

## SNOBBIISM: ONE ASPECT OF THE WILL TO POWER

The sense of power has a double face: on the one hand, it is the will to power as a force impelling to action; on the other hand, it is a basic state of mind which essentially conditions our intellectual approach to reality. It is in this second perspective that we see why the interpretation of a series of relationships between man and reality in terms of power, inconceivable among the Zunis or the Arapesh, is natural to the Western mind, or, at any rate, is more or less in agreement with its general attitude. As Mannheim observed, "We enter at birth a world which has already been interpreted, a world which has already been made comprehensible, and each of whose parts has a meaning."<sup>1</sup> In this study we propose to examine to what degree and through what modes of expression this age-old spiritual conditioning has influenced our view of the world and of the realities of existence.

The perspective in which the category of power was given new scope

Translated by James Labadie.

1. K. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1952), p. 197.

was sketched out by Hobbes; wealth, popularity, reputation, eloquence, knowledge itself, are, he tells us, forms of power.<sup>2</sup> This view was to be rationalized by Locke, who classified “the idea of power among the simplest ideas, those beyond which there is no need to seek a more primitive explanatory principle.”<sup>3</sup> From this fact, man in our civilization has been led not only to strive for power over his fellows and over things but also to interpret every relationship between his “self” and the real world in terms of power. While this may be objective reality or cultural interpretation, he seeks the reasons for, and the traces of, his preoccupation with these matters in the very origins of humanity.

The interpretation of reality in terms of power finds disquieting confirmation in the analysis of the religious experience from the most archaic times. The feeling of man in the presence of “something other which surprises” is qualified by the fact that this “other” is out of the ordinary precisely because of the power it may exert.<sup>4</sup> According to Otto’s systematizing perspective, it is the moment of power which basically characterizes the numinous, whose energetic nature is linked to a feeling of mysterious and terrible majesty.<sup>5</sup> A historicizing point of view retains the hypothesis of a process of change<sup>6</sup> in the content of archaic man’s religious feeling, of a “gradual slipping over from a concern about life, proper to totemic cultures, to a concern about power,” at the time when the individual realized more clearly his separation from the universe. The cults of ancestors and of heroes are then supposed to have come to the fore, displacing the cults of life.<sup>7</sup> The primitive cultures of today in which we imagine, not without reason, that the mental structure of archaic man persists, offer noticeable traces of such

2. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford, 1952), chap. xi.

3. R. Polin, “Sens et fondement de pouvoir chez J. Locke,” *Le Pouvoir* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), I, 56.

4. G. van der Leeuw, *La Religion dans son essence et ses manifestations* (Paris, 1948), pp. 9–10.

5. R. Otto, *Das Heilige* (Breslau, 1920), pp. 12, 19, 25.

6. We are avoiding any term which might imply the idea (called arbitrary by M. Eliade) of an evolution of the religious phenomenon (cf. *Traité d'histoire des religions* [Paris, 1943], p. 12).

7. M. Leenhardt, “Quelques éléments communs aux forms inférieures de la religion,” *Histoire des Religions* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1953), p. 98, 108–9.

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a change. This could be due to a superimposition of cultures on different mentalities: Polynesian culture, for example, over a Melanesian base, substituting for the totemic myth proper to the latter just such a myth of power and of the gods.<sup>8</sup> It is, in fact, possible to verify, through ethnological evidence, the idea that the universe of today's primitive man is dominated, if not obsessed, by the idea of power, of the "mana," an element definable only through the fact of its active force.<sup>9</sup> On this cultural level human existence is characterized by a double insecurity: material, as produced by man's symbolic nudity before natural phenomena, and psychological as well, since the individual personality, newly acquired, is often threatened with disintegration.<sup>10</sup> From this moment the individual's mode of behavior is no longer a matter of indifference; it must necessarily "correspond to the aim of power . . . conquering evil powers and awakening fruitful powers."<sup>11</sup> In this situation magic imposed its requirements, and a magical mentality and magical attitudes took shape. To support our thesis we shall underscore some significant moments in their cultural persistence.

From one point of view, magic represents what is most original and most immediate in the will to power.<sup>12</sup> Through its energetic and pragmatic character<sup>13</sup> it is first of all an "art of making,"<sup>14</sup> of "producing a desired epilogue."<sup>15</sup> Its particular techniques, culturally variable, bear the stamp of a single dominating passion. The significance of magic lies in the fact that magic affirmation claims to create a universe of the subject, an *Umwelt* proper to itself in which its will, its own pleasure, is to be the sole norm. In this respect it is a revolt against "the given" and at

8. M. Leenhardt, *Do Kamo* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 129.

9. Van der Leeuw, *op. cit.*, p. 10-11.

10. E. de Martino, *Il Mondo magico* (Turin, 1948); cf. especially pp. 91 ff.

11. Van der Leeuw, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

12. G. van der Leeuw, *Der Mensch und die Religion* (Basel: Verlag Haus zum Falken, 1941).

13. B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science, and Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p. 114.

14. M. Mauss, "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie," in *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris, 1950), p. 134.

15. Malinowski, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

the same time a transformation of nature into culture.<sup>16</sup> Socially, magic represents an instrument of ascendancy and domination;<sup>17</sup> the phenomenon of shamanism is, in fact, found at the origin of many archaic or primitive hierarchies.<sup>18</sup> All hierophancy is a manifestation of force;<sup>19</sup> this theme is vigorously renewed in the Nordic religions. The degree to which certain of these elements, transmitted to us through the collective subconscious, have influenced the myths of modern societies is a matter of intuition and conjecture.

In Chinese thought, on the other hand, there is a well-articulated spiritual current, Taoism, whose supreme principle tends precisely toward a negation of the will to power in all its forms. But this current is isolated in relation to the main structures of the Chinese world. The conception dominant there sees the universe as a hierarchy of powers which proceeds from Heaven toward the Emperor, son of Heaven; this world is a world of domination.<sup>20</sup> The Vedic religion of India concentrated the movement toward power in the idea of sacrifice, at once liturgical and magical. But within this great civilization an important change of mentality occurred in the introduction of a new category of power: that of power as knowledge. The Hindu intuition interiorizes the struggle which is the myth of its existence: man will no longer be concerned with conquering the world but rather with surmounting its illusion by recognizing it for what it is. This introverted will to power, aiming at nothing less than breaking the cosmic process itself, was systematized in the teaching of Buddha.<sup>21</sup> Yoga was to elaborate, to the profit of Hinduism, techniques whose aim would be to surpass the human condition and its psychosomatic structures.<sup>22</sup> At the same time,

16. G. van der Leeuw, *L'Homme primitif et la religion* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1940), p. 40.

17. Cf. Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (London, 1952), pp. 102 ff.

18. Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Le Chamanisme* (Paris, 1951).

19. Mircea Eliade, *Mythes, rêves et mystère* (Paris, 1951), p. 169.

20. Cf. A. Forke, *Die Gedankenwelt des chinesischen Kulturkreises* (Munich-Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1927), pp. 179 ff.

21. Cf. Majjhimanikayo, I, 1, 2; XV, 9, Vol. I, p. 8, 1080. Dighanikayo, I, 11, Vol. II, pp. 149–50.

22. Eliade, *Mythes . . .*, pp. 116, 122, and *Les Techniques du Yoga* (Paris, 1947).

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from the point of view of the subject matter of religion, there could be seen in faith "the innermost experience of power" culminating in the testimony of the martyr.<sup>23</sup> This view, which appears to be related to the spiritual theme of "conquering evil through good," had a striking practical application. From the principle of non-violence which characterizes Jainism and which aims at the spiritual liberation of the individual, Mahatma Gandhi developed a technique of political struggle which became in turn a true and proper instrument of power.

The category of the will to power as knowledge, which had its metaphysical celebration in Oriental thought, found a different justification in Occidental civilization, where it moved in the direction of a growing secularization of the importance and the final ends of knowledge. Developing out of the feeling of plenitude, as Virgil expressed it, of "the happiness of knowing the cause of things,"<sup>24</sup> modern empiricism moved inevitably toward the pragmatist statement that "knowledge is power." It is normal, then, that in Orwell's animal state the pigs' superior knowledge gives them quite naturally the function of chiefs.<sup>25</sup> This fact was to be semantically translated: "The language of power, we are told, is not clearly separated from the language of knowledge."<sup>26</sup> In all times, knowledge, or a certain type of knowledge, has placed the one who knows in a position superior to that of his fellows; but never so much as today has this idea been interpreted, on the one hand, in terms of power, and utilized, on the other hand, to the ends of power itself.

"To impose on becoming the character of being," wrote Nietzsche, "is the highest will to power."<sup>27</sup> In this view the interpretation of philosophical knowledge is closely linked to the value which man attributes to the absolute, to the importance of the search for, and possession of, the absolute, and to the fact that this knowledge is to some extent creation, that is, a reduction of the chaos of immediate experience to a cosmos of intelligibility. If for the realist philosopher this brings about the

23. F. Wieser, *Das Gesetz der Macht* (Vienna: Springer, 1926), p. 80.

24. *Georgics* ii. 489.

25. George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (London: Penguin), p. 25.

26. Richard P. McKeon, "Le Pouvoir et le langage du pouvoir," in *Le Pouvoir* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956, I, 27.

27. Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht* (Kröner ed.), p. 418.

discovery and reconstruction of an ontological order, and, for the idealist, a true and properly named creation, philosophy creates for both a new world of relations and meanings. Such a position cannot remain the private domain of its author. Every intuition of the world possesses implicitly an intentionality which demands to be communicated. Imperceptibly, this constructed or reconstructed world of being and its relationships becomes, to a certain extent, a world of "ought-to-be." Knowledge, henceforth an existential truth, implies an appeal for the support of others. Thus the competition among intuitions of the world is a struggle for truth, but, at the same time, a struggle for the power which truth gives over men who accept it as such.

Our reflections on the power aspect of philosophical knowledge are equally valid for scientific knowledge as an effort to dominate the objective universe. This knowledge is closely linked to the technique which it at once engenders and conditions, that is, to the art of possessing and exploiting that universe as effectively as possible. We are led to evaluate its significance in relation to its apparent aims, but the reality of the technique is two-sided. "The fact is," observed Spengler, "that the inventor's passion has nothing to do with his results. It is his own vital instinct, his happiness, and his personal suffering. He wishes to enjoy a triumph over difficult problems for the sake of this triumph. . . . All great inventions and undertakings originate in the desire of strong men for success. They are expressions of personality and not of utilitarian thought."<sup>28</sup> Be that as it may, technique is not only psychologically linked to the will to power, but we also know that the realization of its aims leads more or less immediately, especially in certain sectors, to an accumulation of economic and political power. It is not by chance that the age of technique coincides with that of imperialism on a scale no longer continental but world-wide.

The singularity of the mental structure which we may define as the power complex and which is to some extent, as we have tried to show, the haunting preoccupation and the destiny of our civilization, admits the attachment to this central category of numerous modes of conduct and facts which appear totally unrelated to it. Nothing seems more purely altruistic than the act of giving. It is nevertheless significant that, just at the moment when the baroque world became explicitly

28. Oswald Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik* (Munich, 1933), pp. 71-72.

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conscious of the feeling of power, the occult meaning of the gift was revealed: Hobbes could write that “acts of kindness imply obligation; and obligation is slavery.”<sup>29</sup> Such an interpretation does not stem exclusively from the pessimism for which a later age was to reproach the philosopher of Malmesbury. It is metaphysically, if not in fact, the extension and explanation of a timeless feeling brought clearly to light by the study of the archaic mentality. It concerns the concept of the gift as magical gift. “To give, in this view, means to exercise one’s power. . . . He who gives brings something of himself into the life of another and then this other person is no longer free.”<sup>30</sup> This concept is religious in origin. Ritual sacrifice to conjure away the harmful influence of the dead or to propitiate the gods and even the pledge offered to Fortune are equally arguments to a power one fears and thus are instruments of power. On the level of human relationships, the biblical theme repeated by St. Paul of the glowing coals one heaps on the head of the enemy through good deeds<sup>31</sup> is an illustration of this particular technique of domination.

The non-economic and non-benevolent function of the gift is underlined on the sociological level by the practice of the potlatch and its derivatives, defined as “total payments in kind of the agonistic type.”<sup>32</sup> They consist, as we have said, of the distribution, even the ostentatious destruction, of wealth. Now, the aspect of potlatch which interests us is the fact that it is a ceremony of constraint. It implies that he who receives largesse must reciprocate in order not to lose face. But, as M. Mauss remarks, “the ideal would be to give a potlatch and not have it returned.”<sup>33</sup> In this way superiority would remain an acquisition of the generous one—the man who gave proof of power. Here we have the basic elements of a notion of prestige associated with the idea of power: for the competitive will is not directed toward the material aim of the activity (the distribution of wealth) but is destined to outclass a rival

29. Hobbes, *op. cit.*, chap. xi, p. 76. Marcus Aurelius had long before warned of the opposite dangers of becoming a slave of charity or an ingrate (*Pensées*, I, 8).

30. Van der Leeuw, *L'Homme . . .*, p. 72.

31. Prov. 25:21; Rom. 12:20.

32. “Essai sur le don,” *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris, 1959), p. 153.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 212, n. 2.

or a former enemy.<sup>34</sup> Imperceptibly, we pass from that archaic mentality to the modern mentality of conspicuous consumption, as shown by Thorstein Veblen.

Let us note in passing the link between the ideas of chief and “the one who gives.” Originally, in fact, political power and economic power were united in one and the same person, the king; now “this power ought to be superabundant . . . the king gives gifts.”<sup>35</sup> This association is so profound that it has left traces in popular semantics.<sup>36</sup>

To claim domination over the real is an essential factor in the act of magic. By very reason of the assumption that “to dominate is man’s most important existential condition,” our age has not failed to assimilate art as well to human modes of domination and to consider art as “the most sublime form of the will to power.”<sup>37</sup> The study of the forms of archaic art underscores the initial identity between magico-functional expression and artistic expression. The prehistoric act of incantation (Magdalenian animal or Aurignacian Venus as instruments of success in hunting and fecundity) lacks any specifically artistic intention; these are nevertheless expressions of art through the creative display of fantasy. The fact that the form they give to the real “is an act of intelligence and shows a power of organization”<sup>38</sup> establishes a relationship between the effort of artistic creation and the will to power. The same magic quality is proper to the word, whether it be articulated in some Orphic or Nordic incantatory formula or in a poem by Mallarmé where the magic of sound is combined with that of syntax.<sup>39</sup> In both cases it is the concern of the will to isolate reality in some way, to reduce it to the measure of the subject so that he may possess it more fully.

34. Ruth Benedict, *op. cit.*, p. 177; Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (New York: Mentor Books, 1955), p. 133.

35. Van der Leeuw, *La Religion . . .*, p. 109.

36. The slang term “dab,” meaning the chief, the master, is derived from the promissory Latin *dabo*: “I shall give” (cf. A. Dauzat, *Les Argots* [Paris, 1927], p. 73, and Balzac, *Splendeur et Misère des courtisanes* [Pléiade ed.], V, 1055).

37. E. Friedell, *Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit* (London, 1947), III, 403.

38. R. Huyghe, *Dialogue avec le visible* (Paris: Plon, 1955), p. 125.

39. Cf. Aldous Huxley, “Magic,” in *Texts and Pretexts* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), pp. 221 ff.



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As man affirms his individuality in relation to the world, and even to society, art and the artist are individualized in their turn; the affinity between artistic effort and will to power is all the more clearly seen. Freed from archaic constraints, the individual pursues his dream of power along the paths of art. The superior man, wrote Nietzsche, "must create, that is, impose his superiority on others as teacher or as artist."<sup>40</sup> He wishes first to triumph over time in the sense of personal immortality, like the Egyptian of the pyramids, or in the sense of renown, like the Assyrian. This will to vanquish death and nothingness was a trait common to both Horace and Shakespeare.

In other spiritual climates where art is liberation, as among the Greeks or in Goethe, the will to conquer an obsession and its triumph also celebrate the splendors of a refined will to power. The attitude of flight, of revolt, of non-recognition of the world as it is, may in turn be expressed in its appropriate artistic terms. The artist then becomes suggestive of a private universe, and he may acquire, by re-creating the world in his own image, the feeling of a true demiurgic power.

This reading of human reality through the perspective of power (whose principal, if not whose unique reality, is, we stress, of cultural origin) is an integral part of the current conception of history and sociology, both of which recognize the pre-eminent function of power in the economy of world civilization. "All human groups, whatever they are," writes Pirenne, "tend to spread out. This is a fact derived not from reason or from politics, but from life itself."<sup>41</sup> Bertrand Russell notes that "the fundamental idea in the social sciences is Power, in the same sense that energy is the fundamental concept in physics. The laws of social dynamics can only be formulated in terms of Power."<sup>42</sup> The will to power which originally tends toward the affirmation of the individual may, on the other hand, be expressed in the forms through which the person is nullified. This is the case of mass man, who enjoys the feeling of power only in vicarious form, that is, by adhering to some collective body like "the Party."<sup>43</sup>

40. Nietzsche, *Nachlass* (Kröner edition), II, 746.

41. J. Pirenne, *Les grands courants de l'histoire universelle* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière; Paris: A. Michel), VII, xiv.

42. *Power* (London, 1948), pp. 10-11.

43. Wieser, *op. cit.*

Developments of the theme of power have also been significant in the fact that they are not immediately obvious. This is the case when the theme is applied to certain organic functions, ranked symbolically at least, despite their specificity, in the orbit of the will to power.

Such an attribution is sometimes but pure image paradoxically justified by a general intuition of existence: thus Nietzsche could write that "feeding oneself is but a derived act: what is original is the desire to engulf."<sup>44</sup> However, his doctrine that the organic functions are but the expression of a radical will toward appropriation that varies specifically from case to case<sup>45</sup> is in a way confirmed (partially, it is true, but empirically) in the area of sexual activity. The Nietzschean formulation of nature derived from sexuality is somewhat metaphysical, even nebulous;<sup>46</sup> we refer to it only as a point of departure and for what might be called its ironic interest. Nietzsche, in fact, held as false the doctrine of the all-importance of the sexual, a doctrine which his contemporary, Sigmund Freud (twelve years his junior), was to invest with the authority and wide acceptance we know so well.<sup>47</sup> There can be no question here of discussing how well founded these various interpretations and contrasting evaluations are; in no way do they represent eternal verities, their cultural conditioning being far too obvious. From our point of view, the very theme of this study dictates the metaphysical choice of its orientation. As Alexander observes, Freudian doctrine is oriented too much toward the biological to take sociocultural factors sufficiently into account.<sup>48</sup> Within the limits of this context, Freud may be likened to a Goethe who in writing *Faust* would have stopped with the Gretchen episode. But we cannot fail to appreciate the universal human significance of the epic second part.

By stressing the considerable degree to which social structures and cultural imagination have conditioned and qualified the fundamental

44. Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht*, p. 657.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 658.

46. Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, II, 384.

47. On the will to power as a not insignificant basis for the personal effort of the founder of psychoanalysis, cf. Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud* (London, 1956), I, 33-34.

48. F. Alexander, in Clyde K. Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray (eds.), *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture* (rev. ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), pp. 426 ff.

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moment of sexuality by a series of changing meanings, we necessarily go beyond the elementary moment, intumescence-detumescence, of its physiological mechanism.

Even on the subhuman level of primates this appears clearly to be more than pure biology, the sociological element and its structures of hierarchical dominance exercising a considerable influence. It has been observed that the sexual reactions of primates are often oriented toward obtaining material advantages, with no relation to the sexual appetite as such,<sup>49</sup> and that this appetite is to some extent a secondary and derived fact in relation to the primary fact of dominance-possession.<sup>50</sup>

One of the distinctive characteristics of the archaic world is the cultural role played by sexuality. It is closely linked to the idea of power for "the potentiality applied by man to an environment . . . has its roots firmly planted in the sexual life."<sup>51</sup> Such an association is all the more significant when the sexual act is not related to procreation as a physiological process. We are told that "the *Canaques* does not know that the male has an essential task in the transmission of life."<sup>52</sup> The father's function (while considered a result of the genetic instinct) is interpreted as an invigorating function,<sup>53</sup> at once symbolic and concrete, which integrates a process having its own peculiar structures.<sup>54</sup> Phallic symbolism is essentially directed toward the cult of a source of strength.<sup>55</sup> This displayed strength is destined to bring about the fe-

49. S. Zuckerman, *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes* (London, 1932). The shifting of hierarchical positions conditions the sexual response of chickens (cf. Egge Schjelderup, "Weitere Beiträge zur Sozial und Individual-Psychologie des Haushuhnes," *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* [Leipzig, 1922], pp. 81-82).

50. W. Köhler has noted that sexual excitement in the chimpanzee is "less specific and less differentiated from other forms of excitement than in humans . . . the chimpanzee's sexuality is apparently less sexual than that of civilized man" (*The Mentality of Apes* [London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1951], pp. 302-3).

51. Van der Leeuw, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-25.

52. M. Leenhardt, *Gens de la grande terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), p. 143.

53. M. Leenhardt, *Do Kamo*, p. 87.

54. R. Thurnwald, *Des Menschengesteistes Erwachen Wachsen und Irren* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1951), p. 376.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

cundity of the fields or military victory;<sup>56</sup> rites of sexual abstinence are developed concurrently, aiming at an accumulation of power.<sup>57</sup> While in matrilinear societies the power role of the father is diminished, in patrilinear societies a patriarchal status tends to develop, with all the ideas of superiority and domination this suggests.<sup>58</sup> The father is then able to assume a status that is authoritarian and “Adlerian” rather than sexual and “Freudian.”<sup>59</sup> Patriarchal societies recognize polygamy; now this is a fact conditioned sociologically rather than biologically: having a great number of wives is a sign of power and wealth.<sup>60</sup> We are told that “the fundamental instinct of the sexual life . . . is linked to a more or less clear ulterior motive of victory”;<sup>61</sup> the original motive for the rape of women seems (in part, at least) to have been their trophy value.<sup>62</sup> Parallel to this on another level are the innumerable conquests of classical Don Juanism.

Sexual possession in itself has been considered a sign of authority and power. At the time of his revolt, Absalom hoped to consolidate his prestige position by possessing the concubines of his father, King David.<sup>63</sup> Western civilization inherited and deepened the athletic and possessive aspect of sexuality. La Rochefoucauld was later to codify this feeling: for the soul, love is a “passion to rule,” for the body a “desire to possess.”<sup>64</sup> The term “possession” is in fact but an occult symbolization of power, since in the sexual act the male does not really take possession of anything. For the Balzacian hero, “to have a mistress . . . is

56. Van der Leeuw, *op. cit.*, pp. 225 ff.

57. J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (abridged ed.; London, 1949[?]), pp. 138–39.

58. Cf. B. Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1949) pp. 24 ff.

59. Van der Leeuw, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

60. Mead, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

61. P. Bovet, *L'Instinct combatif* (Paris, 1928), p. 50.

62. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 35.

63. II Kings 16:21.

64. La Rochefoucauld, “Reflexions et Maximes,” *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Pléiade ed.), LXVIII, 253.

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a sign of power.”<sup>65</sup> Petrarch had already noted that in the society of his time adultery was an object “not of libido but of pride.”<sup>66</sup> The competitive side of the sexual chase is underscored by Proust’s hero: “Carnal love was the enjoyment of a triumph over so many competitors.”<sup>67</sup>

American sociologists have also stressed this competitive aspect of eroticism at certain moments in the social life of their nation—particularly at the present time.<sup>68</sup> This feeling, carried too far, may become the theme of revolt or of irreligion. Thus Julien Sorel wishes to triumph over the scruples of Mme de Rênal, and Laclos’s Valmont or Balzac’s Montriveau over God himself. Masochism and its counterpart, sadism, have in their turn been interpreted as a double expression of “the will to erotic power.”<sup>69</sup>

We have, then, arrived at the conclusion that a series of circumstances—historical tradition appearing to be the most effective—has conditioned the sociological tendency and the psychological inclination toward power, among individuals, as well as collectively, in our civilization. They have culminated in the diffuse interpretation, theoretical and practical, of the universe and its relations in terms of power. The specific conscious attitude of snobbism as such coincides chronologically with this ever more clearly marked spiritual orientation. Could this be the result of pure chance? The fact that snobbism is closely linked to the myth of the summit, and that the summit symbolizes power and is the seat of power, leads us to doubt it. Given this doubt and the intuition which has from the start oriented our study, we may attempt to discover the hidden springs leading to an eventual link between snobbism and the will to power.

We must bear in mind that the search for power, or its cultivation, considered as authority (and especially as political authority) cannot be

65. Balzac, *Le Père Goriot* (Paris: Pléiade ed.), II, 950.

66. Petrarch, *Epistula de rebus familiaribus* (Fracassetti ed., 1852), IX, iv, 2.19.

67. Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu, La Prisonnière* (Paris: Pléiade ed.), III, 77.

68. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 79; David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 155–56.

69. M. Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (Frankfurt, 1948), p. 20 (cf. also C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1951], p. 232).

assimilated to snobbism for, from the very beginning, the terrible mystery of this power, often clothed in numinous attributions,<sup>70</sup> assimilates every other sense that the person who possesses power might otherwise inspire in the social parvenu. The all-importance of factual elements bears equally on the point of view of descending forms of superiority leading to exclusion. The South African politics of apartheid, for example, aimed at forcing the Negro out of the dominant community, cannot be called snobbist or even snobboid; the defense mechanism it expresses is inspired by factors of *Realpolitik* rather than by a concern with superiority, even social superiority. The symbolic and cultural affinity, however, which relates certain mystico-magical structures of the archaic mentality to the forms of snobbism and the functional importance in this context of the mana or, more precisely, of power, are data equally favorable to our thesis. We should be facing an insoluble problem if we did not have to take into account the particular moment of power which springs up from the fact of its humanization. At the archaic level the mana is materialized first in the person of the chief and in the institution of which he is the living symbol. He is chief because of a particular sacral, politico-military, or economic efficiency, but also because this efficiency is recognized. Such recognition constitutes prestige: to concentrate this in his person is sometimes the principal occupation of the chief.<sup>71</sup> Prestige, marking the passage from efficient objectivity to its subjective recognition, is the aim par excellence of a sociopsychological moment which we know well, that of *esteeming for*.

One aspect of power lies in the fact that it communicates itself, giving rise to a hierarchy of powers. The mode of this communication may be magical contact or, within historicized cultures, delegation. In both cases a sort of participation in power is established; this leads in turn to a participation in prestige, a circumstance which should be carefully noted.

The principal datum from our point of view is the historical fact that authoritarian power and prestige may, at certain times, be disassociated—when, for example, power and legitimacy do not coincide. In this

70. On the theme of "distance" in relation to the king, cf. Van der Leeuw, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

71. M. Granet, *La Civilisation chinoise* (Paris), p. 384. Among the Canacks the chief represents "the personified glory of the clan" (Leenhardt, *Do Kamo*, p. 146), which indicates that even on this level prestige may be collectivized.

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sense, a study of prestige at the court of the Do-Nothing Kings or of the Mikado during the shogunate would doubtless prove fascinating.

The case of the prestige of the nobility in Western civilization is more immediately linked to the theme of our study. There is no doubt that this prestige was originally based on the fact of a more or less effective participation in power. Even today, the mediatized houses of Germany, though they may not always equal in seniority and illustriousness others figuring in the *Almanach de Gotha*, nonetheless enjoy a kind of pre-eminence over the latter—even if only in the second part of the *Almanach*—from the sole fact of their past association with a ruling sovereignty, tiny though it may have been. Proust similarly noted that, unlike the old nobility, that of the Napoleons had a tendency to consider its rank as an effective prerogative because of the comparatively recent memory of the functions it had exercised under the Empire.<sup>72</sup>

It is likewise an observable constant that the diminution, even the total loss, of all effective power did not result in a corresponding loss of prestige for the nobility. Even when it has fallen from its privileged political position, it does not lose its tradition of superiority and its role of arbiter in everything having to do with the manners and conduct of social excellence. Nor, once the immediate contact between power (in the sense of political authority) and prestige is broken, can the snoboid-snobbist movement be disassociated from any idea of power. Werfel wrote in this regard that the totality of the social aspirations of snobbism is far too subtly shaded to justify its being related to so massive an idea as that of power. For him it would correspond rather to the aspiration of appearance.<sup>73</sup> While recognizing the partial truth of Werfel's point of view, we think that such a formulation taken in an absolute sense occupies an equivocal position: while it is true that within certain cultural milieus the all-importance of the Nietzschean will to power yields to the requirement of *esteeming for*, that is, of prestige, which may even be "anterior to power and domination and to their condition,"<sup>74</sup> it is doubtful that this is the case in Western civi-

72. *Op. cit.*, *Du Côté des Guermantes* (Pléiade ed.), II, 131; Jean Santeuil (Paris, 1952), II, 270.

73. Franz Werfel, "Der Snobismus als geistige Weltmacht," *1928 Jahrbuch des P. Zsolnay Verlages*, p. 289.

74. Thurnwald, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

lization. Not that we wish to question the sociopsychological importance of the “will to appearance,” or to deny that it is occasionally even “more profound than the will to truth, to reality, to being.”<sup>75</sup> We wish to stress on the other hand the fact that neither the courtier’s admiration nor the effort of the parvenu can be confounded with the upward movement of snobbism, since there is understood in them a motive of more or less material self-interest. These details, however, should not lead us to deny the reality, non-immediate, it is true, of the relation between snobbism and power, which analysis can reconstruct even on the level of speech. We make a distinction between *puissance* and *pouvoir*;<sup>76</sup> the latter varying infinitely in content. While its meaning par excellence is that of “political power,” it may express itself in many other forms: and one of these is precisely prestige, which, as an active function, implies in the first place a relationship with others. To the extent that someone is sensitive to the influence of the prestige of others, the man of prestige has an advantage over him, and their reciprocal relationship is then a power relationship. We may say, then, that the prestige of the poet, the scholar, the artist, or the duke confers on each of these a power which, while not that of the dictator or the prime minister, is indeed a power in the area proper to itself.

The conditioning character of the pyramid and of its myths and the psychological attraction for the social elite which derives from it, explain the desire to participate in the prestige emanating from the pyramid. Imitative mimetism aims, through the formulas of a well-played role, at a sort of identification with the exemplary personage. It is in this sense that we can say with Adler that the aim of every attempt at superiority is but a “veiled desire for power.”<sup>77</sup> The experiment of American sociologists confirms this intuition: status may often be sought only for its proximity, even fictive, to authority.<sup>78</sup> Scheler has stressed in this regard that “the pleasure of the weak man’s auto-submission to the strong” is the fact of an unconscious desire “automati-

75. Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, I, 1272.

76. The Romance languages distinguish “puissance” from “pouvoir,” while the Anglo-Saxons have but a single term, “power,” “Macht.”

77. A. Adler, *Menschenkenntnis* (Zurich, 1956), p. 131.

78. Mills, *White Collar*, pp. 210, 255.



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cally given, to take his share of power from the strong.”<sup>79</sup>

The case of reverse snobbism, restless guardian of a superiority already acquired, is susceptible of similar association.

The ideal relationship and the effective dependence between the myth of power and the myths of snobbism constitute, in our opinion, the ultimate meaning of the latter.

79. *Op. cit.*, p. 19.