human cities in particular, each one more or less according to its degree of perfection, surround the life of their inhabitants with poetry. They are images and reflections of the city of the world. Actually, the more they have the form of a nation, the more they claim to be countries themselves, the more distorted and soiled they are as images. But to destroy cities, either materially or morally, or to exclude human beings from a city, thrusting them down to the state of social outcasts, this is to sever every bond of poetry and love between hu-

man beings and the universe. It is to plunge them forcibly into the horror of ugliness. There can scarcely be a greater crime. We all have a share by our complicity in an almost innumerable quantity of such crimes. If only we could understand, it should wring tears of blood from us.

### *The Love of Religious Practices*

The love of institutional religion, although the name of God necessarily comes into it, is not in itself an explicit, but an implicit love of God, for it does not involve direct, immediate contact with him. God is present in religious practices, when they are pure, just as he is present in our neighbor and in the beauty of the world; in the same way and not any more.

The form that the love of religion takes in the soul differs a great deal according to the circumstances of our lives. Some circumstances prevent the very birth of this love; others kill it before it has been able to grow very strong. In affliction some men, in spite of themselves, develop a hatred and contempt for religion because the cruelty, pride, or corruption of certain of its ministers have made them suffer. There are others who have been reared from their earliest youth in surroundings impregnated with a spirit of this sort. We must conclude that in such cases, by God's mercy, the love of our neighbor and the love of the beauty of the world, if they are sufficiently strong and pure, will be enough to raise the soul to any height.

The love of institutional religion normally has as its object the prevailing religion of the country or circle in which a man is brought up. As the result of an inborn habit, everyone thinks first of that each time he thinks of a religious service.

The whole virtue of religious practices can be conceived of from the Buddhist tradition concerning the recitation of the name of the Lord. It is said that Buddha made a vow to raise to himself, in the Land of Purity, all those who pronounced his name with the desire of being