

The background of the cover is a detailed botanical illustration of several flowering plants. The plants have upright stems with opposite, ovate leaves. Some stems are in full bloom with clusters of small flowers, while others are in bud. The illustration is rendered in a style that combines fine line work with flat areas of color in shades of green and brown. The overall composition is dense and fills the entire page.

Flowers of  
Solitude

and

Points of  
Reference

E. Armand





# Flowers of Solitude

## and Points of Reference



OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS BY

**E. Armand**

— DRAFT TRANSLATIONS —

By Shawn P. Wilbur

l'en dehors library

This DRAFT EDITION of E. Armand's *Flowers of Solitude and Points of Reference* is a step toward the production of an edition of Armand's works and various related writings from the various periodicals that he edited. Work is ongoing to collect Armand's many publications and sort them into volumes inspired by the collections published during his lifetime.

The current draft translations will be revised at a later date and will be supplemented by a large number of similar writings, which were either not collected in the original volume or appeared after its publication. It has seemed useful to share them in their current form, as interest in Armand's work remains significant, but please do not archive them elsewhere in this form, as some of the revisions will be significant.

— SHAWN

REVISED APRIL 29, 2024

## Preface

E. Armand had the excellent idea of bringing together in one volume the *Flowers of Solitude* and the *Points of Reference* that we have all read in our avant-garde papers. In this way, these pages will not be lost. We will constantly have them before our eyes. Each time I had the pleasure of encountering them in *Le Libertaire*, *l'en dehors* or elsewhere, I reread them several times and carefully put them aside to reread them again. Indeed, there is in these pages a depth of thought that is hardly found in many writers and philosophers. It's an extract of thought, if I can put it that way.

He who fights for Truth and Beauty has the choice between several means of attack: the book, in all its forms, lends itself, as much as the lecture, to propaganda: poems, novels, theater, essays, in each of these forms the writer can let his thought flow, and give it life. However, it is a somewhat special form, quite disdained, and sometimes unattractive, because it goes straight to the point and does not linger on vain flourishes: it is the aphorism, which very few philosophers have cultivated. The aphorism, this precise, concise sentence, which expresses a lot of ideas in a few words, often says more than many works. It is the summary of an entire library, of an entire existence of struggle and action. It has the merit of holding attention, of fixing it, of imposing itself on it. The authors and readers of aphorisms possess to the highest degree the ability to reflect, to see the whole in detail, to bring out the harmony of opposites. The aphorism is a shortcut: but in this shortcut the universe is whole.

The collection of E. Armand is a good collection of aphorisms. The writer who meditates on life, and whose thought prolongs the action, reduces all his observations to two

or three general ideas. It is impossible for him not to notice the regime of iniquity and the triumph of stupidity. So, following a reading, a show, everything he sees or hears, he takes notes, and these take the form of well-felt aphorisms. E. Armand probably does not proceed otherwise: his experience, in contact with life, extends and blossoms into a thought or a reflection. His intelligence and sensitivity transmute into interior life what until now was only exterior life.

The aphorism is the form par excellence of individualist literature, this literature that aims to ennoble thought and touch hearts. There are, however, aphorisms empty of ideas: these are the aphorisms whose authors seek to be witty and only succeed in making themselves pitied. The aphorism that makes you think, while making you laugh, is the only one worthy of the name. The aphorism that touches on everything, without delving into anything, is opposed to the aphorism that leaves a luminous trace in the reader's mind, to the point that memory never forgets it.

E. Armand has touched on all the subjects, delving into them in depth. He walked among men, and he judged them: he judged their morals, their philosophies, their sciences. Sometimes the aphorism of E. Armand touches on the delicate subject of sexualism, so poorly understood by everyone, so simple, but which fools complicate at will; sometimes he addresses a serious scientific question, such as the origin of life or that of man. Nothing that is human is indifferent to the author of the *Flowers of Solitude*, born of reflection and individualistic wisdom, any more than to the author of the *Points of Reference*, these milestones that it is necessary to plant here and there on the road of ideas. Here, it is science and philosophy whose different hypotheses are exposed in a short paragraph. There the author addresses the problems of education, feeling and loving plurality. Elsewhere, it is a critique of the social and religious life of our

time, or an overview of literature and art and their principles, etc... Each chapter is devoted to a particular problem on which men are divided. A collection of aphorisms contains a certain order, this organic order, which is a deep order, opposed to the academic order, which is superficial. This is the order followed by E. Armand. However, he was keen not to mix the questions, which is why he brought together in this and that chapter a whole category of aphorisms relating to the same subject.

These reflections do not tire the mind. They constitute a somewhat random walk. Anyone who does not follow the paths that everyone else follows exposes themselves to making discoveries. The thought of E. Armand wanders in all directions, and we wander with it: we are never bored in its company. The twists and turns of his thoughts are always interesting to follow. The author's style is not twisted or convoluted: its simplicity is its strength. Images are not absent. It has movement, life, color, warmth. It is the personal style of a man who has thought personal ideas.

Let us take this book which will make us think, and perhaps awaken other aphorisms in our minds. We won't have wasted our time reading it. He will truly be a friend to us, a faithful companion. Let us remember, as we read through these pages, that they were written by a man whom bourgeois stupidity imprisoned for a long time, making him pay dearly for his boldness and courage. They were composed in the most disastrous conditions possible: this is yet another reason to love them. This book wonderfully complements the *Individualist Initiation* and *Thus Sang an « En-dehors »*. It takes his place next to them. Coming after these poems and that prose, it illuminates them and is enlightened by them.

This is the book of an honest and sincere man.

GÉRARD DE LACAZE-DUTHIERS.





# Flowers of Solitude

## and Points of Reference



### Chapter I

## Science and Philosophy

### THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE

Contemporary educators — I mean by that those who profess to be educators — have committed a great, unpardonable crime that should not have been permitted by the goal that they claimed to have set for themselves. This crime is to have neglected to tell the “educated” that the only knowledge we have so far of cosmic phenomenon is that it appears to us as a set of states and changes or transformations of “matter” or “substance,” which matter seems to be the theater of actions and reactions, in other words of implacable and continual struggles between different forces at work there. All the attempts made to violate this reality of the state of our knowledge, or adding or drawing deductions that it does not include, is a work of pure imagination. This is what educators, worthy of the vocation they claimed to possess, should have proclaimed from the pulpit or the rostrum. And to have failed in that is their crime. They were not asked, having reported this, to advocate suicide or annihilation. No. It was simply appropriate, once these premises have been laid out, to invite every being, each for themselves, to

ask what attitude they would have to adopt in order to derive from this knowledge the most advantages possible for the formation and development of their personality.

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Ignoring the situation that this knowledge creates serves nothing. It is backing up in order to jump better. Nor should we give ourselves over to a frightfully charged pessimism, indulge in discouragement. Why, in the midst of all these forces that meet and collide, should we not strive to be a force ourselves, a force that has the will to resist the forces that want to draw it into their orbit, the powers which want to make it serve their ends, since their object does not agree with you?

Given this knowledge, why not consider things as they are, then begin to live, to fulfill their reason to be? Why not adopt the dynamic conception of life — in accordance with the instinctive idea of the “will to live it” — contrary to the static or passive conception of existence — state of individual morbidity that results in resignation, the renunciation of the personality, annihilation within the larger whole.

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Humanity has lost confidence in faith and science. Because they have demanded of it something other than what it could give. Faith is a phenomenon of the internal life, of mystical sentimentality; science is a variable sum of relative knowledges.

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Having arrived at this conclusion that all we know about the cosmic phenomenon is that it seems to be a set of states and changes or transformations of matter or substance within which

struggle tirelessly, relentlessly and incessantly different forces, I do not say that this conclusion is to my liking. But in order for it to stop haunting me, do I have to give up my thinking and acting personality, do I have to commit suicide?

We can consider this reality from a completely different point of view. That is to say that it is only a relativity, an appearance, since in the last resort, as it is for us that we — finite beings — judge phenomena of an infinite extent and an indefinite scope. At least the instinct of individual will to live is something other than a relativity: it is ourselves.

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The pessimist says: “The will to live is a snare and the annihilation of the self is salvation.” It seems to me that this is pure fancy. Life is a valley of suffering through which we pass — this is true — but there is something other than suffering in life. There is joy. What am I saying? There is struggle, sensation, desire. There is the satisfaction of desire, the search for the renewal of that satisfaction. There are the little happinesses — the minor joys of daily life — sentimental, intellectual, artistic and economic activity. And who knows what else? And wouldn't all that justify the will to live?

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Salvation is within us. That is to say: it is within ourselves, each taken individually, that the meaning of life resides — that is to say that life only has meaning when seen through what we are, our self.

Strength prevails over right. — But what is right? — There is generic right, racial right, national right, social right,

individual right. Then, what is strength? — Muscular superiority or intellectual superiority? The fist or the ruse? — Vice triumphs over virtue. But what is vice and what is virtue? — Have we ever asked ourselves what we mean, individually speaking, by right, strength, justice, injustice, vice, virtue, the wicked, the good?

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Those sick of the struggle for life, and other pessimists who advise us to renounce it, cast away our personality, are pure *endormeurs*. If we listened to them, we would soon become worse than the slave or the prisoner. The slave can aspire to freedom or escape. The prisoner awaits there liberation. The renunciation of the struggle for life, of our struggle to gain and live our life, leads to resignation, to a state of mind a thousand times worse than captivity, which is only a locating of the body.

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The anarchist point of view on life — especially its individualist aspect — is not static, but dynamic. To desire to be a force that acts without concerning itself with laws, conventions, prejudices, fixed ideas — is there a more dynamic conception than that?

## NO FINAL CAUSES

We know today that there are no final causes. Energies and things exist. They are united only occasionally or intermittently. There is no preconceived harmony. There are only relations, exchanges, fleeting instances of equilibrium. There is no pre-established agenda in the universe, and the Cosmos or Matter is not a well ordered society, of which God or Force constitutes the

executive power. There are only clashes, shocks, disruptions, displacements, troubled cycles, with scarcely any obvious aim for the organisms, conscious or not, but a tendency to live intensely in their present, momentary form, until the exhaustion or cessation of accidental being. Is it otherwise among human beings? Could it ever be otherwise? Will a system emerge some day that will make a harmonic and supreme bliss reign among them? I don't know and only the present interests me.

## THE UNIVERSE

Pantheism is certainly more comprehensible, more acceptable, than deism. Translated into non-religious language, it means that all of the manifestations of life, organic or inorganic, present or constitute one aspect, one modality of that which is, of the cosmic whole. The sum of these aspects or modalities forms the universe and all that it includes of the ponderable or imponderable — for our senses — in other words, that which exists.

## SUGGESTION

I do not deny the influence of suggestion — even collective — even at a distance. I even accept that, under the action of one, several or thousands of wills moving toward the same goal, oriented in a given direction, there are created energetic currents, forces with an influence or intensity that is more or less durable. But I also admit the efficacy of individual resistance to these temporary forces.

## THE ORIGINAL CAUSE

“In the beginning was the Word,” states, sententiously, the author of the Gospel of Saint John. I do not know if there ever



was a beginning and, even had the universe ever began, it seems to me more than hypothetical that the first manifestation was the word. In the beginning, there were undoubtedly phenomena of a mechanical and physico-chemical nature. But it would be necessary to know first if that which exists forever has a beginning. As long as we are ignorant, anything we can risk on “what was in the beginning” will be a pure creation of the imagination.

Can you imagine or conceive of a state of being or a state of things that has not started? I am not trying to imagine it or to conceive it. I’m not making any assumptions about it. I leave to those who are passionate about the question — and I recognize that it is fascinating — the trouble of going back from cause to cause to the primordial or original causes, if it is possible. The efforts of these researchers interest me keenly, but it is understood that “what was in the beginning” is of much less interest to me than the development of my personal life, because if “what was in the beginning” escapes me, at least I sense that I exist. And that is the most important thing that is under heaven and on earth.

Why one original cause rather than several? I know that any combination of numbers or digits always leads back to unity; but while pointing out that numbers and figures simply constitute ratios, relativities for us, why should the one and primitive substance not have presented itself immediately under a multitude of modes and aspects: mechanical, chemical, physico-chemical?

## COSMO-PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is mineral life, just as there is plant life and animal life. Doubtless, the phenomena of mineral life do not appear to us as clearly and in the same way as those of plant or animal life. These

phenomena are not characterized by nutrition, reproduction, locomotion, of course; but they have their special characteristics, such as molecular attraction or repulsion, polarization, affinity, cohesion, etc. Expanding, contracting, changing state under thermal or electrical influences, oxidizing, etc., these are among the most obvious phenomena peculiar to mineral life. There are many more, by the way. Mineral life preceded plant life and it is its ultimate manifestations that will accompany the supreme convulsions of life on earth, when without water, without atmosphere, without volcanic eruptions. without earthquakes, receiving neither light nor heat from the extinct sun, our globe will roll, a desolate and desolate star, in the infinite expanses of the Cosmos.

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Perhaps this somber future is a purely gratuitous hypothesis? Perhaps water and air are not necessary for special manifestations of organized life that our brains are not able to conceive? Perhaps, the sun being extinct, some kind of life can subsist on the surface of the planets constituting the solar system? Life is possible in the dark, and there is no evidence that the “pale shine that falls from the stars” is not sufficient to maintain heat and light suitable for the production or maintenance of certain vital phenomena.

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In the current state of our knowledge, life — in its plant or animal form — can be considered as a parasitic phenomenon, announcing decadence, preceding the decay of the star on which it occurs. Everything seems to indicate that it was thus on the earth. For the first algae to appear, a very noticeable decrease in the activity of the globe was necessary; the incandescence had

long since disappeared, the gaseous vapors which surrounded the burning planet had dissolved into water; the temperature had dropped considerably. It is true that the earth's crust was still wavering, that it was wrinkling, that it was shaken by formidable tremors, followed by gigantic subsidence and formidable eruptions. But, from time to time, the cataclysms and upheavals diminished in intensity and only occasionally recalled the exuberant youth of the world.

Age came: losing more and more of its own particular heat, the earth became more closely dependent on the sun every day. It was then that animal life appeared, emerging from organic life. How? No one knows. No human eye, without doubt, has witnessed the transmutation of higher minerals into plants, of that of higher plants into animals. Their geological foundations show us that the more species multiplied and diversified, while losing their mass and plasticity, the more the planet solidified, petrified, ossified, if we dare say so. It is perhaps a star entered into its death-throes or on the verge of succumbing that we are exploiting.

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It seems within the natural order that at a given moment of their evolution, or even during the whole duration of their development, living organisms are exploited superficially or internally by other beings, specially adapted to this, which we call "parasites." The planet is no exception to this phenomenon. If we do not know what is going on inside, we know very well, on the other hand, that on its surface, at the bottom of the humid mist which the atmosphere that surrounds it, "live" a crowd of beings belonging to a considerable number of species. But why do those of these parasites who belong to the "homo" genus consider themselves to be far superior to their colleagues in

parasitism? Why do they attribute to themselves extraordinary moral and intellectual qualities? Why do they claim to be endowed with intelligence and free will, while they grant to non-humans only faculties of a mechanical order, the whole of which is given the name of instinct?

Perhaps this is the consequence of a natural tendency? Perhaps these claims are simply the effect of religious theories to which we owe the dualistic conception that differentiates soul and body, spirit and flesh, man and brute. But what are these religious theories themselves, if not the product of that vanity and arrogance that characterize humans?

#### OF INTELLIGENCE AND INSTINCT

At the time when the dualistic conception was in full swing, conclusions like these were reached: that the ant-lion digs its hole to let a bystander ant fall into it — instinct; that a poacher sets snares to catch a rabbit — intelligence; that a beaver builds its masonry mound — instinct; that a Cambrouard builds a hut out of mud dried in the sun and mixed with straw — intelligence; that the howler monkeys of Borneo stop howling, or rather singing, every time a female monkey gives birth — instinct; that a city dweller has the pavement of the street that borders his house covered with straw, so that the noise of vehicles does not harm the sick who are in his house — intelligence; that black ants raise aphids and milk them — instinct; that men raise cows and goats and milk them — intelligence; that the red ants reduce the black ants to servitude and make them carry out tasks that they are undoubtedly reluctant to accomplish — instinct; that the Egyptians or the Greeks enslave Hebrews, Nubians or Asians, and use them, these to build the pyramids, those temples to Jupiter or Minerva — intelligence, genius, art; that a sphex stings with its sting, I no

longer know what other fleshy insect, at a particular ganglion of its nervous apparatus, plunges it into lethargy and drags it to its dwelling so that, when it hatches, its larva finds a supply of substance, immobilized but still alive — instinct; that a female of the genus “homo” prepares the trousseau for her offspring whose birth she plans within a determined period of time — intelligence, maternal love, etc. Faced with such facts, and so many others, human self-importance must capitulate and recognize that, like man, the animal is endowed with sensitivity, will, memory, and finally intelligence; that it knows how to consciously direct its movements and, under the influence of impressions which come to it from outside, associate ideas, and combining them, use its sensations for the purposes of preserving its individual.

#### OF ANALYSIS APPLIED TO PSYCHOLOGY

I don't believe that analysis applied to psychology gives exact results. I don't believe that we can solve a human being like we solve an algebraic equation. There is no evidence, given that a circumstance occurs, that a given individual will act as he did in a previous circumstance. Nor does anything prove that, having analyzed his conduct in a previous action, such an individual will behave in the same way — even if this action comes to be represented exactly.

It is impossible to know all the determining elements of an act, not only the current elements, but also the past elements: personal influence of ancestors, influence of the environment in which they lived, particular influence of one of these ancestors, etc. In the determinants of an act, there is a certain dose of unpredictability, an unknown whose greater or lesser intensity is capable of confusing the most insightful analysis.



## OF INSTINCT AND INTELLIGENCE

Today, while we recognize in man as in animals the existence of instinctive acts, that is to say acts escaping the action of the will, the definition of the instinctive act “in itself” is not as clear, as determined as it seems. What is an instinctive act? It is one where the intervention of the cerebro-spinal mechanism seems inappreciable — escapes all measurement. In other words, the instinctive act is an automatic gesture, depending solely on the functioning of the great sympathetic. But could this automatism not be the result of an atavistic habit that originally required the full deployment of the intelligence of the being who transmitted it to its descendants?

An example: Durand, a big metalworker, learns, while having his meal, that his two thousand workers are about to go on strike. While putting his food in his mouth, he thinks; he calculates that he has ten million in wealth, that he has a stock of worked and unworked materials in store and that by estimating the average assets of each of his employees at a thousand francs — an eminently exaggerated figure — he will still be in a position to oppose them with a resistance five times their own. The end of his meal arrives without his being, so to speak, aware of it... And proponents of the instinct sing victory and shout that the act of grasping food is instinctive and nothing else. In truth, in humans, the act of grasping food requires learning, but its repetition and atavism cause it to subsequently be accomplished almost without thought. The reflections and calculations in which the exploiter Durand engaged, not being usual for him, on the contrary required from him an absorbing and very appreciable functioning of the cerebral mechanism. The first of these acts is not more instinctive than the other.

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What we call “intelligence,” “instinct,” are aspects, states of the functioning of the cerebro-nervous apparatus of the animal. In lower animals, whose brain is poorly developed, it is clear that the baggage of associated and combined ideas should not weigh heavily. But as the brain develops — as it presents more convolutions — memory is amplified; the impressions, the sensations entered become more and more numerous; the associations, the combinations of ideas and their use diversify, differentiate themselves, so to speak, infinitely.

#### OF THE CEREBRAL IMPROVEMENT OF MAN

Presumably, the cerebral improvement of man is due to two incidents of his anatomy: his upright position and the opposition of the thumb to the other fingers of the hand. Perhaps it is a prolonged stay in certain climatic conditions that forced the human being to draw from its cerebral mechanism all the resources that it was possible to provide. It is obvious that the possibility for man to wield a tool — and everything that is derived from it — has opened up to him the horizon of ideas and of the association of ideas inaccessible to the most intelligent being... Likewise for the upright stance. Let us imagine the dog, the horse, the elephant, gifted with a thumb and capable of handling a tool, of making a constant effort to add this tool to their strength — who can imagine what the globe would be like?

#### OF ANGER

The man who gets angry does not obey an instinctive feeling any more than the man who receives blows without retaliating. The temperament of the first means that, with him, the reaction to the impressions apt to determine his anger is so lively and so immediate that it dominates all thought, all reflection. It is a question of temperament, of personal determinism, not of

instinct or intelligence.

Moreover, in temperaments which, congenitally or as a result of subsequent education, are able to dampen, blunt or repress the brutal reactions aroused by certain sensations, it becomes possible to conceal or simulate not only the anger, but also the contentment, fear, amorous passion, etc., etc.... This can be observed in animals as well as in humans.

## STUBBORN SURVIVAL

What a little thing the human being appears, when you think about it, when faced with disease. A passing indisposition which worsens — air that is stale or saturated with miasma — a momentary incapacity of resistance — and it is all over for an organism endowed with faculties, even extraordinary ones. This is what you are, a fragment of substance becoming aware of your being. A little more pain, a little more suffering. How is it possible that we could have endured all of this? It seemed that the measure was filled, that one more drop would overflow the vase. And here we have survived the last test, the one it seemed we could never have endured.

## THE EXTRAORDINARY IN THE SERIES OF CAUSES

Let there be neither “effects nor causes,” nothing but an infinite continuity of “causes” comparable to the links of a chain which would unfold to infinity — I want that. What I claim is that among the links there are some that stand out, that distinguish themselves, that have more importance than their peers. I mean that in the infinite series of causes, there are some that radiate with a more vivid brilliance on the panorama of history, which project a more considerable influence, a more lasting memory and which have on what we call “general evolution” an action more intense than the causes that precede

or follow them. I do not claim that the extraordinary causes that generate certain extraordinary events (or that the extraordinary individuals who give rise to certain extraordinary causes and by ricochet give rise to certain extraordinary facts) escape the phenomenon of causality and are inexplicable. I notice that they arise sometimes — rarely — and that in such periods, there is accomplished in a few months, or a few years, what would, in other times, have taken ages and ages to complete.

### SUCCESSIVE LIVES

It is very seductive, this theory of successive lives. Like that of eternal life, it is the consolation prize for those who believe, rightly or wrongly, that they have spoiled or wasted their existence. It is even attractive for individualists since it raises the question of the permanence or indestructibility of the SELF. Unfortunately, despite all the comforting hypotheses it can offer, there is no scientific or even plausible reason why we can consider the “soul” or thought to be independent of the “body” — other than as an aspect of bodily activity. Moreover, while waiting for another life, and in accordance with that adage that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, I intend to live my present life with all the intensity possible.

### DUALISM

Dualism. No. There are not two natures in the human being. The human organism presents itself, manifests itself in a number of ways, which we can reduce to two principal aspects: the physiological aspect and the psychological aspect. The amoeba and the elephant, the oak and the raspberry vine, the bat and the rhinoceros are likewise different aspects of the terrestrial flora and fauna.

## OF THE BRAIN, OF THOUGHT, OF APPEARANCE AND REALITY

It is not true that the brain secretes thoughts, as a famous physiologist declared. The brain simply records the sensations and emotions that reach it from all the parts of the organism on which it depends; it records them, it classifies them, it associates them with the presence or memory of other perceptions, of an identical or different kind. The ensemble and sometimes the conflict of all these recordings, all these classifications, these distinct and sometimes unconscious reminders, constitute a sort of crucible, a cupola where thought is developed, where imagination is forged. A blind man who had never heard of the outside world, who had no communication with anyone and who lived in the depths of a remote cave would still think, but it is probable that his brain would hardly function except in relation to images, to hereditary acquisitions.

If the brain is only an elaborator of thoughts — a kind of laboratory; if it does not create thought; if the exterior, the outside-of-me is so necessary for its functioning, — the “non-me” therefore really exists. Without doubt, the “non-me” exists and we cannot deny it. But it manifests itself. It “represents itself” in a slightly different way to each of those who observe it, — all the more different as the spectator’s temperament, the faculties of observation are more personal, more refined, more sensitive. Moreover, — this is said in parentheses, — it is probable that to beings endowed with senses more complete than ours, the outside-of-me appears, represents itself with details, features, nuances that we do not perceive, — which perhaps modify the appearance or structure of objects.

When the human organism dissociates, the outside-of-me certainly does not cease to exist, but for the individual whose brain no longer functions (because it too is dead), there is no



longer any neither firmament, nor sun, nor humanity, nor societal life or life in general. For the human unit to perceive the outside-of-me, it must exist, it must be sensitive, it must think. The influences that the outside exerts on a decomposing corpse are not of the same order and cannot be compared to those of a living human, whose brain is in full activity.

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“We must understand: do a dog, a tree, a mountain, the sea manifest themselves to you in a different aspect than to me?” — Yes and no. For you and for me, a dog is a quadruped, a tree is a plant, a mountain is a fold in the earth’s crust, and the sea is this immense expanse of salt water which covers most of the globe.

But in this dog, while you only consider the breed, the coat, the appearance, the general or special qualities, I see an animal whose human master is the divinity and who fears nothing as much as not find at all times his will good, pleasant and perfect, the will of his god even if he died as a sacrifice at his feet.

In this tree, you admire the powerful trunk, the nuance of the foliage, the abundance of the branches, the antiquity, finally; I see in it the witness or the direct descendant of witnesses of a vanished age — it seems to me that I am going to see sliding along its upper branches a family of prehistoric refugees there to escape a band of wild animals, unless it is or to shelter from some torrential flood.

You see in this high mountain the effect of the gigantic tremors to which the planet was still poorly cooled, still poorly consolidated and still bubbling; it attracts me like a retreat; it appears to me like a giant staircase, each rung of which you climb plunges you into an atmosphere purer than that of the previous rung, where you feel more sheltered from the constraints and stains of human societies, from wicked and

dominating thoughts.

The sea charms you with its immensity, you never tire of admiring the spectacle of the flow that breaks on the shore and covers it with foam; I regard it as the great collector of the sludge and garbage of humanity; the immense cesspool where generations of men have dumped all the rubbish, all the waste, all the refuse with which they have filled their sewers and drains. And so on.

## RETURN TO NATURE

We remain amazed at the naivety of certain explorers — and also of some talented writers — who string together sentences about the moral beauty of natural spectacles and take advantage of it to contrast the simple and instinctive life of the indigenous groups that we call “savages,” with the complicated and often artificial life of civilized people. What charms the “civilized,” the man raised in the shadow of modern culture, when he is placed face to face with purely natural scenes, is that they respond to sentimental and artistic aspirations that sometimes have their source in ancestral memory of the primitive conditions of life. This is true of the rivers that flow, wide and majestic, between banks decorated with superabundant vegetation; forests with immense and magnificent trees; fertile soil that requires little work to provide an extraordinary yield; fauna with shapes and colors so varied that they defy the pen and the brush. All this, certainly, offers the eyes a spectacle far more grandiose and striking than the parks of our big cities, drawn with a chalk line. We forget, in the fever of description, that this abundance and this luxuriance in the forms, in the meaning, in the colors, are the result of the solar rays that fall sharply, so to speak, on these marvelously gifted regions. The civilized, cultivated man feels rising from the depths of his inner being something like a breath

of admiration and even amazement, which has a lot of resemblance to the attacks of religious ecstasy which great believers are accustomed to. A cold-blooded examination soon shows that there is nothing “moral” in the beauty of natural scenes, nothing even in their conditions of existence and formation that could give a sentimental heart a pretext to be delighted. The expression of power that equatorial fauna and flora generally give off are the results of a fierce struggle for life in which those least capable of resistance are inevitably defeated. By this I mean, the weakest, the least cunning, the least armed. Woe as much to him whose constitution is incapable of resisting bad weather as to the unfortunate person less skilled than his enemy in the handling of a club or a throwing weapon. I love the spectacles that nature offers as much as anyone. They thrill my senses; I taste with pleasure the scents they radiate. They enrich my artistic experiences in life. But I don’t see anything in them that influences me, “morally” speaking. They make me live more fully, more sensually, and that is all. And I don’t ask them for anything else.

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There is an obvious lack of good faith in the writer who swoons with enthusiasm in front of an animal with a superbly variegated coat or in front of some gigantic tree with magnificent foliage, and who forgets that it is thanks to the disappearance of its competitors — always obtained through violence or oppression — that both have survived. There is not only credit in the “great book of nature” there is also debit. And enthusiasm is not a good enough reason to skip every other page.

Imagine, moreover, that the puny plants or plants lacking brightly colored flowers have got the better of the large trees or the plants with colorful flowers — imagine that the dull insects

or the small grayish and sleeping animals dominate the vertebrae with the powerful gait or the birds with richly decorated plumage. Imagine dirty gray moss instead of the green grass of the meadows, uniformly heavy and opaque waters instead of clear running waters and streams — this, of course, under the conditions of mental appreciation which are ours. Do you believe that hymns dedicated to the beauty of nature would not be replaced by curses?

— “Return to nature”... But it is a question of knowing what a cultured Westerner means by the “return to the natural state.” We understand that intelligent men are disgusted with European civilization and have realized that, scientific and intellectual achievements aside, it does not differ, in substance, from the state described as barbarism — that is to say that these men bring feeling into their aspirations and their conceptions of life. We understand that these human beings want to settle in an isolated place, far from social conurbations and live there an existence more in keeping with their temperament and their horror of our civilization. But there is nothing here that resembles a “return to nature” — there is an escape from the conditions of civilized life, an exodus of certain men with special mentalities towards other circumstances and physical and psychological environments, an exodus undertaken taking into account their experiences in all areas of individual activity, a consideration from which they cannot escape without endangering their capacity to resist the causes of deterioration or physiological weakening.

## THE REALITY OF THE INFINITE

To claim that the possibility of the human mind conceiving the infinite constitutes a presumption in favor of the infinite (or the immortality of the soul) is to say that the possibility for the

human mind to conceive that the moon is inhabited by two-headed men, ten meters high, constitutes a presumption in favor of the habitability of the moon.

What is the infinite? An uninterrupted succession of facts, acts, moments, places of which we cannot imagine that they had a beginning, of which we cannot predict that they have an end or a limitation. What concrete examples, what images could make the idea of the infinite understandable to human understanding? Pennies that we would pile up in piles of one hundred at a rate of five hundred piles per day and of which a million days of counting would not be able to touch the number. Stones that we would throw into an abyss, which might fall for thousands and thousands of centuries without ever reaching the bottom. A ball launched at a rate of one hundred kilometers per hour and which, after a billion hours, would be, relatively, no closer to the goal than when it left the muzzle of the cannon.

These various images are the product of cerebral functioning, the result of the association, of the combination of ideas that are formed there. They have no more reality than the episodes of a novel, the scenes of a drama. The Balzacs, the Alexandre Dumas, the Victor Hugos, the Zolas imagined situations, invented successions of events, forged outcomes with a conceptual value equal to the ideas of infinity and immortality of the soul.

That the human being, exhausted by the trials of life and finding it still too short, tormented by its powerlessness to know, haunted by the concern for a reparative justice exercised since he knows not when, beyond the grave — that the human being, finite, limited, anguished, sought in the idea of the infinite a sort of consoling intoxication to which it resorts when existence becomes more painful, it is very explainable, very understandable. The idea of infinity, of the immortality of the soul persists in the human mind in the same way as there persists

in the drinker the memory of some intoxicating, stupefying or dream-generating beverage. But this observation constitutes no proof, no presumption of any kind in favor of the reality of the infinite or the immortality of the soul.

#### NATURE BECOMING AWARE OF ITSELF

It has been said that man is nature “becoming aware of itself.” From a human point of view, if you will, and only from a human point of view. In truth, in each living organism, nature becomes aware of itself, but to different degrees, more or less distinctly, with a vision that varies according to the vividness of understanding of the organism in question. It is clear that nature becomes more conscious of itself in the human being, especially in the higher human types, but it does not become fully conscious of itself in any human being. It could only do so in a being who would have deciphered it entirely, and therefore assimilated it. And what human being has achieved this so far?

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If man is nature becoming aware of itself, that is to say nature realizing that it is, wondering about what it is, about its reason for being, about its possibilities of evolution, on its past, on its present, on its future and on so many other problems, we can say that the individual is the human herd becoming aware of itself, that is to say wondering what he is doing on earth, asking himself multiple questions about his origin and the best way to spend his life, analyzing himself, formulating definite aspirations and calculating the amount of effort necessary or useful to achieve their realization.

## THE NATURALIST ERROR

The great error of the naturalists is to have presented nature as immoral, crude, cruel, merciless. In reality, it is none of these things. Nature is amoral. It exists in complete ignorance of good and evil. It is natural, and that says it all. A tiger is not cruel; it acts in accordance with its tiger nature. A dog is not immoral; it conforms to its nature as a dog. A pigeon is not virtuous, it behaves according to its nature as a pigeon, and so on. It is true that if the naturalists had “naturalized” — that is to say “amoralized” — their heroes, the public would not have understood them. To make themselves understood, they had to view nature through the prism of conventional morality. The more their types supposedly approached nature or the more so-called nature played out freely in them, the more they showed themselves to be fundamentally crude, merciless, ignoble, etc. To tell the truth, it was then that they moved further away from the natural. But it was necessary to sacrifice to popular prejudice, which wants the natural to be inferior to the artificial.

## INDIVIDUAL AGNOSTICISM

I know that I live. I know that I have the consciousness of living. I know many things about the physiological constitution of my body, I believe that I know less about its psychological constitution. I am able to increase the stock of my knowledge every day. Those who come after me will know more. I accomplish what seems to me to be the reason for being of an organism conscious of its existence: to assimilate and disassimilate, to enjoy and suffer, to react and endure, that is to say to oppose my personal, individual, particular determinism — to the ambient, immediate, proximate, cosmic determinism. And it is to the extent that I become aware of the originality, of



the particularity of my reaction against the environment — of the refusal that my “me” opposes to the absorption of the “not me” — that I feel myself to be a “unique,” one “outside of the herd.”

And then even if we had discovered somewhere a center in the universe — a nerve center, cerebral center, dynamic center — a center from which would come orders, injunctions, vibrations intended to be executed, realized, materialized at the point of arrival. Wouldn't my *raison d'être* as a human unity be to intelligently oppose my personal reaction to the action of this center? I admit, moreover, that the explanatory conceptions of the cosmic phenomenon do not provide an ultimate solution of the question of what is or even of the problem of the reason for the existence for life. What was there in the beginning? Was there a beginning and, if so, what state of affairs preceded this beginning? Why life? Why individual awareness of existence? It is because of these questions, left without a conclusive answer, that agnosticism is the most honest intellectual situation that the thinker can occupy — provided of course that this agnosticism is not a mental resignation, that it does has nothing in common with abstaining from research and wanting to know more.

### RELATIVE TRUTH EQUALS RELATIVE LIES

What we call the “self” is a momentary state of substance achieving consciousness of its separate existence, outside of the “non-self.”

Is there an identity between the “self” and the “non-self” — the “us” and the “outside of us”? The non-self is an aspect of things that are external to us, considered in relation to the “self,” to the “physiological” self and to the “psychological” self. The non-self is thus relative, and only exists as I see it, only as for me. The “self” is, on the contrary, a point of departure, a creator, a

center of judgment, evaluation, discernment, analysis and synthesis. It is reality.

However, I cannot make the non-self a starting point, a creator, a center of appreciation, analysis or value. I can relate to a cosmic phenomenon, for example, appreciate its influence on the course of my individual development. I absolutely do not know from what angle of relativity this cosmic phenomenon considers me and what repercussion I have on its evolution, — provided that I have one.

The idea that I have of the empirical or scientific “non-me” (even in the case of absolute concordance of the hypotheses that I form to myself to explain it to myself), this idea can only ever be a truth relative to my cerebrality as an individual belonging to the human species. However, who says relative truth says relative lie. Without forgetting that the idea that the “me” has of the “non-me” varies over the centuries and depends on the cerebral acquired knowledge of the time.

To attempt a definition of the “non-me” — that is to say of what is outside of us, we would at least need to know (?) in what aspect it appears to other organisms, to other vertebrates for example, who also possess their “sui generis” intelligence. What did I say? We should know the idea that beings endowed with a cerebrality perhaps superior to ours have (?) of the “non-me” — because we do not presume to imagine that the puny grain of solidified matter that is our planet is the only place in cosmic infinity where thinking beings move.

But even if we should know — clearly (?) and precisely (??) — the way in which individuals or organisms gifted with thought (whatever place they inhabit in the universe) envisage or define the “non-me,” even if we possessed this knowledge, we would not have gone one step further. We would possess a collection of relative truths — of relative probabilities, if you like. But, I repeat, relative truth is relative lie; relative

probability is relative improbability.

## IS THE “SELF” AN ILLUSION?

Instinct, nature, experience! All beautiful, you say, but are they also something other than an appearance, a word, an illusion? For my part, I am not always an enthusiastic worshiper of nature or instinct; I have always advocated resistance to the natural and the instinctive when they threatened to dominate, to encroach upon what we call “reason,” “will”, and to upset the balance to their advantage. But those who advocate that not only is the world outside the self relative to our limited senses, but that everything that is, including the self, is an illusion — they forget that they only judge it in this way to their capacity for thinking, conceiving or imagining — their judgment, being only a relativity like the rest, can just as well be accused of being an illusion. So that the whole problem remains to be solved and we are once again on the threshold of individual agnosticism.

## OF VOLUNTARY IMMORTALITY

Someone objected to me: “What proves that an individual cannot achieve relative immortality simply through his will? Can he not achieve his individual immortality as he conquers his personality? Can he not react against the annihilation of his psychological personality? Surviving himself intellectually at least, that is to say pushing his reaction against the ambient determinism to the point of achieving the survival of his thought?” — I answer that I do not see the possibility of this since the brain no longer exists, the brain, that is to say the elaborative organ, the birthplace of thought. As to whether through the play of a very strong will — a kind of spell so to speak — someone can be influenced or impressed to the point of continuing, of continuing the work of an intellectual producer to

whom he would be linked by very strong mental affinities, this is a completely different question. And to answer it we would need greater knowledge than we possess. But here again, however powerful the spell may be, it would only be a matter of survival through reflection..

#### THE NON-SELF EXISTS BY ITSELF

That the non-self — the external world — exists by itself, this is certain. And even as it appears to our eyes, the function of vision being to indicate the existence of the world outside the self. But whether it is really endowed with the qualities that we attribute to it, that is another thing. It is not in questions concerning the existence of the object itself that we err; it is in those concerning the attributes with which we endow it.

#### THE ETERNAL RETURN

That everything that has already happened happens again, but not in exactly the same way: that, in my opinion, is how the concept of “eternal return” should be understood. Facts and events reproduce themselves, but not identically, and they cannot return to their starting point. We could take as an example the earth which returns on itself in its elliptical course around the sun, but not exactly at the point where it was, since the day star itself moves, carrying along in its wanderings its harem of planets . Humanity and social agglomerations will begin again, undoubtedly with experiences similar to those they have accomplished or undergone, but not identical, the geological, meteorological and social conditions having been transformed.

After having evolved, having become a superior being, extraordinary perhaps, a sort of superman impossible to sketch at this moment, man will be able to become an animal again, to

retrograde, to regress to animality... But nothing proves that he would become a monkey or an anthropopithecus again. The climacteric circumstances, to name only those, would not be similar, incontestably, to those that saw the emergence of the first outlines of the human. Furthermore, it would be necessary to take into account the long period of "civilization" passed through by humanity... But this brute — this fallen man — could be much more wicked, much more cruel than the monkey, much more "at the bottom of the scale" than the anthropithecus.

It is possible that human agglomerations will return to the experience, to the stage of the clan, the tribe, of promiscuous life, — but not in the same way as in prehistoric times. Later communist organizations would use the driving forces, the scientific applications, all kinds of devices that the primitive experiments of communism were unaware of.

It is also possible that there existed, treading the ground of some continent destroyed or torn apart by a tremor or seismic tremors, humanities and humans "superior" to what we know, in this respect, in the past and present, possessing much more extensive knowledge than ours and who have used — better and more than our ancient or modern societies — the planetary and cosmic energies capable of being captured. Perhaps the superhumanities (?) of the future will simply be returns to a situation, to a plane that men have already occupied.

## OF PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

I certainly admit that in the semi-cultured man there is a desire to extend his self over time. It is an incidental proof of the instinctive repugnance that the self feels for merging with the non-self or being annihilated in it. But that the intelligent, cultivated individual has not understood that the parcel of conscious substance that constitutes him is nothing other than a

moment — a bridge, a passage — that is beyond my understanding. How can serious minds think of rejuvenating doctrines like that of metempsychosis for example? There is naturally an element of accuracy in the notion of the self that extends over time, but what happens takes place quite differently than the supporters of metempsychosis and its different varieties imagine. A being procreates another being and so on over time. And each generated being reproduces — all conditions being equal — the physiological and psychological traits of its immediate ascendants and its distant ascendants and even of its indirect ascendants. It is correct, as Hindu philosophies say, that each act has its sanction in time, that is to say that this sanction extends beyond the individual life of the being who committed the act, useful or harmful; those generated benefit or suffer from the pathological states of being of their generators. We know of nothing that can demonstrate that there is another form of immortality or vital survival than the transmission of being.

Naturally, the question to ask is not whether there is anywhere in cosmic space a being made in our likeness — either physiological or psychological — or not, who, like an autocrat, would lead the universe from the top of his throne. No, the whole question boils down to asking whether the evolution, unfolding or development of the cosmos — partial or total — in time and in space, takes place according to an intelligently preconceived plan or if it is the result of unstable and transient combinations of a mechanical-chemical nature, which change and replace each other as these combinations or states of the substance vary. So that the said development, unfolding or evolution of the cosmos could very well have taken place in any other way than we think it took place, and this without any intelligently pre-established or determined order. I do not believe that in the current state of our knowledge and understanding, we can give even an approximate answer.

## THE PRODUCER

Someone objected to me: "You cannot conceive of a work without the worker — of individual art without an artist — how then can you explain that the work lasts longer than the artist and acquires a relative immortality?" I replied: "The work constitutes physiological posterity. I know that this comparison is not exact, because a work does not generate another work, while a child contains within itself its potential successor. All a work can do is arouse in the admirer, the apprentice, the passerby, the desire and the will to reproduce it as it is, or to continue it, by modifying it or developing it. The individual work is the witness to the existence of the worker and the more superior it is, the more it persists.

We can also say that the work is the reflection, the ray of the worker, in the same way as the rays emanating from a star located millions of kilometers from the planet that reflects or receives them. Perhaps at the moment when this planet is impressed by these rays, the star from which they come has been extinct for centuries. This star nonetheless remains the productive, creative focus, as the writer or the artist who has been dead for centuries remains the producer, the creator of this volume or this painting. Without a producer, there is no product.

This is why we are concerned about the producer more than the product, because we know that it is to the extent that the producer is more himself that the product will be more original. Let the producer become more individualized, let him depend less on the circumstances of the environment and the product will possess his particular character.



## A LIVING PHILOSOPHY

A dry, abstract, dead philosophy will never attract a single individuality. In order for a philosophy to have any chance of gaining ground, not just in the mind, but in what we call the “heart” of man, it must be living, vibrant, evolving. It must not be an account of rules or a catalog of doctrines: it is essential that it takes the form of a story, that it has the character of an autobiography.

Every philosophy is a corpse if it is not the history of the experiences of the intellectual life, of the psychological existence of the one who expounds it.

## THE FREE WILL

I am not unaware that there is no free will. Man cannot escape the determinism of his heredity or, to put it better, of the multiple heredities that juxtapose and fight within him. Nor can he oppose the intervention of telluric, meteorological, cosmic phenomena... But what I deny is that there is a fatality that so disarms the human unity that it prevents it from reacting, of opposing its personal determinism to external determinism, acquiring other or new habits of thinking and acting. And in doing so, using its determinism in an autonomous and very distinct way.

No, man is not free, but there is no inevitable fatality, since there is the possibility of will, the possibility of struggle, the possibility of conquests, the possibility of acquisitions; even more, the possibility of using natural energies originally considered hostile.

For example, man could not prevent it from raining, but he knew how to shelter himself from the rain, to protect himself against it. Man could not cause the temperature to drop, but he

protected himself against the cold by wearing clothing and creating artificial heat. Man has not been able to make food fall to him ready-made from an imaginary heaven, but he has learned to cultivate the land, to make bread, to raise livestock. Man has not been able to prevent night from succeeding day, but he has been able to invent lighting processes. Man cannot strip gases of their faculty of expansion, annihilate the phenomena of electricity, but he can use the power of gases and the manifestations of electricity for his own purposes, use them to modify the conditions of its existence.

## YOU ARE DUST

“You are dust and to dust you shall return.” One of the most true and most appalling things that has ever been written. All your labors, all your troubles, all your sorrows, your struggles, your hopes... despite all of that, you are only dust and you will return to dust. It is to the grave that all that leads. Is that a reason to let yourself go? No. But from now on, everything that I accomplish, I will accomplish because I find it useful or agreeable, and not because I hope for any sort of reward. I come from the dust and I will return there.



## Chapter II

# Education and Sentiment

### ON EDUCATION

All hypotheses aside, each genus, each species has an intelligence adapted to its stage of morphological evolution, to its intrinsic existence. An ant has the intelligence of an ant and a camel the intelligence of a camel. The intelligence of a lion is as far from the intelligence of a man as the intelligence of a mole is from that of a pigeon. The intelligence of a Newfoundland no more resembles that of a greyhound than the intelligence of a Parisian resembles that of a Hottentot. The intelligence of the coastal dweller is different from that of the mountain dweller. The intelligence of the sailor differs from that of the factory worker. And so on. In each case and in all cases there is an action of the specific environment on the individual who evolves there and a personal reaction of the latter against the pressure, the influence of the environment. We believe it is possible to “perfect” all phenomena depending on the functioning of the nervous system. Improvement, that is to say of education. We believe that sensitivity, memory, endurance, amativity, etc., are susceptible to education, both in humans and in animals. But this, of course, to the extent that the special determinism of each individual allows (the temperament, the nature if you prefer these terms), a determinism that must be used in the “process” of this improvement, of this education, and not to annoy as so many misguided educators do and have done.

## EMANCIPATED OR ENSLAVED

I say Initiator and not Educator. Do not confuse them. The Educator is charged with a mission and lowers himself to the level of those they educate, to the point sometimes that they are no longer distinguishable from the prostitute — from those who sell themselves to the public to acquire fame, glory or a big payday. The Initiator shows what they know, in their own language, because it is agreeable to them. The Educator descends towards the one who does not know, and makes himself ignorant in order to open the intelligence even of those who are indifferent toward knowledge. The Initiator calls to those interested in knowledge, invites them to climb towards them and place themselves at their level. The Educator does a work of popularization and the Initiator a work of selection. The Educator makes students, for whom a teacher is always essential to acquire new knowledge. The Initiator makes free people able to do without them as soon as possible and as soon as it pleases them.

## THE TRUTH

“How far does the truth bear assimilation?” asked Nietzsche, somewhere. Indeed, the truth is a horrible, sinister, distressing fact to face. Examples: the truth is that force takes precedence over fairness and that to achieve its ends, force adorns itself with the attitude and language of fairness. The truth is that the functioning of what man designates under the name of biological or physiological laws takes no account of personal value, culture, loyalty. The truth is that the great ideas in the name of which so many people are slaughtered on the battlefields or die before their time in overpopulated cities — these great ideas, so exalted in school, are a screen in the shadow of which

big thieves and large-scale profiteers carry out their operations. The truth is that the scrupulous, the trusting, the tender very often risk playing the role of victims, of beings of prey. I call thus not those who show themselves in their true aspect, but those who in order to better “arrive” present honesty, kindness, frankness as virtues to be sought and saturate with examples to this effect the educational books that they inspire or subsidize. But where are the educators who will tear the veil at their own risk?

### OVERCOME OR RESIST

“Overcome evil with good”. But what is good? And what is evil? Offering your left cheek to the one who just struck you on the right cheek is not a solution. There are temperaments that will never see it as good not to resist someone who knowingly inflicts punishment or pain on you. Oppose that which is useful to you to that which harms you — to that which oppresses you, oppose that which sets you free. Resist anything that aims to hinder your development and mutilate your activity. Resist by affirming your own superiority, like the eagle whose flight no one can outdistance — by cunning, like the snake that can, when all else fails, imagine being a branch of the tree on which it has taken refuge. But resist. The bottom line — eagle or snake — is that you don’t diminish yourself in your own eyes. And this is a problem of far more practical significance than that of good and evil.

### TO REACT

At an interval of twenty years, circumstances led to me rereading several novels that had moved me very deeply in my youth: “Wilhelm Meister”, by Goethe, in the original language, a good translation of “Werther”, from the same author; “Raphaël”

and “Graziella”, by Lamartine. Have I lost my sensitivity? If it is true that I pitied Mignon, Charlotte, Aurélie, Werther, Raphaël and Graziella, if I felt moved and touched, I find, all things considered, that these novels — with the exception of “Wilhelm Meister,” where philosophical reflections abound alongside romantic episodes — exert a morbid, anesthetic influence on the mind. How many existences were lost uselessly and consumed before their time; what incurable despairs that a little vigorous reasoning, that a somewhat massive dose of love of life could have made perfectly curable! There is a breath of sickness running through these pages; there is not enough sanity; there is too much general carelessness, inner nonchalance, cerebral “vegetativity.” All of this is unnatural. Nature cries: “React!” It does not promise victory, it is true; but it considers unhealthy or dismisses as obsolete the organism that fails to react. And it is precisely the spring that the heroes of these novels lack.

#### INITIATOR AND EDUCATOR

I have already explained the difference between the Initiator and the Educator: the educator popularizes or lowers himself to the level of the educated, while the initiator singles out, that is to say strives to attract each one individually to the heights where they have established their home. This is why a day comes, sooner or later, when the initiator is not only abandoned and betrayed, but also vilified by those they initiated. The atmosphere in the peaks where they taught is so different from that in the lowlands from which the initiates come, that once they return to the plain, the actions of the initiator become incomprehensible to them.



## THE MASTER AND THE DISCIPLES

The man who thinks cannot be made responsible for the results of the thoughts emitted by his brain, any more than the man who becomes a father can be made responsible for the acts and gestures of those he has fathered. Someone may appear who takes hold of this thought and makes it say something quite different from what the person from whom it emanates wanted. There are children whose education was geared towards a particular career, and who find an influence on them that completely changes their lives. There are thoughts that have been developed with great care, that have been chiseled, reworked, recast and that lead to results diametrically opposed to those expected.

### SHOEMAKER, NO HIGHER THAN YOUR SHOE!

Since I have come across so many incompetents and busybodies, I understand the feeling that made the ancient painter, true or false, utter this exclamation. O dear mathematician, my friend, pale on equations, add, subtract, but spare me your judgments on poetry. And you, merchant, shopkeeper, patentee, what do you understand about the life of an artist? And all of you, extremely learned people: — biologists, physicists, chemists who have never learned about biology, physics, chemistry except in popular books, if you knew how ridiculous you seem to me when you discuss philosophy, sociology or politics!

And you yourself, feminist who has never known love or motherhood, an incomplete woman whose body ignores the ardent caress, whose flancs have remained virgin, what do you have to say about the social or moral emancipation of your sisters in humanity? Emancipate yourself first.

How many fewer stupid things would be committed or said if we only concerned ourselves with subjects that we are capable of understanding. Through experience, of course.

### TOO COARSE OR TOO DARK

I have before me a classic edition of Gulliver's Travels — one of the most powerful books of social and individual criticism that has ever been written, by the way. However, this book, being for classroom, is redacted. As the preface explains, that have removed what would appear either “too coarse” or “too dark.” This sums up all classical education: that which is “too crude” or “too dark” must not appear; the only descriptions of individual life and social development left should be polite or shiny — artificial. And that is how we train the “ignorant;” for, in life and in nature, the coarse and the gloomy exist alongside the refined and the brilliant: they are their inside or their outside, as one wishes.

### KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONALITY

Putting knowledge above the development of the personality — of appreciation, love and the enjoyment of life — that is a mistake. Knowledge, in fact, is coexistent with life and not prior to it. To use knowledge as a tool, even an indispensable one, in the sculpture, the revelation and the improvement of YOUR personality, as an unrivaled source of information to be used in the pursuit of the experiences of YOUR life — that is what the aspiration to knowledge should consist of. “Culture” is a means, not an end.

### THE ROLE OF NECESSITY

I do not deny that a very large number of human acquisitions

were made under the influence of the belief in metaphysical freedom. It has even been claimed that those acquisitions would have been slower if this belief had not dominated the horizon of human thought. This is a question that requires serious discussion. For my part, I believe that, in most cases, necessity is at the origin of the conquests or “progress of the human spirit”, to speak like Condorcet. Besides, the problem is no longer there. Since it is understood that the human unity is not free, but that it possesses the capacity to react against the ambient determinism, it is up to the propagandist, to the initiator to strongly insist on the role that falls to the will to resistance and personal affirmation, to the action of the association of individual wills in the fight for the conquest of new achievements, new uses, new knowledge, new procedures or modes of existence allowing the human being to evolve with more ease, ensuring the faculties a wider play. In short, it is up to the initiator — the educator, if one prefers the word — to demonstrate that necessity is not a generator of fear or resignation, but a factor of evolution, of fulfillment.

#### I SPEAK FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW

There are hours when I speak and write for those in my world. There are times when I speak and write for the greatest number. Not because I expect most people to understand me; but I always hope that, among the onlookers who fill the public square, there will be someone lost who does not know, and whose mentality is likely to vibrate in tune with what I am expressing.

#### ONE ASPECT OF RECIPROCITY

In an environment where relationships between humans would be based on reciprocity, there is no one who would not

want others to develop in the direction that their temperament and personal conception of life would direct them, as long as this development respected the the evolution of the existence of the other constituents of the said environment. But this type of reciprocity cannot be considered without reflection, lightly. There is in fact, among us, a way of judging, or, if you like, of appreciating the actions of our friends, that has nothing at all to do with reciprocity; it consists of making a judgment, a favorable or unfavorable assessment on a particular act carried out by someone other than us, depending on whether his conduct or his procedure in the circumstances is or is not in agreement with what, finding ourselves in a similar case, we suppose we would have accomplished. It is curious to see men with very liberal, very advanced opinions forget that, in such judgments or assessments, they are determined by their temperament and, it must be said, by a bias that is not the prerogative of retrograde minds. No one knows exactly, moreover, how they would have behaved in this or that circumstance, in someone else's place. All they can hazard is guesses...

Therefore, when we declare that we desire to want for others, for our companion of opinions and aspirations, that they develop in the direction that their nature and their reflections encourage them, this implies that this development can lead them in a path absolutely other than that in which we would have liked to see them engage, even in their own interest; in a direction perhaps completely opposed to our tastes, to our wishes, or deviating from them to a considerable degree. This is what this wish, this desire implies; or it doesn't mean anything at all.

## BE A PRODUCTIVE TREE

Strive to be a tree with branches laden with fruit, even if only

out of dignity, to contrast with stunted and sterile trees. Let men meditate in the shade of your thick foliage; let them be refreshed by your fruits. And this not because it is exploited for the profit of a garden but because it is in your nature to be a productive tree.

#### THOSE TO WHOM I ADDRESS MYSELF

I am not interested in those who are satisfied, nor in those who have faith. I address myself to those who are dissatisfied and to those who doubt. I address myself to those who are dissatisfied with themselves, to those who feel weighed down by the burden of hundreds and hundreds of centuries of conventions and ancestral prejudices. I address myself to those who would like to know themselves better and more intimately. To the worried, to the tormented, to the experimenters on new formulas of individual happiness. I address myself to those who do not believe in anything that is not demonstrated to them. I address myself to the agitated, yes to the agitated, for I prefer the bubbling wave to stagnant water. I address myself to those who rebel against the established and the definitive, to the scorers and deniers of dogmas and ready-made opinions. The others don't need me. Society considers them, and everyone says good things about them: they are the satisfied ones.

#### YOU WILL BE BLESSED

You will be blessed when people speak ill of you for your own sake.

#### THE DARKNESS DOES NOT WANT THE LIGHT

The darkness does not want the light, that is to say that as a result of the education that they have received, men, for the most

part, are enslaved to ways of doing and being, which they perform in public, but which condemn them privately. So when an Initiator stands up and proclaims in the public square that common sense requires openly practicing what is natural and instinctive, without concern for official education or current morality — and this is the Light — the crowd feels so taken back within itself, so agitated and shaken to its very core, that to avoid being disturbed in its existence of duplicity and carelessness — and here is the Darkness — it rejects the Annunciator and demands that he be removed from the World.

### THE OPINIONS

I do not blame you for having renounced the opinions that are dear to me. I myself have not always held the opinions I profess today. What I would reproach you for — what makes me no longer feel like one of my own — is for having abandoned, at the same time as these opinions, your ardor, your enthusiasm, your carelessness about what people will say about it, your love of risk, your search for struggle. I thought you possessed the opinions you then professed — but it was the opinions that possessed you.

### COWARDICE

There comes a time when the disciples turn their backs on the Master. But the hour they choose is not the one when the Master is acclaimed by the crowd or received by the influential or the successful of the world. The moment they choose to run out on him is the one when it becomes dangerous to follow or when the crowds refuse to listen.

## LOOSE HIM AND LET HIM GO

“Loose him and let him go!” — Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the educator, propagandist or sect leader would like this person or that to be rid of errors and prejudices, but on the condition that they become one of his disciples, listeners or followers. They all agree to loose Lazarus, but to let him go, that’s another thing.

## MOVEMENT IS LIFE

I prefer the restless to the stagnant, the dynamic to the static. I prefer the one who moves for the sake of moving to the one who shuffles in place. The restless changes places and movement, both literally and figuratively, announces life.

## TO DOMINATE THEIR PENCHANTS

The question is not so much about being filled with passions — or vices, if you like — as about remaining master of them. Perhaps you are only the slave of one inclination. There are a hundred of them, more intense than the one that triumphed over you, but behold: it dominates them, it rules them, it uses them, it takes advantage of them to bring the intensity of its life to its height.

## SATED WITH EXPERIENCES

Die sated with experiences and not just with years, as the biblical formula indicated. Sated with experiences that have succeeded one another, replaced, renewed one another, with no other regret than the time stolen from you by the State, or the law, or society, during which you were unable to belong to yourself and accomplish new ones.



## BE SOMETHING

Because you are lukewarm, neutral, amorphous, you are not mine. Be cold or hot, but be something: friend or foe.

## THE A B C OF EDUCATION

You are only poor educators if you do not start with the A B C of true individual education: teaching your students to be able to look at themselves as they are, deprived of the varnish of speech and the veneer of appearance.

## BE JUST

Do not hate your enemies indiscriminately. You will find that some of them are more interesting than your friends. You will encounter, among them, some whose cunning, strength, knowledge or self-awareness will fortify your in your attitude toward the resistance of the non-self.

## RESIST

Resist anyone who wants to obstruct the development of your "Self." Resist anyone who contests your attempts to examine, unveil or uncover what is hidden behind the dogmas and conventions. Resist the orthodox and the conformists. Resist and attack first, if you must, in order to preserve your "life as experience."

## ACCORDING TO YOUR APTITUDES

"I am a man of one purpose." Why not several purposes, if you feel capable of it? I have rarely pursued only one experiment at a time; I deeply regret not being able to pursue more at the same time than I do. Don't be the man of one project, of one

goal, if you can be otherwise. Be the man of all goals, of all designs, of all projects, even of all the ideals that you are capable of conceiving or imagining.

## RECIPROCITY

Act by reciprocity in all circumstances of life. To whoever provides you joy, provide joy in turn. Whoever teaches you the practice of a new enjoyment of life, return the favor in one form or another. Be one of those who owe nothing, because it is dignity that is master in the domain of the Self.

Give if you are powerful enough to do so without reciprocity, not to give alms, not to be admired or approved, not out of humanity, but as a sign of natural strength or compassion.

## DO NOT BE LIKE EVERYONE

Everyone loves their friends. Everyone hates their enemies. And it is a sign of vulgarity. I say to you: "Give justice to those of your enemies who are worthy of it. And love them, desiring that they become perfectly themselves."

Whoever fights you by looking you in the face, return the favor and it will be proof of your esteem.

## TO THE LOYAL

Be a serpent, be a dove, be an eagle. According to your temperament, You do not owe the truth to your enemies, nor to the beasts of the herd. But be loyal to those who act loyally towards you. Be fair and equitable to those who are fair and equitable to you.

## LIGHT A TORCH

“Let your light shine,” not because you are a reflection, but a focus. Light a torch on the summit, in the thin air, so that it shines brighter. For your pleasure.

### BY WAY OF A PRAYER

You need to meditate. You need to pray — that is to say, to pour out your thoughts, to tell yourself about your afflictions, your sorrows, your desires, your aspirations. I understand you and, after all, it would no longer be a sign of weakness. You are no longer an imaginary entity, but you exist, you are.

Here is a draft prayer for your use: “Forces, Energies, Powers affirmed, at work or latent in me, which only exist because I am, which are myself. Make me develop to the limit of my abilities. Let me reveal to myself all that I really am. Let me be endowed with the will and the perseverance necessary to accomplish my designs, with the discernment suitable for enjoying life intensely without allowing myself to be diminished by my own desires, — with the intelligence essential to obtain my daily subsistence, — with the capacity of resistance necessary to voluntarily surrender nothing of myself to the social herd, — with the character desired to get through difficult times without letting myself be damaged or mutilated internally. May MY will always be done and this without thwarting the will of others, and, demanding accountability from no one, may I never put myself in the position of being accountable to anyone.”

### YOU ARE THE LIVING STONES OF THE CITY

You are the living stones of the individualist City, you who read me. The individualist anarchist city will not descend from the firmament, like a celestial Jerusalem, with streets drawn with

a chalk line, with houses designed like geometric equations. You who believe so little, you who think you know so little, you who feel capable of so little — you are the cement, the heat, the light, the traffic, the life of this city whose inhabitants have hatred for the moral police, disgust for grants of good behavior, repugnance for restrictions on license. It is within you, the anti-authoritarian City. You are its architects, builders, masons. It exists in you, by you, for you.

### AN ERROR OF THE ADVERSARIES OF INDIVIDUALISM

The adversaries of Individualism claim that the individualist conception breeds avarice of spirit, arouses coldness of sentiment. If you hear such nonsense uttered in front of you, stand up and protest boldly. This is not true; the true Individualist is not poor in spirit or feeling. How could he love himself, that is to say, want himself to be perfect and accomplished if he dogmatically locked himself deep in his shell, if he did not come out from time to time from his "inner fortress," if he had not wandered here and there, gathering from the flowers that he might encounter on his route, the juice that would be used to make it, the scent of the honey of his personal life?

For the Individualist to grow, grow, develop, flourish, he needs the open air, the fields and flowers of the earth, the stars and the blue of the sky, the intellectual or daily commerce of those who want, like him, to forge an original personality. So that his inner being is formed and takes shape. He is forced to assimilate all kinds of external utilities. Nothing that concerns the individual, directly or indirectly, is foreign to him. He finds pleasure in seeing the number of his comrades multiply. Is it not likely that, among the latest to come to the ideas that are dear to

him, he will meet companions with whom he will start again, tomorrow, some experiment that, yesterday, failed for the lack of aptitude or affinity of the partners that they had joined?

Stingy of spirit, mean in feeling, come on! The mind and feelings on the lookout for all the vibrations that run through or shake the atmosphere; sorting them, so as to choose from among them those that are likely to make one more complex, more aware of their possibilities, more delicate, richer, fuller and one's sensitivity and cerebrality — such is the attitude of the individualist in life!

TO KNOW HOW TO LOVE...  
TO KNOW HOW TO HATE...

It is well written that “knowing how to love implies knowing how to hate.” That “hate is to love what shadow is to light.” We write all this and we feel like a fiercely angry, vindictive, hateful soul. In the moment. Then we go back to the depths of ourselves and realize that we are still as benevolent, as disposed to gentleness and tenderness, as free from resentment and ready to move on from the harm that has been done to us... as we usually are. “If I had been wrong, if those who so cruelly hurt me were unaware of the extent of the clavier of my sensibility.” You see, there is too much hatred bubbling and fermenting in the world. Oh! Don't you think that there are too many murdered, too many with their throats cut on this great road that leads we don't know exactly where and which we would like to see lead to a land — magical no doubt — where the basis of the relations between men would be mutual understanding?... You hurt me, so I will hurt you; you have hit me in the sensitive spot, so I will aim at your sensitive spot... And it swells, swells, grows like a torrent ready to overflow. One day the torrent overflows, a corpse lies at your feet and, if you are a good sport, you can do no better than

go and join it where you sent it. And all this for a suppressed desire, for a shattered hope, when all it would have taken was an affectionate phrase, a complacent gesture, a more flexible attitude for the irreparable act to not be consummated. A phrase, a gesture, an attitude which, in comparison with the consequences involved, would have cost the person who carried it out so little. Let's make no mistake, it will take a mentality other than that for the "economy" of our wishes to come about.

### I HAVE NOT STOPPED LOVING THEM

I have never doubted the misunderstanding of "my people," that is to say those to whom I feel attached by a more or less close communion in the theory or practice of life. I know that I will be rejected by those in "my world" — nay, unrecognized, despised, abandoned, even betrayed. And yet, I have never stopped loving them. This is what my temperament demands.

### A THEORY OF THE HUMAN HEART

Can we build a theory of the human heart? I will be told that if we knew exactly all the data on this psychological problem, the solution would be relatively easy. If we could evaluate all the contributions provided by heredity, the heredity of the physical constitution, that goes without saying, but also the heredity of ancestral education, by following the influences they have undergone in the different environments where they existed, due to developments and revolutions in these environments; if we could fix the exact part of the new circumstances created by the various crossings, would we not arrive at a theory, not of the human heart in general, but at the theory of each human heart, considered in particular?

What a great discovery! Everyone would eventually know how they would behave in the various sentimental situations in

which they might find themselves. What would remain of life afterwards? For my part, I do not think, I do not believe that we can achieve a so-called fatal predictability, even if we have all the elements of the problem. An encounter with a fortuitous event will deviate from its path the best determined temperament, as the star that crosses a celestial body on its path deviates from its orbit. What monotony if everyone could determine in advance the history of their heart, of their sentimental life, without their will being able to intervene in any way! But it's just a pipe dream. Let us be happy that it is possible for each of us to tell the story of our own heart.

#### MY FRIENDS

I recently wrote :“My friends. they are those who do not run out on me in the troubled hours, those that I find at my side in the evenings of defeat, when the shadow fills my whole, even when I have made a mistake, even when I have been wrong — which a does not mean that they renounce criticizing me”.... One of my "good friends" claims that this means: — "To close his door and his purse to me when public vindictiveness is on my heels — to refuse me his assistance as soon as a serious threat will prompt me to ask those who associate with me to give of themselves." — To hell with your interpretation! You don't surprise me: I've known for many days the nature of your "friendship" and the extent of its "effectiveness," but why did you wait for me to push you against the wall?

#### THE SOULMATE

There is no more enviable fate on the planet — for a sentient being, at least — than to encounter a friend who understands you — a soul mate, if you will and if you are brave enough to overcome the ridicule attached to this term — yes, a soul mate

who feels like you, who makes your hopes, your aspirations, even your faults their own — who neither chides nor moralizes, but whom you feel is on your side in days of joy and hours of adversity alike — someone who is another version of yourself, not out of imitation, but out of similarity of temperament and psychological constitution. When you have the pleasure of encountering such a being among the men or women that you love, you can say that your happiness is at its peak. But, let me be clear: I am in no way thinking of someone who could become lost in another's personality. I am not thinking of one (or more) companions, one (or more) traveling companions who, renouncing themselves, would constitute an artificial alter ego, a doppelgänger or double. No, I have in the idea an innate alter ego, a doppelgänger that is natural.

#### BEING REASONABLE

I desire that in each human being — and this to channel the impulses of feeling — or if you like the exaggerations of passion — reasoning intervenes. I want the individual was not to be entirely a creature of passion or sensitivity, but I regard as mortally boring the human being who has tamed feeling to such an extent that it is nothing more than logic and calculation — an animated mechanism. “Being conscious of oneself” — this does not mean being solely reasonable, it means that one has full knowledge of the passions capable of agitating one's person, and that one has enough self-control to grant, in life, to feeling, the domain that is essential for it to give its full measure.

#### WHAT IS SENTIMENT?

I call "sentiment" the whole, the sum of actions and reactions, manifestations which, in a given individual, relate more specifically to different aspects of sensitivity, aspects that



are ordinarily designated under the name of faculties, for example: amativity, affectivity, sympathy, or even (when they take on a violent character), passions. I do not make of sentiment the idea of a watertight partition, fatally closed to the actions and reactions of manifestations that relate more specifically to what we are accustomed to calling intellectual or moral, or even cerebral faculties, for example reasoning, judgment, reflection, calculation, will and so on. No. I simply consider "sentiment" as a particular aspect of individual activity, as is "reasoning," an aspect that varies in importance and intensity according to each human unity. I go further, however, I consider that it is in matters of sentiment that human unity shows itself in its most primordial, most "natural" state, in other words that it is in the domain of sentiment that it borrows the least from conventions, from the conventional, and finally from the artificial.

#### WHO ARE MY OWN?

There are men who are neither brothers nor relatives in any degree, but who feel closer to each other than the closest blood relatives, because they are animated by the same disgust for what is demanded, the same hatred for the established, the conventional and the "ne varietur," the same repugnance for the gregarious. They seek neither to preserve, nor to save, nor to rebuild what is. They are content to live their own life, to make it as original as possible, their life as contemptors of the imposed, deniers of conformism, outside the social herd. This is the species to which I belong, the race I claim to belong to, and whoever adopts this attitude of thought and being, in self-defense, is my father, and my mother, and my brother.

## CAMARADERIE

By dint of coming together among those who are sympathetic to similar ideas, among co-sharers of similar opinions, of encountering one another in meetings, in small group chats, on walks in the suburbs of major cities, of meeting on good and on bad days, in times of trial and in hours of joy, an affection of a very special kind ends up binding you to one another. An affection that involves neither obligations nor rules, but which makes one feel ready to render to those whom one meets in these circumstances all the services that it is possible to render to oneself. An affection that makes you, quite naturally, feel joy when you see the radiance of satisfaction illuminating their faces, and feel sadness when you see them looking defeated and dejected. An affection that makes you deplore their absence, regret not seeing them there, suffer at knowing they are prevented from being in your company. It is this special form of friendship based on the communion of ideas that we call “camaraderie.”

## THE MYSTERY CLEARED UP

I know Alceste's pride, her deep sensitivity, her acute susceptibility. I was surprised that, having been crumpled as it was, it had not broken. But the mystery has become clearer: — to afford the luxury of a break, the monk must be equal in power or intelligence or heart.

## MY FRIEND

What is the greatest proof of love or friendship that I can show to my friend, if not to want him to develop fully according to his personal determinism, that is to say according to all of his attributes or faculties? But we love for ourselves, and it takes

great self-control and a lot of reflection to admit that the one or those we love are developing on a level that leads them to follow a path that may not be the one we would have liked to see them get commit to.

### A FRIEND... A FRIEND, MALE OR FEMALE...

A friend... A friend, male or female... Not a stringer of sentences, someone in whose eyes you read that they understand you, that they will stay, that if you were crucified you would find them at the foot of your cross, that if you were resurrected their greeting would be the first to welcome you... It must only exist in legends.

### THE SENTIMENT, FACTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

To claim an individualistic virtue because one forgets one's friends or comrades in times of absence or affliction is to fail to understand individualism. I see nothing that develops the sentiment in forgetting the one who finds himself prey to difficulties or is distant. We have admitted that sentiment is a factor of individual development at least equal to reasoning... Now the hardening that restricts and shrinks instead of growing and expanding damages sentiment.

### RARA AVIS

It is common to encounter a friend who promises to hold your interests as their own. It is rare to meet one who does.

### ORIGINALITY

It is curious to note what care biographers take, what trouble they go to to leave in the shadows or at least, when it is impossible, to excuse the extremities to which those whose lives

they recount have, in certain circumstances, been given. However, it is these deviations, these anomalies that made them original, that made them saints or monsters, and allowed them to show up in the midst of so many indistinct beings.

## SYMPATHY AND COMPASSION

Showing sympathy, compassion, not to everyone, without discernment, vaguely, but to beings who interest us or to whom we feel linked by affinities of one kind or another — that is in no way a proof of weakness or “sentimentality;” — it is simply putting into operation the cogs of our sentimental apparatus. There is more real strength in showing, in certain very specific cases, tenderness and affection than in fleeing this “experience.” I believe that he who shows sympathy — in the deepest sense of the word — has a much greater value than the one who has refrained from giving free rein to his instincts of compassion. In many cases, moreover, I have found that this abstention was synonymous with fear.

Wanting to ask for sympathy is not a sign of weakness either, especially if it is a particular environment or a special personality that your desire for sympathy is aimed at. Wanting sympathy is wanting to find in others, as an echo of their state of being, an appreciation of their effort. “It has been ten years since I heard a word that touched me,” complained Nietzsche, this great loner, painfully. What a lesson! Wanting sympathy — of course outside of any obligation — the sympathy that revives, warms or refreshes depending on the acuteness or temperature of the ordeal experienced, is in short to appeal to the clauses of the agreement that tacitly brings together beings espousing certain similar aspirations, nourishing a roughly similar conception of life, pursuing almost analogous achievements.

## IDENTICAL FACADES

Boeotus has kept company all kinds of artists and intellectuals. The years have passed, but he has become neither a painter, nor a sculptor, nor a poet, nor a musician, nor a prose writer; — he is Boeotus as before. So he filled the air with his moans. “These artists, these intellectuals, don’t talk to me about them; they are men like the others: same defects, same passions, similar frivolity.” Come, Boeotus, my friend, do you think that they waste their inner vision on the first comer? It is their secret, their treasure, which they guard and bury jealously in the depths of their intimate being — which they only reveal on infrequent occasions, that is to say when this vision has become so intense that it seems to be a vital need to externalize it. It is then that they sculpt, paint, compose, speak or write. But once the balance is restored, the need satisfied, they are men of flesh, muscles, bones, each with their particular temperament. Fortunately.

## Chapter III

# Love and Sexualism

### WOMAN THE DUPE OF MAN

“Woman the dupe of man.” Is this really true, and what exactly is meant by this statement? That after having made use of her, having used her as an instrument of pleasure, of his pleasure, the man abandons the woman; doesn't care about her anymore. But there is also the man whom the woman abandons, without putting more gloves on it than her male counterpart, sometimes less. There is even more — there is the man reduced to the state of a puppet by feminine coquetry, the man for whom the woman serves as a toy and whom she uses for her purposes. There is more: there is the duped man of the home, of the interior, of the household, of the family — the man whom, by using all kinds of pressure, the woman keeps at home, distracts, keeps away from any emancipatory movement, both individual and general; the man who is weakened by the woman, making him incapable of being interested in his personal development or in collective evolution. There is the woman, a tool of reaction, prey and instrument of beings in retreat, exerting a harmful influence on her companion and on her offspring. And the woman who pursues the material ruin of the man who fell into her net? I would never end it if I wanted to list all the ways in which man, too, is “duped” by woman... Let's be fair. I admit that woman is frequently the dupe of man, but I maintain that in equal proportions man is the dupe of woman. More often than

the woman does for him, the man sacrifices to the latter his cerebral evolution, the development of his intelligence, his physiological and psychological improvement.

### MY COMPANION AS INTIMATE FRIEND

I am willing to take my companion as my close friend, not letting her know anything about my desires, my aspirations, my most secret thoughts; but this is on the condition that she does not act towards me as a pawn or a confessor, that is to say that I always find her willing to inflict some penance on me. Either I would tell her everything; and then, instead of scolding me and reprimanding me, she will help me with her advice, she will assist me with her experiences, she will deepen my temperament in order to take a real part in my anxieties and my joys. Or I won't tell her everything, for fear of her reprimands, and then she will only be a partial friend. Every man, before contracting an affair with a woman, should ask: "How long can she be my close friend?"

### THE QUESTION OF SEXUAL FREEDOM

It is not a question of wondering whether the practice of free love has given, when carried out in unprepared or unfit natures, bad results. It is not a question of posing amorous variability as the only factor in the evolution of the sexual fact. It is not a question of whether monogamy or monoandry is an aberration. We ask the question of sexual freedom, as we ask the question of intellectual or scientific freedom — the question of the freedom to consent, to meet or to associate. And it is in a similar spirit that the problem must be resolved. To make an exception for romantic activity, to claim, except in this area, the ability for each person to determine themselves according to their aspirations and tastes, is to demonstrate indefensible illogic.

## THE COMICAL OBJECTION

Nothing is more laughable than to hear the partisans of the “Strike of Wombs,” partisans of frustrating nature, rise up against sexual “perversions” and “anomalies.” To see neo-malthusians opposed to unnatural tastes is like rebuking a hanged man for using a rope.

## SPROUTS AND SEEDS

Nationalism, chauvinism, warmongering, exploitation and domination are germinated in jealousy, sexual monopolization, romantic exclusivism, marital fidelity. Sexual morality always benefits retrograde parties, social conservatism. Morality and authoritarianism are linked to each other like the ivy to the oak.

## BEACON-PHRASES

“Everything that is done out of love is done beyond good and evil.” (F. Nietzsche). There are beacon-phrases. And this is one of them. Faced with these few dazzling, blinding words, the night birds of love indeed take wing and flee. Because the immense forest of love conceals night birds, which, when the sun goes down, howl in all kinds of plaintive and desolate tones. Here, there are deaf voices that affirm that in love we must calculate, reason, consult the right tone, worry about what people will say, place ourselves on this side of good, fear doing harm. There it is the resonances of religious or conventional prejudices that clash like so many false notes, right in the middle of the harmony of instinct. But I affirm it, anyone who feels love “for real” — love beyond good and evil — has never heard these voices whisper or these resonances rustle. Ask yourself instead.



## ADVENTURE OR CAPRICE?

I had believed in an adventure, not a caprice. An adventure knows no time limit, it is true, but it takes on a profound, tragic, vehement character unknown to the caprice. The caprice is the caricature of the adventure.

## FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

“Friendship outlives love.” That is to say that the grounded and proven aspect of affection still lasts, while the purely emotional and superficial aspect of physical attraction increasingly pales.

## WHEN I LOVE

When I love, it is because someone pleases me; because I am attracted first, then held. It is a look where I seem to decipher an entire novel, it is lips revealing voluptuousness. It is the squeeze of a hand. It is a detail of the gait. A quick turn of mind. A tone of voice that penetrates me deeply. A passionate correspondence. A nice turn of phrase. A call to desire. It is that and a thousand other little things that I can't reason about. I don't think about tomorrow. I declare myself immediately. I don't ask questions. The antecedents do not concern me. I don't care what people say or do when I'm gone. I do not intervene in the life that the one I love leads outside of me. At least I don't intervene without being asked. Sensitive, I don't like being disdained. I hate teases, flirts, “women who cause pain.” And, in all this, I believe, while conforming to my nature, bringing me closer to nature, my Mother. I am deeply convinced of this.

## I PREFER DON JUAN

A man told me: I'm cynical. My morality is that of the classic Polynesian: "The good, for me, is to possess the neighbor's wife: the evil is that the neighbor possesses mine, therefore..."

— "Not another word, please," I retorted. I like your cynicism but I prefer Don Juan who will free your slave — your wife — and that of your friend the Polynesian."

## TO REMAIN YOUNG

To say of an intellectual producer, writer or artist, that he has remained "young" does not mean, of course, that thanks to a miracle, he has been able to escape the mechanism of universal determinism that makes all living organisms go through the same cycle: birth, growth, decline, death. This expression quite simply expresses that despite the winters that may have accumulated on his forehead, the intellectual in question has lost none of the originality, the boldness, the disdain for scholastic formulas and the aptitude for diversity that characterized the beginnings of his production.

We know that observation has repeatedly demonstrated that when it comes to the day-to-day affairs of life, we are only as old as we feel, a fortiori when it comes to the conception of ideas and the materialization of the birth of thought.

This is how one intellectual who is barely twenty-five years old can be classified among the old men who still exploit the literary or artistic branch in which he operates. A feeling, when reading or examining his very first productions, that his spirit will never break the mold within which his activity simmers. As a literary man, his last novel, his final poem will bear the imprint of his initial draft. As an artist, his last painting, his last booklet, his last statue will reveal the same compositional processes as his

first works, not at all that he achieved from the start this perfection in the results that make, for a few rare exceptions, further development almost useless; but because, from the beginning, it is obvious that this intellectual has made himself subservient to some routine, enrolled in some school to which he will remain faithful until the end — in the way in which the dog remains faithful to its master and to his kennel.

But it is not to these general remarks that I would like to confine myself. I want to try to find out by what obvious signs we can recognize that a writer or an artist has “remained” young — young in conception and young in execution — in other words bold, vigorous, ardent; the mind on the alert, the understanding on the lookout; open to the deductions that spring from the unexpected — that spring from new experiences, fresh sensations.

My thesis is this: that it is in the more or less pronounced role that the sexual aspect of your life plays in its production that we can determine, that we can realize the vitality of an intellectual producer.

It is not a question here of the sexual aspect of life considered as a specialty of intellectual production — one can treat the sexual question throughout one's life in a cold, stiff, mechanical manner, as one would treat any other subject. I speak of the sexual aspect of life from the point of view of nature, which does not separate the flowering and development of living organisms from the sexual faculty, from sexual sensitivity. In other words, I posit that the artist, the writer, will remain young and alive to the extent that he remains "in love" — I only use this somewhat vulgar term because it expresses well what I want to explain. The day when, for one reason or another, the intellectual ceases to be in love, his production will bear the marks of an irreconcilable decadence, caducity, and crystallization. Even if there is an appearance of romantic interest there.

I maintain that novelists, poets, artists, etc., who have had the good fortune to thrill the intelligence and move the senses of those who were interested in their work — owed it to the fact that they remained in love until the end. Their interest in the experience of love showed itself, crept in, finally appeared in one form or another in every work that emanated from them. Not, after all, because love forms the inevitable theme of their productivity, but it is because they were in love — in other words sensitive to the loving side of life — that their work reflected such remarkable qualities of invention, imagination, variety or freshness — such spontaneity and brilliance.

#### I DO NOT WRITE FOR THE SICK

Another man came and explained to me that he was jealous. I don't deny jealousy any more than I deny fever. But I don't write for sick people. Very good intellectual and general health is required to support certain revolutionary theses relating to sexualism. We are among those whom life carries away to the point that we do not have enough time left to pick up the wounded along the road we are traveling on. And remember, in passing, that the activity of the initiator is not that of the nurse.

#### THE FEAR OF COMPETITION

“If he meets another... If she meets another.” Always the fear of competition, the fear of comparison... There is one way in all areas to fear neither competition nor comparison; it is to possess or develop in oneself a particular aptitude, a special characteristic. Because competition is only really dangerous when there is equality of quality. In the field of love, the fact that you are gifted with an original quality will not prevent whoever loves you from looking in others than for qualities you that you no longer possess (the attraction of the new, for example) — but

this same particular quality will mean that you too will be sought after.

## ERROR

You disdained that one because, you claimed, you did not want a being who raised you towards him — you wanted a man who raised you towards you. You chose this one. See how far down the rung you went today.

## TO REVEAL YOURSELF

We can ask ourselves whether, for a woman who calls herself an anarchist, there is less prostitution in being paid by the State than in providing ten times, a hundred times, the joys of love to a comrade whom she esteems, with whom she sympathizes and who would feel such great joy. It is my opinion that if I were a woman, I would experience, in certain cases, a great inner happiness in creating for myself the strength of will required to give loving joy to a friend who would not inspire in me absolute repugnance and with whom I would feel sufficient affinities of feeling and spirit. I believe that I would find in this abandonment of my body to his caresses, the intimately selfish pleasure that one tastes each time one consents to someone experiencing happiness through you.

From another point of view, it happens quite often that it is with the "officiant" — male or female — who does not take you "to the skin" from the start that we experience subsequently the most satisfaction in celebrating the rites of sensual pleasure. In love, there are temperaments that do not fully deliver on the first try. One swallow does not make spring any more than an hour of love reveals everything that the beings who experience it are capable of manifesting in terms of amorous achievements.

## IN ORDER TO MAKE OUR COMPANIONS REFLECT

It is a fact that the greatest part of the clientele of courtesans has always been recruited from "married men" and "fathers of families" —whether it is the "proowler" of the city walls or the featured actress. It is not a question of passing over this observation in silence, since it is a question of a fact common to the Athens of yesteryear and to contemporary Paris. I hope that our companions will draw all the sensible and scientific deductions that are possible for them.

## RECEIVE ME AS I AM

My companion... My wife... My daughter... My sister... you understand... If you fell in love with her. Or she... My dear prejudices. So many restrictions. Keep them, since they are your property: wife, daughter, sister, prejudices... I do not want restrictions imposed on me — intellectual, sentimental, sexual, etc. — from the threshold of the house where I am invited as a guest... I do not frequent houses where moral silverware is counted when I have left the dining room. Either receive me as I am, me and my consequences, or don't invite me.

## OF SEXUAL COMPETITION

In the animal kingdom, the irritating question of sexual equality does not admit of discussion. As a general rule, among insects, it is the female who holds first place; the male only occupies an accessory position, up to and including edibility, as happens with spiders. Among vertebrates, the male is the master and the female obeys, whether she is called tigress, lioness, bear or hen. The problem of equality, or rather competition between the sexes, arose in the human species as soon as women left the home to work outside the home, and its acuteness increased

with the increase in women's wages. The question is also a consequence of the conditions of existence in large cities, the development of industrialism and the circumstances in which mechanical production takes place. The problem did not arise in the same way when production was agricultural or pastoral; it did not present the same acuteness in the period of craftsmanship or when men only grouped themselves in small agglomerations: hamlets, villages, small towns. The "struggle" between the sexes (as contemporaries understood it) is a function of current modes of production.

### OF THE VARIOUS FORMS OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Observations have demonstrated that we find among our animal brothers all the known forms of sexual life. Their realization depends on the nature of the individual, the species to which it belongs, its confirmation, the goal that the coupling pursues, etc. We find in animals that live in the company of man an absolute ignorance of the so-called repulsion which close inbreeding engenders. Monogamy, polygamy, monoandry, polyandry, relaxed monogamy, relative polygamy, there is room for all these manifestations in the animal world. Among insects, it is the female that inclines towards plurality; among vertebrates, it is the male. In the human species where all the aspirations, all the achievements of the animal culminate and flourish, it is understandable that we find all forms of sexual practice.

### LOVE AS A BATTLE

Yes, love is a battle where the man, in general, wins and where the woman, in general, among several suitors, elects the one who has ousted the others, whether he has used violence or cunning. But this means love practiced between common

humans. When love, in addition to the purely physical aspect, includes deep, long-range friendship, as happens among lovers gifted with sensitivity, it is quite different, at least for man. It is not a question of ousting rivals, but of asking yourself if the woman you feel drawn to is capable of responding to the trust that comes from the love you feel for her.

## WOMAN AND NATURE

Women are reproached for preferring to the tidy, peaceful man of quiet morals, the adventurer, the bohemian, the refractory — the outsider, the « en-dehors », to put it bluntly. In this way, woman would be closer to nature, which reserves its favors for those who, so to speak, impose on it and tame it. It is nevertheless true that nature is merciless to the timid, the peaceful, the irresolute and that it only grants what it can give to the "victor," in other words to the fittest or the most cunning, to enthusiasts in a word. I believe that as far as women are concerned, there is one more that which pushes them towards irregularity. Her sensitivity reveals to her that it was not without suffering that he conquered his place above rank. It is also because of her sensitivity that she is attracted to the poet, the artist, the actor, the dreamer, to anyone who seems misunderstood to her. Nature, too, let us not forget, is more subject to impression than to reason.

Moreover, I readily admit that it is in things that depend on feeling much more than in those that emerge from reasoning that true individualities show themselves. A being dominated exclusively by reasoning is soon nothing more than an automaton. He in whom passion no longer finds a place is only a living corpse.



## THE TWO MORALS

Your insistence, Mademoiselle, in talking to me about the “purity of soul” of Lamartine or De Vigny or even the intransigence of Balzac tires me. These great writers produced under the influence of women, I do not say of a woman. Should I mention the names of their friends? Eléonore de Canonge, Marianne Elisa Birch, Caroline Angebert, Delphine Gay, Marie Dorval, Camilla Maunoir, Marie de Clérembault, Delphine Bernard, Clotilde Busoni, and who knows who else! Balzac is credited with having half a dozen natural children, including the daughter of Maria, this young woman who served as a model for Eugénie Grandet and who had promised him that if he loved her for one year, to love him all his life, These demigods lived on earth and were no more insensitive than those of Olympus to female attraction. Besides, without this factor — or this stimulus — would we count a single masterpiece, in the arts, as in letters? Here, I note, I do not draw conclusions. I hear your answer: It is accepted by a Lamartine, a Hugo, a De Vigny, a Balzac, a George Sand, etc., but not by the locksmith next door or the seamstress across the street. There it is, the system of two moralities: not a morality for the use of man and a morality for the use of woman — but a morality for the use of the intellectual producer and a morality for the use of the manual producer.

## WHAT WILL REMAIN?

You want to take the sensuality out of life? Very good, but then what will remain of life that is worth experiencing and feeling?

## LOVE IN THE "BOURGEOIS" MANNER

The woman is no longer sexually attractive, it is understood. Her charms are faded. So it is no longer love that keeps spouses together. It is the farm, the grocery store, the hardware store, the jointly operated cabaret. And then there are the children, and the woman resorts to all means to keep the man, not because he pleases her, but because she cannot provide for them alone, and she is too withered to hope to meet someone who will become attached to her. The man knows all this, and this family life disgusts him, but he stays anyway. In this association of interests the bourgeois and legal conception of love is thus realized.

## THE CHILD OF LOVE

I do not deny the charm of the "child of love", the tender memories that he evokes, the past of freshness and amorous exaltation that he recalls, but it is a fact that very often the "child of love" is not the healthiest of the family. It was conceived at a time when its progenitors thought much more about the pleasure resulting from mating, than about perpetuating the species. How many times out of a hundred would the parents of the child of love not have wanted him to remain in a state of hope? Even if desired or welcomed with joy, he was procreated in a moment of genital overexcitement, which is clearly unfavorable to its further development.

## NO PRIVILEGE IN FREE LOVE

Would it be only a privileged few for whom would be reserved the practice of sexual freedom, the realization of free love? Would the remainder of men be unfit for it? Stop there. I protest against monopoly and privilege in matters of love as well as in economic or intellectual matters. Let us first propose the

free-loveist thesis. The experiment will then select those who are suitable for it. Perhaps it is among those who seem least adapted that the best experimenters are found. An then, it is not because at seventy-five you vilify a theory whose application was the delight of your youth that you should put others off it.

#### LITERATURE AS AN HORS-D'ŒUVRE

The woman loved in defiance of the law — or, if you prefer, without concern for established morality — is the subject of so many classical, even religious works, that if we withdrew from circulation all the works based on this premise, little would remain of the masterworks of literature, whether of the past or of modern times. So how is it that societies forbid love outside the law? Quite simply because they consider literature only as an hors-d'œuvre or amusement, something like gladiatorial combats or cockfights.

#### THE WOMAN AND THE SERPENT

Why is it the woman who first allowed herself to be seduced and in turn seduced the man? I admit that the writer of Genesis needed this incident to legitimize the dependence of women and explain the pains of childbirth. But isn't this also a symbol of the spirit of curiosity and liveliness of the woman, always ready to welcome the new, the adventurous? Besides, didn't the snake, symbolizing an initiator of revolt, know that to be followed by the man, he had to first win the woman?

#### ON COHABITATION

No doubt there would be much less discussion or reasons for incomprehension between beings of different sexes called to live together, if we retained enough control over ourselves to

conceal from the person with whom we live certain aspects of our temperament that displease or concern them.

It is only superior individuals who agree to overlook the character traits that they do not like in those with whom they cohabit — of course when they have found enough that satisfy them.

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE LOVE OF LIFE

Loving life naturally leads to loving women. Loving woman leads to loving the flesh. Whoever loves the flesh will give carnal, sexual sensitivity its rightful place in the development of the individual. And this place is important. Whoever understands this strives to put sensual pleasure and wisdom, enjoyment and knowledge, on the same level. Sometimes we don't understand him, we torture his words and distort his actions. But we soon realize that those who take him to task most violently are the least wise and the least knowledgeable.

## FOR WANT OF DARING

If you had dared, you could spend a night of love. And I know it would have pleased you to spend it like this. A night that perhaps will never come again — under the same aspect I mean. — A night of love counts in life. — And you hesitated, you feared... what?... the opinion of those who were there, all people who were certainly not at the beginning of their love experience. You feared their “small” public opinion, more formidable, you thought, than the “big” one. For lack of asserting yourself individually. For want of being “yourself.” For want of daring, I tell you.

## PLURAL LOVE AND SUFFERING

It is false to say that plural lovers only suffer more or less from separations or breakups when they occur prematurely, when they have been imposed on them. It is a prejudice to reserve suffering only for single lovers. I understand very well that the temperament of the "single lover" pushes him to understand only one love at a time and the suffering associated with it. What I challenge is the judgment he passes on the sensitivity of the "plural lover."

## OF SEXUAL "AFFECTATION"

One might wonder if there is not much exaggeration in the value that many of our female fellows give to the granting of their favors, news item style. They too often make abandon, a joy that appears healthy and normal to the least expert biologist, a synonym for supernatural or extraordinary action. If there is often in this attitude the imprint of an oppressive heredity and an education that we have not been able to put away, there is also some "affectation," and often quite a lot. One thing is certain: it matters little to us whether we are in love with the artist in order to appreciate the work of art. Now, the erotic is an art.

## A WOMAN SAID TO ME

One does not advocate "sexual freedom" without questions being asked and comments made.

So, for example, one woman said to me: "I'm getting old. I can only count economically on the man with whom I live. Suppose he meets another, younger, more attractive... What would I do? What would become of me?"

I replied: — "Madame, the prostitution lists in Paris mention prostitutes over the age of sixty. You're not at that age yet, I

think."

#### ANOTHER WOMAN CAME

Another woman came and said to me: "What will we have left when we are old, when we have lost the freshness of youth, the radiance of our complexion? Our lovers will abandon us, and our thirst for love will not be satisfied."

I replied: — "Madame, you will have a lot left if you want it: the charm of the mind, the acquired experience, the science of pleasure. Work to acquire this 'lot' now."

#### I AM A MAN

When I deal with sexual questions, it is as a man — that is to say, as a being of the masculine gender — and not as an abstraction. But there is not a single line of what I write that is not written as well for the other sex.

#### INCOMPETENCE

If you do not have a loving temperament, I understand that what concerns the love life, the individual refinements of which it is susceptible, and the idea of considering it as one of the fine arts does not interest you. I never addressed you, anyway. I have never allowed myself to give advice to a cobbler regarding his work either. — I am ignorant of shoemaking and the trades associated with it.

#### TANGIBLE ATTRACTIONS

It is false to say that we always feel attracted to a being of a sex other than our own by their intellectual qualities or their strength of character. The radiance of their eyes, the freshness of their complexion, the delicacy of their skin, the softness of their

speech, the promise of their temperament, and so many other tangible and palpable attractions, can constitute lures that are as appreciable as the knowledge of higher mathematics or inflexibility of judgment.

#### RECIPROCITY

At the corner of a street, I met Archippe. — Master, he began... This always flatters vanity a little, even when we claim to be dead to these things... Master, do you still hold reciprocity as the basis of relationships between humans? — Certainly, yes, and more than ever. — Well, isn't it reciprocity itself that in exchange for the support I provide for my family, my wife maintains impeccable loyalty to me? — So you haven't looked at yourself, wretch? You have rare hair, dull eyes, a lackluster voice, a gesture without audacity... Reciprocity is fully accomplished by the fact that your partner agrees to live with you, made as you are... But Archippe had already fled.

#### AMOROUS COMPASSION?

Sophonra is frankness or charity itself — as you wish. “If my companion knew,” she said, “that I have lovers, he would feel great pain. Now, I love him and what I consider a weakness in him is compensated for by so many other qualities that it's like a drop of water in a vase. This is what I will do: I will take precautions so that he remains unaware of my external romantic experiences and, in this way, I will not spoil my pleasure by knowing that he suffers from it.”

#### INCONSISTENCY

Sosthène has the pleasure of living with a very intelligent and “very broad-minded” woman. One day, when he was walking

with her and a friend who could only be a passerby in his life, how astonished he was to hear his usual companion complain that he paid "more attention" to this one-night friend "than to her," with whom he resides five or six tenths of his time!

## MY AMOROUS LIFE

You sketched my portrait. As you saw me. According to the vision of your eyes and that of your imagination. Perhaps — my friend — your sketch differs in certain features from the original. I mean the original as I imagine it. It is possible, in fact, that if I had had to draw my portrait myself I would have done it differently than you. It is certain that you have highlighted some characteristics that, for my part, I would never have placed so clearly. But you represented me according to your vision. The main thing is that you have drawn me sincerely. As you saw me and not as I would have liked to be seen, glimpsed, reproduced. However, there is one point on which this portrait does not satisfy me. Definitely not. And the point is that you left in the shadows one of the most salient particularities of my way of being. You didn't dwell on my love life. If I am not only sentiment, I am not only mind. I am not only perception, I am also emotion. I am not just sensation, I am also vibration. Why have you neglected to devote the part that it deserves to love in my existence? I'm not ashamed of my love life. I'm proud of it. By this I mean that it is one of the consequences of my temperament in which I feel the best, the most myself. I attribute a large role to it in my evolution, in the fulfillment of my personality. If we removed the events to which it gave rise from the total facts of my existence, it would strangely reduce it. I wondered if this omission was due to your fear of frightening, of scandalizing your readers? Of losing a few perhaps? Are they therefore monsters of imbecility or monuments of hypocrisy? What then



would have been the use of the education that your activity is supposed to provide them? Or what would be the nature of the propaganda that you made among them? For them to be so unemancipated? So that an allusion to the love life of an activist of the idea you support might frighten them or push them away? Of his love life considered in its complexity and variety. Unless you are the timid one or the frightened one? You know I like to cut ties behind me. Now, know that if I feel regret. A regret, but stinging, but bitter, but deep. A regret of which the tablets of my memories keep an indelible trace. It is the fact that my love life has not been wider, richer, more diverse. That it did not embrace more objects in its orbit, I am aware that it was a poor little love life, very puny, very poor, very narrow. No matter how much I repeat to myself, the fault lies in adverse circumstances. These accursed circumstances which did not allow it to develop with more vigor and expansion! This is a small consolation to me. And my regret is no less poignant and painful.

#### AMOROUS FRIENDSHIP

Alceste, as we know, is incapable of feeling for a woman to whom he feels attracted any other feeling than that of a romantic friendship. A simple matter of temperament, they point out to me. Yes, certainly, but also uprightness of mind. Because Alceste knows nothing of the hypocrisy which, forty-nine times out of fifty, characterizes so-called intersexual camaraderie; he even describes this type of connection as an unnatural relationship!

#### EUGENICS

I can passionately love a counterfeit, hunchbacked, lame woman, perhaps because she has remarkable intellectual or artistic talent — perhaps also because her conversation is very attractive — perhaps finally because, from the point of view of

sensual pleasure, she is without rival. This does not mean that I want her as the mother of my children, provided that I am gifted with a paternal instinct.

## OFFSPRING AND COHABITATION

The fact that a woman has aroused you, that following a voluptuous experience during which pleasure was shared, offspring resulted: from this fact does there follow for the two participants in this experience the natural obligation to henceforth spend their entire existence together?... The law and morals, through legal separation and divorce, have already resolved the question negatively. The founding of a “home,” of a “family” on the basis of a passing sexual attraction cannot be seriously justified.

## THE WOMAN AND MASCULINE FIDELITY

It seems strange that the ordinary woman values sexual fidelity in her partner as much as she does. She knows well that as a general rule sexual attraction normally ceases as soon as male desire is satisfied. Why then do women not seek to keep close to them the companions they love and whom they distinguish, through the cultivation of their intelligence, the development of their sensitivity, participation in their work? In vain will the hair of a woman who is the intimate friend of her companion whiten, in vain will age fade her features, she will have — on the solid ground of friendship and attachment — nothing to fear from the rival who only has her youth and her beauty going for her. But why must jealousy make so few women strive to become “close friends” of the one or those with whom they cohabit?

If the ordinary man considers his female as his thing, his property, it is perhaps because he has judged her incapable — instinctively — of rising above the conception of sexual fidelity.

One leads to the other. "I will be faithful to you sexually," the man said to his partner, "and you will be my servant." However, as it is an imposed contract, he slashes himself with a penknife numerous times.

## VULGAR FEMININE MENTALITY

In the consummation of the sexual act, in the pleasures that belong to the purely sensual domain, the woman — the ordinary woman, quite simply — finds as much satisfaction as the man, sometimes more. But she nonetheless considers herself wronged as soon as her male partner is the first to claim to stop seeing her. She cries of abandonment. So that she doesn't complain, she has to move away, to break up first. And yet she wants everyone to be convinced that she is right to act this way. For her to remain calm, it is essential that she appears to have been deceived.

## IN LOVE, IT IS BETTER TO STEAL THAN TO BEG

A woman who claims to be individualist echoed this quip from Oscar Wilde the other day: "In love too, stealing is better than begging." Either I don't know what the words mean, but this sentence, in practice, is equivalent to: Taking by force is better than soliciting, violating is better than insisting.

From a sexual point of view, like everyone else, I am an associationist and resolutely so. Communist sexual promiscuity (or sexual communism) I translate, in the individualist sense, by loving pluralism or sexual mutualism ("all for all, all for all," "each for all, each for all" in the association. In short, "everything is common between friends" from Pythagoras extended to the sexual). But I only understand this voluntarily, with the knowledge and choice of all participants.

"In love too, stealing is better than begging" has nothing individualistic at all, any more than it is anarchist-individualist

to steal from a comrade the result of one's personal effort, to swindle them to defraud them. These are authoritarian acts and nothing more.

In today's society, violence being accepted as a means of defense and even attack, we can perhaps consider kidnapping in the same way as theft, seeing in both an aspect of anarchist "illegalism." Theft is economic illegality; kidnapping is sexual illegality. Indeed, if we admit the use of force to obtain our economic needs, why not admit it when it comes to satisfying our sexual appetites?

What if we started with the daughter of Eve who recalled this phrase from Oscar Wilde? Before writing perhaps it would be advisable to know what we are writing?



## Chapter IV

# Social and Religious Critique

### PROGRESS

We are not unaware of the superficiality of progress. We realize that it has changed the temperaments very little and hardly transformed the intimate aspirations of individuals at all. And when I write "very little" and "hardly at all," that's already conceding a great deal. We know what progress is, the "displacement" in time of the conditions of civilization. Scientific discoveries — especially from the mechanical point of view — and their technical applications have transformed the circumstances of the evolution of social agglomerations; they have replaced the purely economic fact with religious-moral and political-idealistic facts, whose roles are reduced to that of a reservoir of terms used to veil the crudeness of the expedients or the economic necessities of human existence.

But we know perfectly well that modern Workerism is no more apt to make the contemporary worker an individual — an original being, thinking and living for itself — than slavery and serfdom were. Wars demonstrate how much "economic social unity" is subject to the whims and wills of those in high places among the human herds.

And yet, having recognized this, none of us would want to remain insensitive to the technical applications of the most recent scientific-mechanical achievements, if only so as not to find ourselves in a state of inferiority in relation to the other

components of the social environment. This concession made, it remains well understood that our scientific knowledge — if it can be considered as a "perfected" tool, compared to the club of primitive man — will only influence our psychological state of being only insofar as our reason and our reflections desire and determine it, not by itself.

## THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

Whatever the environment or the conglomeration — factory, barracks, prison, construction site, educational center, any association — the crowd does not tolerate, does not accept the man who stands apart, outside of it, especially when it is to reflect, to meditate, to withdraw into himself. It blacklists the original who does not chatter, who does not involve himself, like the others, in the thousand little intrigues that occupy the leisure of civilized people. The one who flees the noise and the gossip of his relations may well do no harm to others; he is not only frowned upon, considered false or devious, but he also feels a whole web of animosities and hostile gestures developing around him. We are angry with him, we do not forgive him for being a loner, for "singling out." Big or small, the people regard him as their enemy. And this enmity that he arouses is due quite simply to the fact that those around him feel very clearly that he is escaping them, that he is withdrawing from their influence, from their power. The crowd — big or small — feels something like reproach, like blame in this existence that evolves in complete autonomy, far from the hubbub and the pettiness that agitates it. The crowd gladly welcomes a boss, a tamer, a dictator-demagogue, a strong man, a decisive leader. If he succeeds in establishing himself, in hoisting himself onto a pedestal, it claps its hands. It follows him, docile: but it feels only hatred or hears only mockery when faced with an individual

who does not want to exercise any kind of domination over it... The most curious thing is that this same sentiment pervades a good number of supposedly advanced groups, groups that call themselves avant-garde and pull a long face at anyone who deviates from the average mentality common among those who make up their milieu.

## THE PUNISHMENT OF THE TALION

Has society, through its leaders, persecuted and tormented enough those who gave, spent, delivered themselves — thought, nerves and muscles — to try to liberate, emancipate, enlighten somewhat, at least, some of its constituents! How many tears has it caused to be shed, how many lives has it shattered! It happens that it reaps what she it sown and that it in turn bathes in blood and tears. The retribution is fair.

## THE STAGES

At the moment when the pagan, worn-out order of things was collapsing, having probably given all it could give as a "social conception," Christianity appeared and the slaves triumphed. Likewise, at this moment, while the capitalist order of things collapses under the pressure of a war that could not be other than what it is, just so socialism appears as the supreme port of refuge. And the proletarians triumph (!?) But just as, in order to establish its domination, Christianity had to destroy and assimilate a large part of paganism — in the same way, to establish itself, socialism will make a large part of the capitalist trappings its own.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Written when the World War of 1914-1918 was in full swing. In the term socialism, I of course include communism (E. A).



I have just said that paganism was used up as a "social conception." — I did not say as an individual attitude and activity. It was precisely because individuals, here and there, continued to adopt a pagan attitude towards life that Christianity could not remain omnipotent. To adopt a pagan attitude towards life was not to worship idols of marble or wood, but to imbue oneself with the meaning of the symbols they represented. Now, paganism is the exaltation, the divinization of life: intellectual and passionate, deep and superficial, substance and form, spirit and flesh.

Christianity, only magnifying one of the two aspects of life, was bound to find itself, one day or another, in a state of inferiority.

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Socialism will likewise succumb because it only considers the production-consumption aspect of social life. And it only considers this particular aspect from a particular angle: the producer-consumer, cog in the collective machine, an automaton whose every economic movement is regulated by a central organization. It is in vain that socialism and its different schools — collectivism and communism of all shades — will leave the individual free to behave as he believes to be intellectually and morally good. — And we will still have to see to what extent? — It will perish because it will have stifled economic competition and because in the economic field as in other fields, competition is the soul of activity.

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After the victory of socialism — if it is it which emerges victorious from the current immense melee of peoples — we must expect an economic Middle Age worse perhaps than the

intellectual Middle Age that spread over Europe when Christianity triumphed. There will be no more craftsmen. Everything will be manufactured, crafted, machined, factory-built, according to established and pre-ordained rules. The production will be anonymous. Producers will endlessly reproduce the same model of worker. All the clothes will, I'm afraid, have the same cut. All houses will have the same type. And, as is already happening in countries with large capitalist concentrations, the general mentality will be characterized by its lack of individual originality and the impossibility of doing without collective economic regulation.

#### THE MAN ALONE

It is not physically, of course, that the man alone is the strongest. The man alone is incapable of resisting the social body; we know that well. It is when he goes on the offensive that his strength is revealed. When he succeeds in shooting an arrow that passes through the skin and penetrates the flesh of the social whole, his triumph begins. Nine times out of ten, the wound is incurable and it is in vain that the injured person tries to pull out the stinger. — If he succeeds it would be at the risk of his life. — You ask why there are freer morals, why we express opinions that are a little more subversive than in the past, why governments tolerate people expressing themselves with more or less disguised frankness on all kinds of subjects that about which they would never have tolerated discussion in the past — well, it is because in the course of what we call "human evolution," there are individuals whose criticism or practice have hurt the social body so deeply that it was only able to heal by adapting to the new conditions that the injury ended up creating in his body.

## CREATOR EQUALS DESTROYER

How do you recognize the creator? Because he begins by destroying. And destroying is something entirely different from replacing. He who replaces does not transform, does not renew, does not invent. In fact, he does not bring, he does not produce any original value. He is a modifier of personal or collective situations, not a creator. Putting scholars in the place of the ignorant, literati in the place of warriors, proletarians in the place of capitalists, is not producing a “new society;” it is continuing, with another brand, the same enterprise. It is doing the same thing as replacing respect for the priest with that of the legislator, respect for God with respect for the Law. The creator is the one who destroys what exists, who annihilates it without return, by producing a state of things or being, without any analogy to what took place in the past. Thus, this society functions by means of various cogs called State, Government, Justice, Army, Police, etc. A “new” society will only truly be so if these cogs have disappeared. Let the action of governing be exercised by one class instead of being by another, Let the laws be enacted by some legislative elite instead of being enacted by an elected body — nothing is changed in essence in the functioning of the human environment.

## INDIVIDUAL RELIGION

Since we do not think that a civilization is possible without a religion — even secular — political or economic, must we then throw the handle after the ax and recognize that, without religion, all civilization is impossible? Not at all. “All civilization based on the social, on the people” we must add.

A civilization based on the individual, that is to say on the constant and persistent affirmation of human unity — creative,

productive, consuming — and on incessant resistance to all invasions, to all encroachments of the gregarious on persons; a civilization conceived without the people, so to speak, this civilization does not need religion. People will tell me that religion can be individual, but these two words curse at being coupled. The etymology of the word “religion” is “religare:” to connect, to unite. Religion and the individual, these two terms coupled, are a paradox.

#### AT THE BEGINNING

I know well that one can oppose to the question: “Who created God?” this other question: “How did nature come into existence?” Even if we created life in laboratories, the problem would be displaced, nothing more and nothing less. All conceivable chemical combinations, all imaginable spiritualist conceptions result in a primary combination with an original conception, postulating an antecedent. If we discovered this antecedent, at the same time as its discovery, the problem of the antecedent that preceded it would arise! Every cause posits a prior cause. “In the beginning no Cause existed. In the beginning was God, Life, the Infinite, That which is, That which has neither beginning nor end...” definitions as vague, as pompous, as incomprehensible to my poor finite mind, alas! O let me withdraw, no longer this time into my ivory tower, but into a cautious agnosticism, the only understandable attitude of the Sage in the face of the unknown or the unknowable.

Agnosticism, at least, has in its favor that it has never prevented the lover of life from experiencing the present hour in all its intensity.

## CHRISTIANITY AND NON-RESISTANCE

It is claimed that the principle of non-resistance triumphed when Christianity was recognized as the state religion. This is incorrect. The day Christianity replaced paganism as the official religion, it became an instrument of government, that is to say, of oppression, as the heretics were quick to realize. What happened then was the absorption of Christianity by the State, which had a clear interest, in the face of the success and the extension of the new religion, in removing from it any character of opposition, of danger to established institutions. But the triumph of Christianity, under Constantine for example, has never implied the triumph of the principle of “non-resistance to evil through violence.” Quite the contrary.

## DETERMINISM, DIRECTORS AND RESPONSIBILITY

Since we are determined by the environment, by the atmosphere — physiological, psychological, meteorological, social or otherwise — why make an individual responsible for his actions? Why not blame the environment? I admit that the problem is complex, especially since it is just as possible for an individual to go against the tendency of a given environment as it is to resist it. But you will never be able to place on an entire environment the responsibility for acts committed by beings who interpret with excessive rigor the will, or prevent the desires, of the leaders of said environment. Because you know, instinctively, that it is possible for men invested with positions of authority to be more or less severe or cruel in the execution of the mandates entrusted to them, to direct the majorities in a more or less oppressive direction.

It is impossible, in fact, not to place the responsibility on the leaders who abuse their power to impose arbitrariness or

coercion, regardless of whether they are the spokespersons or representatives of the social herd that they they lead or who chose them. We feel instinctively guided by the hope of relaxation and we come back to this very simple idea: that the disappearance of the rabid dog that blocked the path makes it passable.

## UNREAL AND REAL

As insane, as chimerical, as delirious, as improbable as the creations of our imagination may appear, there is not one that does not have its source in a real fact or event. The unreal is only a distortion of the real.

## ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY?

Hostile to the revolution. Why is that? I am curious and have no interest, none at all, in the persistence of the old world. I ask nothing better than to see it go to pieces and finally die. But I want a revolution that is something other than an oscillation of the human pendulum to the the political or social left or right, an oscillation that will diminish in scope and come back to a standstill. I don't care about a revolution made by the animals of the social herd, which will only succeed (?) if they are penned, branded, guided, regimented. The day after the revolution will find those herds just as they were on the day before. A fine result!

## FREE LABOR OR FORCED LABOR

The civilization of the past, that of the future, relates to the way in which labor has been accomplished or will be accomplished — either it will be free or it will be forced. Free labor corresponds to a mentality of creators, artists, researchers, innovators, experimenters, differentiators, non-conformists,

free traders. Forced labor corresponds to a mentality of laborers, traditionalists, misoneists, uniformists, conformists, protectionists. Free labor: genius, talent and originality. Forced labor: know-how, skill and routine.

### TALENT, GENIUS IN MODERN SOCIETY

In our pitiful societies, we place the creative genius, the original talent of a man well below his social conformity. It doesn't matter whether you are a remarkable poet, a great artist, an unusual writer, a philosopher with bold and new ideas, a biting, erudite and profound critic, an anticipator with a higher vision and more frank words than those around him — your value and your effort matter little. The whole question is whether you live in accordance with the morality decreed or inspired by the leaders and those who follow in their footsteps. If so, you will be recognized as having genius and talent, even if you are a bit of a charlatan. If not — that is to say if you cannot justify very legal means of existence or if, to obtain your bread, you resort to expedients — in that negative case, you will be refused a creative brain, you will be denied any spirit of originality. You may be worth ten times more than the officially recognized celebrities, but you will be worth nothing if your “morality” is of poor quality.

### CLIENTELE

We do not wonder whether a production will find outlets or sell because of its originality, its good packaging, its usefulness. We simply wonder if it will “take,” all consideration of its intrinsic value or the trouble it has cost being set aside. The clientele, the taste of the public... This is what it is about: winning, reconciling, attracting, enticing. And succeeding constitutes the science of the seller: manufacturer, trader,

merchant, publisher, pension master. Also, in all areas, the brainwashers have the upper hand.

## THE DECADENCE OF SOCIETIES

I hear that ancient societies fell into decadence because they were based on slavery. This is an error. These societies simply perished because they had reached the end of their existence. The proletariat is the contemporary form of the social state called “serfdom” in the Middle Ages and “slavery” in antiquity and depends on the economic conditions of the current human environment. Just as the feudal-Christian and Hispano-Islamic civilizations of the Middle Ages succumbed, civilizations based on industrialism, the power of money, the exploitation of the labor of the producer for the benefit of the holder of capital, cash or tools — these civilizations will die out as soon as they have exhausted their capacities of resistance against the influences that undermine them, the reactions that attack them, and they are only waiting for their ruin to give birth to new forms of civilization... Civilizations are born, grow, decline and perish according to a rhythm whose measure depends on the amplitude of their social determinism.

## THE INDIVIDUALIST NOTION OF COMPETITION

Once and for all, no competition is possible without fairness at the point of departure, whatever the enterprise, the attempt or the experiment it is a question of pursuing. We cannot speak of possible competition between the farmer who owns primitive cultivation tools and the farmer who owns sophisticated agricultural implements. The latter is always favored over the former. And it is the same in all areas, in all directions. This is the individualist notion of competition.



## MISERIES OF LOGIC

I read that the characteristic of the degenerate is that he passes without transition from desire to action. Farewell, charming spontaneity and alert presumption: you are the prerogative of degenerates. And you, poet who grabbed your stylus and your tablets as soon as the impulse pushed you; and you, delicious lovers, for whom a single meeting was enough to throw yourselves frankly into each other's arms, you are only vile degenerates. But hello to you, to those who imagine 420 cm howitzers, searchlights, asphyxiating gases or torpedoes for submarines; for years and years, you have floundered over formulas to develop your inventions; through patient research, you have succeeded; here you are in all your glory, perched on a Himalayas of corpses and mutilated people. You are one of those who have not passed without a transition from desire to action... O miseries of logic!

## ON PROJECTS OF RENOVATION

The “doctrines,” the “claims,” the “aspirations” more or less saturated with Individualism or which claim to maintain a vague, fuzzy appearance are criticized. From the moment that a project of renovation or human transformation renounces, to establish itself, the use of violence and coercion, it is necessarily a bit uncertain. By relying only on a modification of the mentality of the environment to pass into practice, it strips itself of any character of fixity, of rigidity. What? Can we say whether, at the moment when mentalities will be transformed to such an extent that they will allow a project of this kind to be applied, this project itself will not sin by its insufficiency and will not appear retrograde to precursor minds?

## THE MODERN STATE

Since Industry and Finance play the leading role in the State, the aim of the latter has become to monopolize the raw materials of great necessity, such as cotton, iron, oil, coal, etc. The master thought of any government is, in this area, to oust competition and force other human agglomerations to be dependent on manufacturing, factories located in the territory whose destiny it directs; when it lacks possession of these raw materials, the government effort then aims to put competitors in a state of inferiority in the event of a conflict involving the use of arms. Whichever way we look at it, this effort of each of the States tends to acquire a privileged situation... Suppose for a moment that the effort of the leaders had tended towards the search for processes making it possible to replace with an equivalent some fabric, some metal, some fuel, thus making it possible to do without the product, which a particular territory that possesses it within its limits jealously wants to keep for itself... the risk of war immediately disappears... But does the risk of war not return in the means of government of today's States?

## GOD AND WAR

How can you be intelligent and not understand that war — and especially the last war — proclaimed the bankruptcy of religion, of all religions? Unless we consider as the punishment for our "sins" the terrible hecatombs that marked the great melee and the refinements of scientific barbarism that will make it forever famous — unless we consider war only as a call from God, a supreme call intended to call disobedient creatures back to him? I cannot understand how those who think like this do not realize the disgust with which they fill us for their idol.

Undoubtedly the war — it is the same with all plagues, with

all catastrophes — has brought a resurgence of superstition. But to imagine that it could lead an intelligent being to acquire or rediscover faith in God is pure stupidity. What I am about to say is perhaps a commonplace, but to believe in this god, one would have to admit that there exists somewhere — as the moral director of the solar system — an entity embodying wickedness in its most vile aspects.

There is no need to raise here any problems of transcendental theology, for example: how can God, who allows evil to happen and does not prevent it, be all goodness and all love? How can God be all-powerful, since foreseeing war, he did not know or could not prevent it? No, it only takes a moment of reflection to realize that if such a god existed he would be the last of the wretched or the first of the criminals, since he would allow to be slaughtered — while being able to intervene — thousands of beings in the flower of their youth and thousands of beings who had never asked to be born on earth — its creation.

## OF GOOD AND EVIL

To understand the evolution of gregarious or social morality, it is essential to remember that good is synonymous with "permitted" and evil with "forbidden." Some person — the Bible tells us — "did what was evil in the eyes of the Eternal," and this phrase is found stereotyped in numerous passages in the sacred books of the Jews, which are also those of the Christians; it must be translated: Someone did what was forbidden by the religious and moral law as it was established for the interests of the Israelite theocracy... In all times and in all the great human flocks we have always called "evil" all acts prohibited by convention, written or not, convention varying according to times or latitudes. Thus it is wrong to appropriate the property of one who has more than he needs to provide for his necessities — it

is wrong to deride the idea of God or his priests — it is wrong to deny the homeland, to maintain sexual relations with a very close blood relative. As prohibition alone is not enough, the unwritten convention crystallizes into law whose function is to repress.

## ONE CONCLUSION

Mr. Le Dantec, religious scholar and officially atheist, has given up his soul. not to the devil, as one might believe, but to God... This is at least the conclusion to be drawn from his burial in the church of Montrouge... I see from here the grimace of Saint-Pierre forced to receive in Paradise the author of "Atheism," "Conflict," "Mechanics of Life," of so many books in which he fought, sometimes stubbornly, against ecclesiastical dogma and spiritualist inconsistency... But enough jokes! Don't you find that these posthumous conversions — and I am thinking of Rémy de Gourmont — cast a pitiful light on the weakness of these men who, after having shaken, if not destroyed, the faith in many of their readers, do not even have the strength of character to get those close to them not to make them give the lie, at the last hour, to an activity of so many years.

## IS THERE NEED FOR A RELIGION FOR THE PEOPLE?

Is there a need for a religion for the people? This is the great problem that all reformers, all innovators, all initiators have undoubtedly had to ask themselves one day or another. And when I write "a religion," I do not only mean a belief in a supernatural being, in a supreme spirit director of the Cosmos or general supervisor of the progress of evolution, ultimately imposing his will there. I do not mean a cult, a set of rites and ceremonies connecting the creature and the creator, the human and the divine. I give the term "religion" a broader, vaster

meaning, and I thus pose the question: “Do human communities need an overall, universal, catholic doctrine, which binds together the members of humanity — a doctrine that takes concrete form, that is expressed in a collection of commandments, regulations, acquired, to “exert yourself” according to your aptitudes and your aspirations — purely secular formulas; which has a morality, a code of rules of conduct accepted from one end of the world to the other — a doctrine that presents or teaches an ideal to be achieved as soon as possible, or later, by stages? Or even an invariable ideal? Is there a need for a political or economic religion for the people, whose priests bear the name of delegates, civil servants, administrators?

We know that the political and socialist doctrinaires of all schools responded in the affirmative. In my turn, I will answer: “If we want the people to remain a herd, if we want them to remain manageable and requisitionable at will, whether their reason for being or their aim is to accomplish the designs or to put into practice the conceptions of its political and economic pontiffs: yes, we need a religion for the people.” Indeed, it is not possible to achieve a single, global or international political or economic concept if the people are neither docile nor flexible — let us say the word, if they are ungovernable.

#### AGAIN A RELIGION FOR THE PEOPLE

The essence of any religion is that it can be conceived, understood, practiced socially, en masse, universally. It is only when the human unity differentiates itself from the people by its thinking, by its initiative, by its way of behaving individually, that we begin to question the usefulness of “religion for the people.”

## VALUE YOURSELF

“Humble yourself. Be humble. Bow to the will of the Master of heaven and earth.” — This is the whole of Christianity: I suggest to you, not to be complacent, stupid or pretentious, but to work to acquire an acquired notion of “valuing yourself” according to your aptitudes and your aspirations. Stand up to your full height. If you bend over because the door is not high enough, do so by revolting within yourself and straighten up once you have passed through the door — unless, if the “hearsay” leaves you cold, you prefer to go through the window.

## THOSE WHO PAY

The child Jesus escapes from Herod and the tyrant, in revenge, orders the killing of all children under the age of two who are in Bethlehem and its territory. What does it matter if the innocent pay for the guilty!

Thus have acted, before or since Herod, all statesmen, all politicians. They take revenge on those who have nothing to do with the fear caused to them by those whose influence they dread.

## GOD DOES NOT EXIST

No! The moral world, the spiritual world, God, do not exist. They are abstract ideas, a product, a result of cerebral activity or effort. This does not mean, alas! that these abstractions do not live in the state of intellectual ghosts, which haunt the depths of a thought that does not know or does not yet know how to create other images or imagine other representations to explain or materialize some of its aspirations .

## JESUS SAID

Jesus said: Your Father who is in heaven makes his sun rise on the good as on the wicked.

I say: Nature dispenses the useful as well as the harmful, to the good as to the wicked. But who is good and who is wicked? What things are really useful and what things are really harmful?

## GOD: AN INVENTION OF THE PRIESTS

What exists is everywhere and in everything. And everywhere and in everything, we find what exists, in some form or aspect. In what we call “good” as in what we call “evil.” What exists is at work as much in the act of the hawk that rushes at a chick as in the spontaneous gesture of a man throwing himself into the water to save a drowning child, in the act of an impulsive person who rapes a little girl as in the thought of a researcher discovering a serum capable of curing a contagious disease. There is no problem of evil. In what exists, Good and Evil are included. There are acts, thoughts, movements, gestures that are useful to us, that are harmful to us, that are superfluous — either individually or gregariously, depending on the point of view we take. God, all love, all goodness, all perfection, is a creation, an invention of priests and moralists, an idealized representation of religious and legal morality.

## BIBLICAL ILLEGALISM

In order to compel the Egyptians to let the Israelites leave their land, Jehovah killed the firstborn of all the Egyptians and the firstborn of all their cattle, as if all these little ones of women, cows, goats and donkeys had anything to do with the oppression of which the Hebrews had to complain. We understand that the oppressors then consented to allow themselves to be stripped of

their jewels, and jewels of gold and silver, because the chosen people should not leave Egypt empty-handed—on the advice of the Eternal, naturally. Ah! comrades, a beautiful manifestation of collective reclamation!

## OF FREE EXAMINATION

We call Free Examination a method of investigation applicable to all problems that require the attention of men — no matter the field of human activity in which they arise — which method is based on a rational and impartial examination of all the questions that it explores in depth, an examination freed from any aprioristic consideration, that is to say taking no account of dogmas, prejudices, conventions, institutions or traditions, of any order whatsoever.

It does not follow that with regard to certain controversial questions, the method of free examination cannot result in a conjecture or hypothesis. Certainly, man lacks sufficient knowledge, not only to form an exact idea of movements, energies, cosmic forces, but also — through ignorance of all the determining elements — to make judgments free from inaccuracies, either on purely telluric phenomena, or on the progress of the evolution of environments or individuals. Now, the characteristic of the method of free examination is that it leads, in this case, anyone who uses it conscientiously, to present their deductions or opinions for what they are: hypotheses or conjectures that the future will confirm or refute.

It may even happen that the method of free examination does not result in an identical solution for the same question asked of several people. There are, in fact, in the sphere of the abstract, of the intellectual, of morals, even in the economic sphere, problems whose solution depends on the temperament of the individual who undertakes to resolve them. Examined in the



light of free examination, there are questions that have several answers.

The method ordinarily applied by statesmen or men of the Church to the examination of the questions posed by human evolution is limited on the contrary by dogmas, prejudices, conventions, religious or secular institutions, moral or legal, intellectual or educational, etc. — that their response can never transgress. This is why it is wrong to speak of free examination when it comes to State or Church.

### AN APPARENT CONTRADICTION

It seems curious, at first glance, that the bourgeoisie, who fully accept that all the vital forces of a territory are requisitioned for the defense of what they call the "homeland," show so much hostility when it is question of applying the same process to the economic order of things. They accept very well that one takes away from his ordinary occupations, nay, that one ignores the opinions of a human being, that one violates his convictions, that one forces him to cooperate in actions that deep down he disapproves of, being forced to fight against men, his peers, who have never harmed him personally, whose only misfortune is to be led by privileged people who have interests contrary to those of the privileged people who lead him. They accept all this, and the cruel sanctions that hit the recalcitrant. But if, to achieve that everyone consumes or has access to the possibility of consuming according to their effort or their aspirations, it is a question of mobilizing willy-nilly, all the aptitudes, all the capacities — these same bourgeois cry tyranny. To tell the truth, the contradiction is only apparent. When the bourgeoisie approve the requisitions inherent in the state of war — even when it is to the temporary detriment of their interests — it is because the survival of the convention or prejudice "homeland" implies the maintenance of

the regime of exploitation of man through Privilege or Monopoly, Let, on the contrary, in one form or another, the possibility be offered to everyone to satisfy their needs, to consume according to their appetites, outside of any privilege or any monopoly, it will be the death knell of their domination.

#### THE INFAMOUS WORK

Governments that know the horror of advanced groups for informers have always endeavored to cast doubt on certain agitators whom they considered dangerous for the maintenance of established order. It costs so little for a minister or a police chief, not to declare, but to make people suspect, that such and such is a hired agent, especially since it is practically impossible to verify.



## Chapter V

# Art and Literature

### ART FOR THE ARTIST

Either art for the artist. Or the artist for art. Either the work of art where the artist has described, drawn, engraved his inner vision, into which he has poured the content of his imagination or his hopes: the work of art, an act of creation. Or the work of art with a utilitarian aim, the work of art-education propaganda — the work of art-prostitution. Either art for the artist — because art does not exist without the artist — art as a tool, as an instrument of individual revelation, as a vehicle for the manifestation of the most intimate emotions and sensations. Or the artist for art's sake — the artist becoming the servant of a formula, the servant of a technique, a laborer placing polish in execution before sincerity in impression. The artist for art's sake — the artist pursuing a "social" goal, writing, painting, engraving to win over others, to convince them, to persuade them, the artist sacrificing his sincerity of perception to the desire, to the necessity of being understood by the non-self.. I say: No! Art for the artist or nothing...

### THE WORK OF ART

But what is a work of art?

A poem, a cauldron, a statue, a basin whose creator expressed himself with all the integrity of his soul — any visible, tangible, palpable object, which bears the mark of an effort attempted

with a view to achieving an original conception — an act of sincerity.

One can thoroughly master the technique of an art and remain insincere — that is to say, write, paint, sculpt for effect, climb the ladder of fame, earn money; in other words, being the complete opposite of an artist.

Besides, you can be a very great artist and never have produced a work of art; in other words, one can remain a dreamer — an inner artist all his life.

### THE GOOD POEM

A few days ago I was asked this question: — “What is a good poem?”

I replied: — “The one where the poet has truly exteriorized himself, unconcerned with the rules of prosody or versificatory technique.”

And who will convict me of lack of taste?

### THE FAILURE

Behind the critic of art, poetry, literature, I always seem to see the failure grimacing. I am not talking here about the critic who criticizes “as for himself” — I am talking about the critic who wants to pose as the educator of crowds or the great man of the cenacles.

### LIFE: A BLOSSOMING

I pity those who constrain their temperament. They are never just caricatures or actors (in the bad sense of the word). They reach the end of their existence having spent their entire lives compressing themselves, not blossoming. They were never individualists, artists. Individual life — this work of art — is

indeed a flourishing and not a compression.

## THE PERSONAL TURN

Everything that is said and written has already been expressed — or nearly so. This is true; outside the realm of purely scientific discoveries, there is little fundamentally original thought. Something, however, remains apart: it is the man, the personal turn given to the sentence. Pen strokes are like brush strokes — some remain inimitable.

## ON THE THEATER, THE DRAMATIC ART, THE POPULAR SONG, etc.

There are two ways of conceiving theater and of making the characters move on the stage.

The first consists of choosing characters symbolizing “virtues” or “vices,” endowing them with the characteristics that tradition or public sentiment attributes to them, then taking them through certain historical circumstances or a special social environment: these characters move independently of the author, the playwright, whose role is reduced to depicting them with more or less warmth, color, passion. He presents them with more know-how than originality, he surrounds them with a more or less absorbing staging. The success of plays whose characters are thus conceived depends, in general, as much on this staging, the effects of language or diction used by the actors as on the fidelity with which these characters typify the “virtue” or the “vice,” the “quality” or the “defect” that they are tasked to represent.

The other way is to present characters who embody personalities, not abstractions — characters conceived by the author, born in his thoughts and moving within them. It does not matter whether he creates them entirely or whether he uses

documents to situate them in a given social or historical environment; they no longer symbolize a special “virtue” or “vice.” They are such as the personal determinism with which the author, their creator, has endowed them makes them. They are ambitious or disinterested, treacherous or courageous, because it is in their nature — in other words: because that is how their author wanted them. They are antipathetic or sympathetic because of their actions or what they say, not because they symbolize antipathy or sympathy. The author depicts himself in them. They are indeed his creatures. They reflect his observations, his public and often secret aspirations. He tells how he would have acted if he found himself in the conditions in which he wanted his characters to evolve, what circumstances would have been necessary for him to triumph or give way. The staging is then only a complement — what illustrations are to a novel — and the craft — it is necessary in the theater — consists only of making the play playable in front of a public, and of making it played by suitable actors.

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The plays where the characters typify a “virtue” or a “vice” are boring in that they keep the spectator for two hours under the suggestion of the improbable. In real life, we are not always hypocritical, fearless, dedicated, mean or good-natured. The most courageous has his little moments of cowardice, and the most hypocritical shows himself to be truthful from time to time. We are not from morning to evening the Cid, Tartuffe, Nero, Polyucte, Horace, Phaedra. There are times when “we take a break.” Otherwise, it would be so tiring that we wouldn't last six months in a row.

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What applies to creators, to playwrights, also applies to actors. When they symbolize a “virtue” or a “vice”, they do not play a living role: they represent an abstraction: they are truth, lies, pride, sacrifice. When, on the contrary, they embody “a character”, their role is quite different: it is an individual gifted with real life, with his triumphs and his failures, that they present to the public. The actor's success then no longer depends on fidelity to a classic interpretation, but on the originality — I mean the sincerity — of his performance.

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What is a popular song? — Is it this kind of easy poetry, more or less confused with the Poetic Code and which this social “category” that we call people understands, assimilates and absorbs with a minimum of effort? (Between parentheses, we suppose “the people” to be generally illiterate, endowed with clear-cut, lively, elementary feelings, in contrast to the “elite” who we imagine to be refined, literate, adorned with artificial feelings.) But this definition suffers from a lack of accuracy, since fragments of opera or comic opera, which were only written for “dilettanti” manage to become acclimatized among the masses and become familiar to them, although they require a certain effort of the intelligence to be assimilated. We could therefore extend the definition of popular song, and write: it is any poetry whose words or melody — or the two together — touch, move, make vibrate, satisfy the sensitivity of the masses; excite, impress the nervousness of the multitudes.

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One might wish that the term popular songs be reserved for those composed or written by “people of the people” — and there were people of the people who were songwriters. But the most



popular songs, those that were preserved for a certain time in the memory of the working classes, were not imagined by “common people” strictly speaking. Their composers or authors have a primitive education superior to that of the masses, or they later devoted themselves to studies generally ignored by the popular, and have become — in relation to their environment — “intellectuals.”

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I call a popular singer the poet who transports himself, through imagination or observation, to the people, to the heart of the social category towards which his sympathy, his affinities, his curiosity perhaps, attract him, depending on whether, after having collected them, he translates or describes most faithfully, most sincerely, the gestures, the needs, the aspirations, the hopes, the joys, the sufferings of what we call “the popular class” — that he is more or less a “songwriter.”

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I never take into account, when I write or discuss in person, intellectual production, the *mercanti* who produce to satisfy the demands of a clientele, who makes theater, songs, novels, because this gives him a better day's wage than working on making appetizers or cultivating mushrooms. He doesn't exist for me. If there is a repulsive type of exploitation, it is that of the arts or letters. Oh, what a disgusting profession!

#### THE PLAGIARIST

“I cannot be a master on the first try.” — No, my friend, you cannot be a master on the first try. And I'm not asking you to be a master: I'm asking you to be yourself, that is to say, original.

Your prose (?) and your verses (?) are pure imitation. I don't blame you for not reading enough, but for reading too much. If you were content to single out little or no known authors; but, unfortunately, these are writers who have fallen into the public domain, who can be obtained for a few tenths of a franc from the first bookseller who comes along, whose works are in everyone's pocket. Stop writing for a few months, for a few years; collect yourself, isolate yourself. Then, by your perseverance you will judge your sincerity.

### I REMEMBER

“When my book is published!” — We always have a book to publish, when we are young and we have not yet read.

I remember, thirty years ago, having composed a play in five acts and in verse, if you please. It took place in India and it was about some rajah in revolt against the English and madly in love — it goes without saying — with a princess who was a prisoner of her enemies. I have since read and seen plays worthy of the name performed... As what I wrote seems to me today to be poorly constructed, unfit for the stage, inept...

### THE MANIA FOR WRITING

There are people who are tormented by the mania for writing to such an extent that those they bombard with their “copy” end up, in an hour of weariness, letting themselves be moved and “to please them” insert — in retouching it — some piece of verse, or some piece of prose of their own. Are they too unintelligent to notice it or not proud enough to balk at the insult? — How, in either case, can they figure among our own?

## ART AND CIVILIZATION

Is Civilization necessary for art? Is it harmful to it? And first of all, what is civilization? Should we mean by this a collective of human beings living under the empire of similar laws, practicing the same religion and the same morality, accepting that the nature of the regulations that govern them includes sanctions against those who violate them? Or resigning themselves to it? Does a civilization consist of a collection of coercive institutions and a development of activities — parallel or competing — political, intellectual, economic? Are the characteristics of civilizations the existence of the State, the Government, a civil, military, judicial, fiscal or other administration — intervening in the lives of the inhabitants of any territory — of a restricted area or an immense extent? If I am not mistaken, these are indeed the traits by which we recognize civilization.

Well, in all sincerity, we cannot claim that this mode of civilization practiced — with differences in detail inherent to places and times — by the ancients and the moderns, was unfavorable or harmful to the hatching and production artistic events.

On the other hand, the absence of any civilization — the state of nature — has hardly been conducive to art, it is clear.

Do I mean by this that a civilization based on foundations other than the domination of the strongest, the richest, the most astute over the weak, the disinherited by fortune — or the supremacy of majorities over minorities — or that the adoption of an identical legal, moral, economic or other status by a given social environment — do I mean to say that a civilization otherwise conceived and achieved would not have given rise to other artistic manifestations than those that we have before our eyes or whose remains we keep? Not at all. It is more than probable that a different civilization would have responded with

a different art and literature. But I maintain that to depict or describe what these artistic or literary manifestations could have been is simply a work of imagination.

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It has been claimed that our contemporary civilization — mechanical and industrial — involves antagonism with the artistic manifestations of Greco-Latin Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; I have heard very cultivated minds affirm that the activity of laboratories, mechanical production, factory work, industrialism are unfavorable to art.

And I wondered if the gigantic blast furnaces, the ships measuring several hectometers in length, the giant ventilation shafts, the generators and the transporters of motive power of all kinds are not to the civilization within which we evolve what obelisks, colossi, pyramids were to Egyptian civilization, for example? Who can say if the paintings of a Corot, a Millet, a Whistler, a Pissaro; the sculptures of a Pradier, a Rude, a Barye, a Rodin — I cite names that come to mind — are not anachronisms that have nothing in common with an art adequate to the contemporary civilization? Building arenas or aqueducts, building cathedrals using all the genius or all the talent that a century was capable of, these works were linked to Roman or medieval civilization. Manufacturing, perfecting, developing machines intended to transmit at a distance - on and underground, in the air, on and under water — a motive energy is to create a work of art in relation to the mechanical and industrial civilization of our times. They will tell me that this civilization is a shrew, an ogress; that it maintains despotism, pauperism, militarism and so many other institutions in their most brutal aspect. I know it well and I hate it, this civilization... Another civilization, ignoring large agglomerations —

sprawling cities — based on craftsmanship, individual production in the anarchist sense of the word would have resulted in very different artistic manifestations. I am convinced of it.

## OF INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTION

To produce cerebrally in complete independence, as if you were in the midst of nature, without worrying whether you will be followed or not by a clientele of readers. To produce, with a free brain, because it suits you, that is to say because you are determined by desire or by taste. To produce by opposing your personal determinism to the general determinism. To produce in this way, — all writers proclaim that they do it, but how many are ready, in practice, to present all their thoughts when the fear of losing their readers arises.

## OF ART, OF THE BODY AND OF HUMAN CLOTHING

Drawing, painting, sculpture without knowing the anatomy of the human body is like building a house without using a plumb line. It is necessary that, under the folds of the drapery, we can make out the limbs, the flesh, the protrusion of the muscles, if we do not want to create dreamlike or unnatural beings. Otherwise, art is no longer life or truth: it is nothing more than phantasmagoria. However deformed the parts of the body covered by clothing may be, they are flesh, furrowed by veins, enveloping the bones. All this must be felt, sensed in a painting, in a statue. It is a body that the artist represents, not a block of cotton, wool or some made-up material from which a head and the ends of limbs emerge.

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It is a bit risky to assert that contemporary clothing — overcoat and trousers, skirt and blouse — accounts for a very large part of the deformation of the human body. It is equally risky to assert that as long as one wore a tunic, a toga or a peplum, the body was not deformed. I would have liked to see the bodies of the Athenian slaves or those of the Lacedaemonian helots. I believe that they could, in terms of deformations, rival the body of the miner or that of the contemporary factory worker.

Moreover, through the discoveries made during numerous excavations, we know that the elegant compatriots of Helen, Sappho, and Aspasia used corsets and ingredients intended to repair “the irreparable outrage of the years;” Greek women who had breastfed several children no longer possessed the firmness of contours that characterizes the Venus de Milo!

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If we admit that art means life and truth, we arrive at the conclusion that unless they are liars, artists should represent the human body as it is, with the alterations it undergoes from the fact of professional deformation, from the existence lived in overpopulated cities, in desolate slums, in poverty. Why hide the bodily defects, the fruit of the industrial civilization that we endure? Why always represent only athletes or idlers? According to certain admirers of ancient art, the contemplation of the Greek “nude” (to name just one) only awakens an absolutely “pure” feeling. Whereas one could not lay eyes on a contemporary representation of the nude without arousal of a sexual nature occurring. Well, it is infinitely probable that the apparently high number of beautiful bodies that we encountered among the ancients — among those who were not laborers — resulted from the sexual suggestion exercised by naked beings or

whose veils suggested shapes. There was a constant provocation to the generation. All Greek mythology is there to show that the purity of spirit of the ancient Hellenes is a myth. The Greeks were passionate about form. Being passionate about form, they could only be sensual.

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Florentine artists thought that the face is the mirror of the soul, Greek artists thought that it is the entire body. This explains the difference that we cannot help but notice between the representations of the human body that they left to us. Paganism was all sensitivity and sensuality. The Florentines had behind them the Middle Ages and their Christianity preaching contempt for the body and renunciation of the vibrations of the senses. We do not remember well enough that the Renaissance only perceived paganism and conceived ancient art through the veil of Christian heredity — fourteen or fifteen centuries old. And this heredity, in art how dependent we are still on it!

#### OF POETIC INSPIRATION

No poetry, the best crafted that is, is ever worth the poem — poorly constructed perhaps — where the poet recounts, as he feels it, as he has felt it, a moment of his existence that has impressed him so strongly or struck so keenly that he feels the need to express it. It is this imperative need to let what accumulates “inside” flow “outside,” through the medium of the pen or song, that constitutes inspiration or impulse. I am not claiming here that everyone feels this irresistible need to externalize their impressions, their emotions, their sensations — even their opinions. On the contrary, I am of the opinion that those who know or have known this necessity or this need are very limited in number; many even who write or speak about it

have never understood anything about it — but that is a digression and I will return to my subject. So, I do not believe that it is possible to evoke in others the more or less deeply buried memory of the hours of enjoyment and suffering which for a short time tore them away from the everyday earthiness — without having experienced for yourself the joys, the pains, the hopes, the aspirations that we describe.

Without doubt, we can place on the lips of a fictional character the story of the moment of happiness that delighted you, the moments of despair that tortured you. Without doubt, we can make a being, imaginary from head to head, express the hopes that, at certain periods of your life, precipitated the circulation of your blood, the perspectives that overexcited your cerebral activity. But it is your experience that, under a borrowed mask, you expose, you deliver to those whose temperament vibrates in unison with yours.

I am aware that I will be criticized for erecting a system of autobiographism, but that doesn't matter. Be careful not to confuse artificiality with art and mistake a wig for natural hair. Anyone who makes it his trade to express or sing what he does not experience, feel or think — he has, in my opinion, no right to be called an artist or even an intellectual artisan; he is at most an unskilled worker, a sort of puppet.

## ART AND MONSTERS

“From the day we admitted that art is the manifestation of life, we manage to reserve our admiration only for the abnormal in humanity — for the monsters.” Not at all. Not for the monster that is only a production of nature, in which production the monster himself had no part. Those for whom we reserve our interest are those who behave or have behaved in such a way as to detach in an original way their colorful personality from the



gray and monotonous background of conventional mediocrity; those who achieved it through the effort of their will and through the cultivation of their primitive dispositions. The giant grenadier, the dwarf of the Empress of Araucania, the bearded woman, the man with the calf's head, need no initiative to distinguish themselves from the human group. Nature created them as they are.

#### ART « FOR ME »

“Art for the artist”? — But I call an artist any being who vibrates in front of a work of art that pleases him. Any work of art launched by its producer into the public domain — therefore subject to my appreciation if it falls before my eyes — will only be a work of art to me if it moves me. It matters little to me whether it moved or repulsed a thousand art critics — deserved the blame or the approval of the artistic public. It will leave me cold as marble, or exalt my imagination, making my temples beat or my blood boil. And depending on whether it has one or the other effect on my constitution, it will or will not be, for me, a work of art.

#### PERFECTION IN ONE'S WORK

Pursuing “perfection” in one's work does not always reveal a creative spirit, an initiating temperament. This denotes excellent, valuable qualities of know-how — it demonstrates that one is a qualified, accomplished worker. For me, it is strength, it is power, it is originality that I demand in a work, not finish in the details and a constant, stifling preoccupation with the finish in the form. I ask of a work that it makes me think, reflect, that it moves my sensitivity to the point of bringing tears to my eyes, that it puts my understanding to the test, that it raises in me a hurricane of contradictions. I want to see in every

production an attempt, a sample, a draft, not a definitive piece, out of competition, so detailed, refined, that the producer will not surpass it, will no longer surpass it; that it is both the alpha and the omega of his work.

## INGENUITY AND GENIUS

Ingenuity is to genius what know-how is to knowledge.

## PROTESTANTISM AND ART

Is Protestantism hostile to Art? Is it true that in a Protestant country a movement similar to the Renaissance could not have emerged? Some have answered in the affirmative. But again, the question was poorly asked. Let's put it in another form. Are northern climates favorable to the development of feeling and artistic culture or not? Could northern Europe, northern Asia — under the most favorable circumstances — ever have given birth to the beings who conceived and produced the artistic manifestations of southern Europe and the Orient? Could countries where neither the myrtle, nor the orange tree, nor the palm, nor the lotus flourish, ever have produced masterpieces of monumental architecture, painting, sculpture, music, etc.? , which were the consequence of Mediterranean, cis- and even trans-gangetic civilizations? There is no doubt that the form of religion influenced artistic production until the end of the 17th century, just as it cannot be denied that the economic constitution of human societies influences art from the 19th century onwards. But there is also no doubt that each climate corresponds to a form of religion. The richly starry nights of Chaldea, Media and Egypt make us understand the astronomical religion of the “initiates” of these countries. The easy climate of Greece and Asia Minor provides the key to this religion that deified natural forces. The pure sky and the rich vegetation of

the southern countries of Western Europe make us understand paganism and its heir Catholicism, darker in the Iberian Peninsula than in Italy or the South of France. Just as the steppes of Eastern Europe provide insight into the mystical and dreamy Christianity of the Slavic countries, the misty climate of England, Holland, Northern Germany and Scandinavia provides the key to the success of Protestantism. We can say, without much doubt, that where the sun is not obscured by clouds, we love color, sound, form — even in their exaggerations.

### CLIMATERIC INFLUENCES AND ART

Therefore, the form of religion, the artistic manifestations, the economic circumstances of different peoples are in effective relationship with the climates of the territories where they have their habitat. However, we must be careful not to generalize too quickly. Green and misty Ireland is Catholic, Poland too, and there are many followers of Catholicism in the Batavian countries. Holland and England have first-rate painters. I don't need to talk about the churches and belfries with which the Middle Ages scattered Northern Europe. And no one is unaware that the populations of northern Europe not only have a great taste for music, but that they produce some of the most remarkable composers. To make an accurate assessment, it would be necessary to know with certainty what was the cradle of the races that inhabit Northern Europe. If the ancestors of some of them came from southern regions, it is not surprising that, through atavism, they retained a sunny and flowery vision of life. In the literary and artistic production of the Nordics, it would be necessary to demarcate which is the work of immigrants and which is that of the natives; what is the share of crossings between one and the other... All this considered, we are hardly wrong in positing as a general rule that the native of

the north, in his imaginative production, is darker, more withdrawn, more at home self, more inner life, more comfortable, less sensualist and “*far niente*” than the native of the south.

## OF PARTICULARISM

It is true that particularism — in the form of dialects or provincial or local customs — is generally the companion of parochialism, of narrowness of imagination, of superstition, of short-range judgment. But by dint of trying to speak the same language, universal or almost, to dress in the same way, to suck the milk of the same culture, to mass-produce the utilities necessary for housing, we come to to regress to a monotonous and languid uniformity, a conformity of morals and products that makes each human being an example of the same cliché.

## THE INDIVIDUALIST IS AN ARTIST

The individualist is the one who is primarily concerned with sculpting his own personality. He is an artist. He considers life, his life, as a work of art, like a statue or a painting that he never finishes polishing, carving or retouching, whatever the perfection or the development of the sketches or of the delicacies already completed. He is thus in the field of manual production — the Individualist is not a worker — an executor — but an artisan — a creator. The dream of an Individualist Society is only possible on the condition that its constituents are, from all points of view, artists and artisans, which is the complete opposite of the current gregarious trend.

## THE INTELLECTUALS

We owe a lot to the "intellectuals," that is to say to those who have made matters of Intelligence the great business of their lives — without ever making "Intellectualism" a synonym for careerism or complacency towards the shepherds or the social flock. They have taught us a lot. More than this. They have helped to arouse in us the desire to be a personality thinking by and for ourselves.

But they owe us a lot, on the other hand. How many intellectuals would never have left the restricted framework in which they lived if our circles, our newspapers, our magazines had not been interested in what they wrote? It has already been noted that they willingly forgot this support given at the time of need when they had overcome difficulties and were sailing on the open sea of notoriety... It is true that our circles never expected to be rewarded for the assistance provided to men whose brain production they believed would be useful to disseminate, we must say to avoid any misunderstanding...

However, if only out of modesty or dignity, some of these "intellectuals" would have benefited from avoiding being accused of forgetting the past too casually.

## CONTRADICTIONARY OPINIONS

Between children from different beds, there are marked divergences. Between thoughts expressed at different times and under different intellectual influences, it can happen that there is a marked contradiction. From which it follows that we cannot blame a thinker for expressing different contradictory opinions according to the various moments of intellectual life.

## INTELLECTUAL DICTATORSHIP

Because you do not like to insert the correction that we made you make on a particular presentation of a thesis of ours, which we judged to be inaccurate, you refer us to “our newspaper.” This process is not only contrary to the good brotherhood that tacitly binds together newspapers fighting even the enemy, but it is likely to harm us in the minds of readers who only read your periodical. We had not asked you to make any allusion to our special theses and here we are not writing for the sake of writing; we love the ideas that we present and we suffer when they are presented in disguised, distorted, falsified form. Without doubt, if all our readers read your periodical, if all your readers obtained ours, there would be no great harm. But this is not the case. The readers of your paper are not familiar with the theses that we present and it is detrimental to us to have them presented them differently from our conception. I saw you protest against a president of the Assizes depriving an accused of speaking. And you were right. The fact that he is accused — and whatever the charge — puts the accused in a position to demand the ability to use all possible arguments to defend himself. If you don't want to hear defensive words that hurt you, don't take him to court. We find ourselves somewhat in the same situation with regard to your readers before whom you have, so to speak, dragged our theses. Don't stop us from defending them in front of them or even mention it. If you hinder our defense, if you prevent us from reestablishing the conception, which we believe to be erroneous, that you have provided, you are doing nothing more and nothing less than all the thought stranglers of all time: dictatorship.



## Chapter VI

# The Anarchist Individualist and Their Inner Life

### LIBERTY, MOTHER OF ORDER

Liberty, mother of order: it is Proudhon who wrote that, if I remember correctly, and the anarchist individualist Tucker took up that phrase, who used it as an epigraph for all the time that his newspaper Liberty endured. Anarchy the mother of order—are you kidding? Not at all! The most amoral, the most asocial, the most alegal of the anarchist individualists can associate for a specific time and task, establish a contract to this effect and set certain instructions, establish certain statutes with a view to carrying out successfully the task that they have determined to undertake... But then what is the difference from the social contract that holds sway us? You speak without knowing what you are saying. The contract, the statutes and the directives of the anarchist individualist association are voluntary; you are free to join or to stand aside. In all times and places, no authority, no government, no anarchist State will force to take part in them. And if you wish to remain isolated, you will naturally not share in the profits or products of the association, but not anarchist individualists who take part in it will dream of excommunicating you from anarchism..... That is where the distance lies between archist society and the anarchist association or milieu: it is not imposed on you, while the authoritarian society forcefully includes you within itself, forces



you to submit to its laws, customs, habits, traditions, etc. The anarchist disorder is the obligatory social contract, the anarchist order is the voluntary contract, proposed and never imposed — which links and holds only those who accept it for the time and purpose proposed — and terminable under the conditions agreed upon before setting to work. Am I clear enough?

## THE DANGEROUS MAN

They call me a dangerous man. The rulers, the magistrates and the police agree to attribute this vice to me. Or this virtue. Because it is not certain. In fact, I have never carried a weapon. I do not like brawls. I profess a marked horror for the settlement of disagreements and disputes by blows. But none of that has prevented the authorities from branding me a “dangerous man.” I have never profited from private or public misery to speculate on the distress of anyone. It would never occur to me to use a calamity or catastrophe, whether great or small, to improve my financial situation. I have never taken advantage of some great international slaughter to furnish murderous machines or low-quality foodstuffs to the wretches that the great money-handlers sacrifice to their greed. Making them pay five or ten times their value, of course. I have not built a fortune on corpses or ruins. I humbly admit that I would have lacked the necessary audacity, craftiness and cunning at the moment to act, if my addled brain had conceived the thought. I am nonetheless a “dangerous man.” It is true that I do not profess the opinions of the politicians or the police regarding life or social conventions. It is true that I can people and things by their names. I call an exploiter whoever draws a profit from the labor of the disinherited, from whom their privileges allow them to hire the effort. I call an assassin whoever makes his fellow kill one another in order to retain a profit that free competition threatens to cut. I harbor a stubborn

and sincere hatred of all those who practice the trade of leader or that of follower, an occupation of command or obedience. They all disgust me, from the first magistrate of the Republic to the least of the rural wardens. I consider harmful those who use or exercise authority. I proclaim it in a loud voice. I thumb my nose at the established, the traditional, the orthodox. I am not afraid to boast of it. Opportunism disgusts me. That is what neither those who reign nor those who oppress will forgive. And this is why I figure in the list of “dangerous men.”

LABEL?

An anarchist individualist, I choose, I have chosen the “label” anarchist because it please me, but also after reasoning about it. But this anarchist label is not just a label. It is an affirmation and a definition by itself, of which no one could be ignorant if they have studied the slightest bit of sociology or have spent time with flesh-and-blood anarchists.

Anarchist is a label that is also a declaration: a declaration that — in order to live in isolation or association, to produce or consume, to learn or to teach, to exist and to evolve in all domains — there is no need of governmental authority, there is no need for the State. The rulers have understood this so well that they have enacted special laws restricting the anarchists, the so-called lois scélérates. And this is true of all governments, up to and including the government of the proletarian elites.

The dictionaries indicate for the word “anarchy” and its derivatives “disorder, confusion.” But it is easy to see that this reflects the governmental method of teaching, which wants to promote the idea that without the State there is only disorder.

An artist, a literary person who does not prostitute themselves is only imaginable anarchically, outside of governmental or statist tutelage, protection or orders — and

that is why an independent artist or writer who uses the words anarchy or anarchist in the official sense is incomprehensible to me.

## ALEGAL

An anarchist individualist is always alegal, legality being one of the occasions that allows authority to manifest itself. What is governmental authority without legal sanctions? An abstraction, like divinity, as ineffective, as inefficient and as spectral. With no more respect for legality, respect for the law is impossible and authority no longer exists.

## SOME DEFINITIONS

There are people who confuse amoral and immoral, alegal and illegal, asocial and unsociable and these people, straightaway, brand the anarchist as immoral, illegal, unsociable. This proves that they have understood nothing of the anarchist idea. An anarchist is certainly always amoral, because they could not accept one moral standard bending all temperaments under a single ethic — while to be immoral is simply to declare oneself the enemy of the moral, thus to recognize it, in the way that satanists recognize the existence of God. An anarchist is necessarily alegal; they can accept no law, no collection of laws the articles of which they have not discussed, which would be imposed on them by a milieu (or its representatives) of which they are not a part — an illegal is quite simply an adversary of the existing law, because that law obstructs them, and not of every legal standard. An anarchist is consequently asocial. They do not accept being incorporated into a human society despite themselves, against their consent, in opposition to their desire to not participate in its burdens and its benefits; to claim that an anarchist is necessarily asociable, unsociable, speak nonsense;

save for exceptional natures, the fiercest of the anarchist individualists anarchists are always ready to associate for a specific time and task, to make agreements and subscribe to contracts, terminable under agreed upon conditions, in all the domains of human activity, with those of their comrades with whom they feel affinities of one sort or another.

### AN INDIVIDUALIST HUMANITY?

Naturally. The characteristic quality of the individualist propaganda, as we understand it, is to create a state of mind that not only admits the coexistence of a multitude of associations of all sorts and every degree of importance, composed of individuals joined by affinities, but also the possibility of existence, outside of these associations, for isolated individualities or personalities, without these associations ever seeking to dominate those isolated individuals or families, or vice versa, without imposing under any circumstances the theory or practice of their economic, intellectual or philosophical points of view.

That is our humanity, our individualist humanity! The only one within which we could develop comfortably.

### THE SUDDEN BREACH OF CONTRACT

In a milieu where the sudden breach of contract did not entail any disciplinary or penal sanction, one would never prevent a human being — even supposing them to have an exceptional mentality — from breaking the contract to which they had agreed, even had they done so in the most complete independence of situation and mind. Not only because they would be convinced that there as a “material” advantage, whether fleeting or lasting, for them to do so, but also because their continued submission would appear of a nature to

diminish them. It is obvious, however, that the more conscious sentiment that a human being possesses of their dignity, the more they will hesitate to break the contract that they have agreed to without warning. That said, in a milieu like the one that I have just indicated, insurance or guarantism is indispensable in one form or another. While respecting the autonomy of the individual, its practice protects against the consequences and hazards of the sudden breach of contract. And it does more: it prevents the reemergence of the system of intimidation and repression that characterizes the present social contract.

## ON VIOLENCE

The question of violence is not resolved, at all, with regard to its value as a factor in anarchism. It is unquestionable that violence has served the purposes of anarchism in various respects. But we are absolutely uncertain if it will serve the aims of anarchism. That is the problem and we must get to the bottom of it. No anarchist could deny that violence breeds violence and that the effort necessary to shelter ourselves from reactions, reprisals and assaults perpetuates a state of being and feeling that is not favorable to the blossoming of an anti-authoritarian mentality. To make violence is to make authority; there is no escape from that. A milieu can only be conceived and exist if it is accepted voluntarily and cheerfully by those who form it; as soon as there is constraint or obligation, there is no longer anarchy.

## THE CURRENT FORUM

For a long time to come, individual destinies will be played out and decided in “the public square.” And, these days, the public square is the immense forum constituted by the debates of the Parliament, the sessions of the courts, the speeches of people

embodying authority, the “in depth” articles of the half-dozen dailies that direct, that “make” public opinion. The public square is this platform where high-sounding declamations, redundant phrases and dramatic pauses follow one another, of which nothing remains once they have been analyzed and dissected. It is there, intoxicated by the oompah-pah-pah of this intellectual “circus music,” the spoken or written chatter of political rhetoricians, it is there that the vast majority of men form an opinion that they maintain, without hesitation, is “personal.” Sated, nauseated by this opinion of the public square, one goes away, flees by a side street, in the hope that, far from the din of the trade in principle-words, they will form an opinion of his own, an opinion that satisfies their temperament and resists the silence of reflection. And this happens: either the disgust at the tumult of sentences, all the more sonorous because they mean nothing, has only been fleeting and the boredom of solitude makes them quickly return to what they had vomited up in that momentary rebellion; or else their will to determine their own opinion is the stronger and it resists arid isolation. There is one more individual on the planet.

## VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION

An anarchist individualist, if they are sociable, are always asocial, for the human societies that we have known thus far has always been a means for authority to make its presence evident. Present societies are based on an imposed social contract, that we cannot terminate or break without being chastised, punished or put in a state of individual inferiority. Every human society from which the constituents can separate as they wish, to isolate themselves, to join another grouping, or to create a new milieu, is not longer a political society, but a voluntary association, and thus anti-authoritarian.

## IN SOCIETY

The Anarchist Individualist does not really isolate themselves as much as it seems to the ignorant. First, because they love struggle and have understood that without struggle there is no life. This is what the great book of nature, read properly, has taught them. Second, because they tend to reproduce themselves “intellectually”, to form a root-stock, to perpetuate themselves, that is to say to extend their “self” as far and as long as possible. By instinct. And this is again what the great book of nature has taught them, on another plane. We can understand a more or less extended stay in a place of rest or refuge — colony or free milieu — we understand it for a few months, one, three, ten years perhaps. But the place of the anarchist individualist seems to me to be in society, without being of society, battling side by side with those of their species. It is good to build an ivory tower, but only if you descend from time to time to take a walk on the plain. Remaining caged in a cell, on the 32nd floor, you risk shriveling your heart, petrifying your mind... « hors du troupeau... ». It is also living in the midst of a herd, without conceding anything to the gregarious mentality, without bending to ovine propriety. Isolation is often a proof of pessimism, resignation, and carelessness. But the individualist is essentially an optimist — they have faith in their life: the struggle for their joy in living does not frighten them.

## THE NORMAL HUMAN BEING

Any observer who is in any sense discerning soon realizes that there exists in every normal human being an instinctive tendency — an “innate” tendency — to violate the law, to break the rules. I even add that whatever the “moral” qualities of an individual, it happens or has happened that they act contrary to

the conventions in force in their social environment and that in all the moments of their life when they have let their nature speak. For submission to the Law and obedience to the Rules are an addition, an artificial veneer that the normal human being no longer takes into account at the moment when their instinct speaks the loudest —they then he then find themselves in the situation of primitive man: closer to nature. And whoever lives close to nature ignores social discipline.

## ANARCHISM AND HYGIENISM

When an anarchist, when a rebel makes “hygienic” propaganda – physical culture, anti-alcoholism, vegetarianism, anti-smoking – it is rare that he finds the organized forces of authority or exploitation raised against him. It’s so rare that I don’t know of any contemporary examples. But if one of us, not an abstainer at all and an omnivore, starts distributing the slightest “subversive” leaflet and immediately the watchdogs of society stand up, fangs bared.

I am obliged to conclude that the societal organization does not fear hygienism.

Do not infer from the above that I stand for alcoholism, etc... I am not a consumer. But I claim that individualist anarchism has nothing to do with questions of therapy. To be an individualist anarchist is to individually adopt an attitude that negates authority before life, before institutions, before men. It is nothing else.

## LIBERTY

We are neither “metaphysicians”, nor “hygienists”, nor “revolutionaries”, nor “organizers of class victories”, — nor the engineers of cities to come. We are beings of flesh, bones, muscle and thought who, upon reflection, found that individual



freedom, even with the excesses it implies, is better than authority, even with the benefits that the latter can bring to the individual. And it is not just reflection that led us there, but also experience.

#### IN A STATE OF LEGITIMATE DEFENSE

Why should I be held accountable for my acts and deeds to another unity, or to another herd, since I demand no account of what they do either from any individual or from any aggregation? This is why, me and “my own,” we are in a perpetual state of self-defense with regard to those who hold us accountable in relation to our words and our deeds.

#### THE NEW DAWN

I would not declare myself happy and yet I know that I will die before having seen the dawn of it — I would not declare myself happy so long as the Individual has been achieved the possibility of dissociating themselves, at will, from the social milieu — it being understood that this separation does not imply domination over the said milieu, nor its exploitation, or the exploitation of any person whatsoever. I will not see it, I know, but the presentiment that this is where will land, after many twists and turns and returns, the ship bearing the fortune of superior humanity — superior in that it will place above every that possibility of the Individual to dispose, in freedom and reciprocity, as they see fit, of their “I.”

#### THE FREE DISPOSITION OF ONE'S PRODUCT

The anarchist individualist intends for the producer to fully enjoy or dispose of as he wishes, which amounts to the same thing, the product of his labor or the result of his effort. You will

answer me that this is not possible in an environment constituted in such a way that the tools of labor or the machines of production are made exclusively with a view to promoting or intensifying multitudinist production, to make gregarious production predominate over individual production. I do not deny it. It does not occur to me to dispute the difficulty of achieving a large-scale individualist environment in the current social environment. What I have said — and I repeat it — is that in today's social environment the individualist feels like a misfit (as in other environments, for that matter.) As he is convinced that the tendency towards a more integral liberty cannot emerge if “being” is not supported by “having,” he considers himself in a state of self-defense or resistance, declared or hidden, against any societal organization that requires the producer to renounce the enjoyment or complete disposal of the product of HIS effort, of the result of HIS labor.

The individualist is the one who is primarily concerned with sculpting his own personality. He is an artist. He considers life, his life “like a work of art,” that is to say like a statue, a painting, a piece of verse that he never finishes polishing, carving or retouching, regardless of the perfection or development of the drafts or sketches already obtained, already completed. This is the case, and consequently, in the field of manual production. The individual is not a worker — not only an executor, but also an artist, a creator. The dream of an individualist society is only conceivable on the condition that its constituents are ALL and in ALL POINTS OF VIEW and in ALL FIELDS artists and craftsmen, never laborers or automatons, which is the complete opposite of the current “spirit of the herd.”

## THE HAVE-NOTS

It is not correct to say that it is property that makes theft. It is not property, but the absence of property. Nor is it the bread, the potatoes or the hundred sous coins that cause theft, it is because we lack bread, potatoes, wine, crowns that we are stolen from. Nothing is better than agreeing on the exact meaning of words, terms, and propositions. It is therefore not because property or capital exists that there are individual “expropriators,” but because a very large number of individuals are devoid of capital or property.

## IN COMMUNIST SOCIETY

Where does the right to dispose of my assets end in a communist society? That is what is very difficult to know. The possession of this photograph of my lover, of this collection of butterflies assembled by my sister, which she bequeathed to me, of this armchair sculpted by a friend who is dear to me, of this book of poems that came to me from my mother, of these various objects finally that I hold dear and that I acquired in exchange for my production — is this possession guaranteed to me or could a decision of the administration or a vote of the social group to which I belong dispossess me of it? I cannot be allowed ownership of this extension of myself without granting it to others. So?

## KEEP BALANCE

The individualist, as I understand him, does not place the resolution of the economic question at the forefront. If he never neglects “his” economic question, the said question presents so many slippery sides that if he worries too much about it, the individualist risks losing his balance. Beware of the individualist

who worries too much about this question. He is a sheep or a shepherd, and we want neither.

## PHYSICAL FORCE AND ARRIVISM

It is affirmed that ordinary humans bow to brutal force, that they admire physical vigor, that their preferences are for those of their fellows cut as athletes. There is a lot of exaggeration in this statement, which is at most true for lovers of physical culture.

It is true that the common man fears, dreads those who are stronger than him. It is instinctive. But he doesn't admire them. He can deify them, because "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom," — according to the opportunists of all times — but to include someone in the catalog of gods and demigods is not a proof of admiration.

Those who have practiced common humanity know that the man they admire is the clever deceiver who succeeds, the adroit man who gets out of the most scabrous situations without leaving any of his fleece in the thorns of legality. It is the man who "deceives" his neighbor, makes a fortune thanks to his dishonesty, and "manages" to escape all the penal sanctions which affect the crude or imprudent thief. The real object of admiration of the ordinary public is the arriviste or rather the comer, the upstart; the one who, regardless of the means employed, has risen to a position of wealth that ensures him relative independence, and gives him the ability to obtain enjoyments that ordinary mortals must renounce.

In these days when it is money that confers power and commands respect, it does not matter what tools you use to amass it: crowbar, oxyhydric blowtorch, theft, fraud, lies, swindle. As long as you have slipped through the cracks of repression. It doesn't matter whether you vilified, trampled, crushed, betrayed those who helped you steal or earn your

money, or whether you sent your accomplices to the penal colony. The main thing is that you managed to get out of the situation: yes, that you succeeded. Then the crowd greets you, hats off, and waits, in admiration, for you to allow them to collect the crumbs that fall from your table. And each of the unities in the multitude says contemplates you says "in petto:" "Why was I not clever enough to do the same?"

## THE INDIVIDUALIST AND THE ECONOMIC QUESTION

The individualist does not want the herd to solve HIS economic question for him: he wants to solve it himself, by himself, for himself. He has no confidence in systems that tend to replace the economic exploitation of man by his fellow man with the economic exploitation of the human unity by the community. It is the exploitation that must be destroyed and not the method that must be modified.

## WE PASS FOR MYSTICS

We pass for mystics because we proclaim that the Anarchist City is or must be an experience, an external realization. We pass for mystics when we declare that if revolutions never end up where their initiators would have wanted to lead them, it is because "revolutionaries" are not first and foremost "revolutionaries." My experience over many years has led me to affirm that you and I will only create a "New City" if it first exists in us in a latent state, that is to say, if we find ourselves in the desired state of mentality, in the sentimental and practical dispositions necessary to go through all the essential conditions to attempt and make the experiment a complete success. If only our brain is affected, if our feelings are not affected, believe me, there is nothing done or to be done.

## “ADVANCED” MINDS

I often wonder if the mania that takes the Regulars to praise the distinguished Irregulars after their death is not due to the action of some malignant or perverse spirit of contradiction, because there is not a fate more lamentable than that of the Irregulars, famous or anonymous. The successful among them are only ever tolerated. As for the others, ignored by the Regulars, it is with only great difficulty that those who claim to be favorable to the outclass and the wanderers welcome them; those who are sympathetic to others fear above all being victims of their generosity and we know that the most robust friendship rarely crosses the limits of the wallet.

There is a Jesuitism of “advanced” minds that is no less contemptible than that of the “retrograde.” It consists of proclaiming oneself the friend of all those who play with codes and mock conventions, of claiming to be in solidarity with their suffering; then, this displayed and known, to avoid the unpleasant consequences that flow from this sympathy. No one is forcing these people to side with the Irregulars. No one is forcing them to act as their advocate. Nothing forces them to embrace their hatreds or their enthusiasms. If they do it it is willingly, their declarations can bring them certain benefits, of an intellectual or moral nature — they can, by compensation, bring them disadvantages of a material nature. This is logic itself.

## MANY ARE CALLED...

There are many who have heard a sort of call inviting them to life outside the frame — to an irregular life — who have believed their vocation to be that of the « en dehors », and, once in the thick of this original and independent life, have wondered

how they could have ever wanted it. Ah! Here is the great temptation!... The life of the outsider does not consist of a sort of Palace of Delights where everything is arranged as you wish. "Life outside" is above all the unexpected, insecurity, deprivations of all kinds, the desert. The desert in all its unknown, in all its aridity... It is then that the memory rises of the days of regular life, of the bread that was never lacking in the buffet. How happily we lived with our parents! How peacefully we vegetated at our job, sure of tomorrow! Ah! The troubled times when, in the balance, the advantages of the past tip the board to the great disadvantage of the present! We find ourselves in the state of mind of the Hebrews mourning the onions and pots of meat of Egypt, in the state of mind of the Prodigal Son remembering that in his father's house, the servants had food in abundance. Is it not finally time to turn back the clock, to re-enter the "fold," to make peace with society, to renounce the chimera of non-conformism to become "like the others" again? What if we gave up reading this compromising newspaper, and spending time with this propagandist whom prisons have too often hospitalized? What if we abandoned the thorny path of individual autonomy for the great and broad road of social duty? How little, at these moments, weighs the joy of being ostracized from the milieu and the pleasure of having situated oneself outside the herd, beyond its conventions and prejudices.

And remember that it is a small, a very small number who do not listen to the voice of Temptation.

### THEY HAVE BEEN FOUND TOO LIGHT!

The Irregulars are criticized for not attacking the Regulars, their long-time enemies. We forget that they have no access to them. And forcing this access is not as easy as the givers of advice imagine. Often dominated by circumstances, the Irregulars do

not always do what they want; they sometimes act contrary to what they would like and by these contradictions — those for whom the door is open are sometimes affected. There is nothing to worry about here. Because, all things considered, it is only a test intended to probe the sympathy shown, to discover whether it is genuine or superficial. How many, weighed on this scale, were found too light...

#### ONE OF US?

Verhaeren... one of us... knight of the order of Leopold, officer of the Legion of Honor, friend of a king and a queen... one of us... it leaves me dreaming. When Elisée Reclus was taken to a certain cemetery in a small village in West Flanders, there were neither Belgian gendarmes, nor picket of French troops, nor academic delegation, nor official figures there. In this way, this thinker was indeed one of us. While Verhaeren...

#### TO ACCEPT EACH "AS THEY ARE"

As I am. As you are. To be accepted, received, considered for what we are, as we are, each of us. Ah! The beautiful individualistic achievement. I know very well that you call yourself an individualist, that you proclaim it, that you flaunt it. A little indiscreetly sometimes. I know that you support individualistic activities with your purse, while so many are content with verbal approval. I am aware that you shudder from head to toe when the predominance of the social over the individual is discussed before you. That you jump when we pretend to support the idea of the exploitation of man by the milieu. I know all this. I even know that you have suffered for your opinions. And that is something. And that you would find yourself in a better material situation if you had been less intransigent. And that is something else. Perhaps because you



did not want to make these concessions to the milieu that the common people describe as insignificant, you had to undergo privations and persecutions out of proportion to what the milieu demanded of you. I would easily believe it if my statements are correct.

But all that settled, I wonder if you are individualistic enough to take your comrades as they are. I'm not talking about excusing, or giving away, ambient influences. I know that you are not lacking in broad-mindedness and tolerance. The question I ask you is this: Do you take your comrades such as they are, as they are, for what they are? Without nourishing them with an ideal – the term doesn't matter – to which you would like to see them respond? No doubt you apologize a lot, but excusing is not accepting, and the proof is that after getting to know them better, you soon discover — without saying anything to others of course — that they are not absolutely what you would like them to be. So, that one talks too much and doesn't achieve enough. This one, in such a circumstance, did not behave like you, being in his place, you would have behaved. This third interprets some of your opinions – the most cherished – in a completely different way than you do yourself, at the risk of disturbing the minds of those who are dear to you. This other...

And you have a word to say about each one, because deep down you want everyone to behave, not according to THEIR nature, but according to what you would like their nature to be — in other words, according to your taste.

Now, as long as you do not accept your comrades as they are, without restriction, even mental ones, you will not accept that they behave according to their nature, according to their state of being, there will still be a hidden corner in you deprived of individualistic action. As long as you sometimes wish that they conform to the ideal that you have imagined for their life, there

will still remain in you the spirit of domination of man over man.

## PRUDENCE

I know well that there are circumstances: circumstances of time, money, environment - what else do I know? There are measures to maintain, existing situations to consider, there are so many people who must be careful not to displease. I know all this, but I also remember these words from the Book of Proverbs attributed to Solomon: "The Sloth said: There is a lion outside - I would be killed in the streets."

## SECTARIANISM

I am the irreconcilable enemy of the sectarian spirit, and yet I am aware that where there is a lack of attachment — I was going to say fanatical attachment — to the opinions that we profess, to the ideas which we cherish, they play no more than a limited, barely visible role in our lives; they cease to be or are not one of our reasons for being, for living, one of the deepest sources, perhaps, of "our" joy in living. It is only when we are firm in our opinions that our opinions, our ideas, are worth spreading — then let us suffer for them to the point of being mocked, hated, persecuted, thrown in prison, put in jail or perhaps put to death — it is only when we are in this state of mind that we derive real, palpable satisfaction from our individual activity. We have created a vital "value" and not a formalist "appearance". I conclude nothing, I merely observe.

Besides, we escape the sectarian spirit when, while holding on to our opinions energetically, we admit that others hold to to their own with as much tenacity. And where there is absolute respect for the ideas of others, — supported by reciprocity, of course, — there is no longer fanaticism, but only conviction.

## EXPERIMENTS

We do not hide it, we have said that all individualist camaraderie misses its goal, which certainly does not imply the absence of drunkards, snitches, usurers, jealous people as much as the absence of brutal sorts, of swindler, of sexual proprietors — which does not include, even today, the abundance of opportunities for intellectual or economic experiments as well as for romantic or recreational experiences. And where is the anarchist individualist who will deny that his personal development is a function of the abundance of experiments with which his path is sprinkled?

### THE INDIVIDUALIST AND HARDSHIP

The individualist does not deny hardship. That would be absurd. There is no one in the world who feels hardship so deeply as the being who is aware of what is useful or harmful, pleasant or unpleasant to his flesh and nerves. Hardship is capable of defeating the best tempered soul, of weakening it, of discouraging it, even of causing it to despair. But all of this momentarily. A little earlier, a little later, upon reflection, the individualist regains his “psychological” balance, that is to say, realizes his “real” situation.

Isn't it a question, in hardship, an experience of of the sort that we describe as “painful”? Now, the experiences of life are not always pleasant and satisfying experiences. So I say that, at a given moment, the individualist finds himself “himself.” And from that moment on, while striving to reduce to a minimum the hardship he endures — in terms of intensity and duration — he tries to take every possible advantage of it for sculpture and the development of his own SELF.

## NATURE AND MORALITY

“There is an antinomy of nature and morality,” said a thinker. Just as there is an antinomy of the natural and the artificial. To tell the truth, there is an appearance of antinomy; for just as without the natural there would be no artificial, without nature there would be no morality. Everything we call “artificial,” in fact, has been “made” using elements borrowed from nature. Everything we call “morality” is based on elements borrowed from nature or, if you like, from “instinct.”

### A MEANS OF DEFENSE

Someone has recommended, as an effective means of dominating one's adversary, a constant effort tending to identify oneself with him in such a way that one can, through a sort of mind-reading, guess or predict his plans of offensive and his projects of attack. We can ask ourselves if this means of defense is suitable for the being who is aware of its value, and if its use does not, on the contrary, harm the development of the Individual who uses it.

### “EGOISM” OR “ALTRUISM”

It is curious — I was going to say comical — to note the trouble the “idealists” go to in order to constantly oppose — and in new forms as the old ones become obsolete — “altruism” to “selfishness,” what they call “dedication” to what they call “interest.” As if egoism were not the most obvious reaction of an individual temperament, “generous liberal, lavish of oneself,” to forces that are contrary to it? I challenge you to find a true altruist — I mean one of good will — who does not feel pleasure, satisfaction, delight, therefore interest, in spending themselves, in sacrificing themselves. Now, what is the end of egoism, if not

self-gratification?

## INDIVIDUALISM AND ARRIVISM

“Our” individualism differs from arrivism in that, to succeed in sculpting his “self,” as he feels determined to do so, “our” individual will never seek to conform to the gregarious “whole” or to avoid the hostility of the herd. The arrivist, on the contrary, fears above all else to be different from the average mentality of the herd. His success depends on it.

## TO KNOW ONESELF

We do not put new wine in containers incapable of supporting fermentation. Likewise, anyone who is not capable of contemplating themselves as they are is not suitable for the Domain of the Self.

## INDIVIDUALIST GREATNESS AND DECADENCE

Nietzsche often speaks of the nobility with which he adorns his sketch of the superhuman. Without this nobility, individualism quickly degenerates into low arrivism. Thénardier, that type immortalized by Victor Hugo, is not an individualist. He is a thief of corpses and cripples incapable of defending themselves. Nothing else.

## GOOD AND EVIL

I immediately recognize that the appearance of a difference between good and evil — the permissible and the forbidden — marks a stage in the development of the intelligence of communities. Originally this difference could only be social, the individual did not possess enough personal hereditary acquisition, enough particular mental experience to do without

the acquisition and experience, the control of the group.

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It is understandable that good and evil were first decreed with a religious nature. Throughout the pre-scientific period, religion was to our ancestors what science is to us. The most learned men of the time only conceived an extra-natural explanation for phenomena that they did not understand. Religious custom naturally preceded civil custom.

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Surprising as it may seem to us, "a posteriori," living in ignorance of conventional good and evil is a sign of unintelligence in the primitive. It is not at all because he is close to nature that the primitive ignores what is permitted and what is forbidden — it is not at all because he is "amoral" — it is quite simply because he neither reasons nor reflects.

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On the contrary, the current human being who places himself individually on the margins of good and evil, who personally places himself beyond what is permitted and what is forbidden, is at the higher stage of the evolution of the human personality. He studied the essence of the conception of social good and evil; he wondered what remained of the permitted and the forbidden once stripped of their trappings. If he prefers to have instinct rather than reason as his guide, it is as a result of carefully crafted comparisons and judgments. If he gives precedence to reasoning over feeling or to feeling over reasoning, it is deliberately, surely, after having probed his temperament. He separated himself from the traditional herd,

from the conventional agglomeration, because he considered, having weighed and experienced it, that tradition and convention were obstacles to his development; in other words, he is only “amoral” after having asked himself what “morality” is worth in relation to the individual. There is a long way from this non-morality to the primitive man, barely differentiated from an ancestor with a still foggy brain, incapable of opposing his personal determinism to the ambient and overwhelming determinism.

### THE MORALIST BLUFF

Moralists assert that in the end injustice is punished, that ultimately the unjust meets ruin, and that a day comes, sooner or later, when the unjust receives deserved punishment. In reality, the great exploiters, the great proprietors most often end their days without experiencing any of the worries that haunt the old age of the dominated and exploited. It happens that some of them succumb in the struggle they undertook to conquer, to amplify their situation, but it is a “work accident” which is no more extraordinary than the fall of a roof from a roof, or the death of an officer killed by a projectile launched by the enemy.

### "NATURAL" AND "ARTIFICIAL" VICIOUSNESS

There are people who are “vicious” by temperament and others who are artificially so, highly strung. The latter can be recognized by the fact that they experience the feeling that they are doing wrong each time they perform one of these gestures that prejudices describe as anti-virtuous. They then feel an irresistible need to justify themselves and there they are, to do so, piling up quotes, authors, philosophies, scientific methods. There is always in them the fallen angel who regrets the place he occupied in heaven. The “vicious” for real, the “vicious” in nature

ignores this casuistry, these battles against the flesh, these reminders of lost paradise. He is cheerfully, healthily vicious. He does so with a good heart, without any ulterior motive of taunting the virtuous. He does not claim any doctrine, he does not rely on any text, he has never been expelled from any Eden... He is vicious in his good humor...

## KNOWLEDGE AND EVIL

“Evil” is not the result of ignorance, like superstition is. And “evil” and superstition are two very different expressions. The vulgar call “evil” egoism pushed to such a degree that to achieve its ends, there is no weapon or means that it does not use. “Evil” is therefore, popularly speaking, the instinctive, unpoliced form of egoism. Knowledge does not abolish egoism, it merely disguises it, makes it speak a polite language and gives it good manners. Knowledge therefore does not abolish “evil.”

## THE "SUPERMAN" AND THE INDIVIDUAL

A herd of supermen would be worth neither more nor less than a herd of subhumans. Perhaps it would be more dangerous for the individual. By dint of bleating that man has been overcome — bleating it so that they would have believed it — they would end up destroying in themselves any appearance of man, by which I mean that they would show themselves with vanity and an insane self-importance, while remaining exposed, after all, to the same accidents as the rest of their fellow human beings. This is why the superman must be overcome by the Individual, — in other words, by the man in full possession, in full enjoyment of all his faculties: the man who wants to live his full life, without worrying about hearsay, and without wanting to play the role of social shepherd. The superman is only understandable — and tolerable — as an exception, as a sort of



prophet whose voice comes down from the mountain and invites us to look within ourselves, what we too often forget. Moreover, the superman is contained in man, he is a function of it, and the content, in this case, cannot be abstracted from the container.

## THE RECTILINEAR MARCH

The rectilinear march does not always indicate a strong man — most often, on the contrary, it is a sign of mediocrity. What characterizes a mediocre man? It is that he does not offend anyone and no one thinks of putting obstacles in his way.

Whoever says a life where struggle abounds — that is to say an original life — does not speak of a straight-line path. Because the struggle involves windings, goat paths, flanking advances, retreats, returns to the starting point, if necessary. When we fight, it is to achieve victory — and sometimes we have had to use many stratagems to remain victorious.

## MORALS AND MORALITY

I am not an ascetic, but an individualist. I did not rebel against the morality that imprisons the expansion of the human person, to place myself under the yoke of a constraint replacing it. “My” anarchism is both a negation of morals and morals: it implies enjoyment, consciousness of living – sensual and voluptuous enjoyment, passionate enjoyment of the present hour; this against which these two authorities have always risen and will rise: morals and its bastard daughter, morality.

## THE UNSATISFIED

So you think you're so different from the crowd? — But no, we are, like it, made of flesh, bones and muscles. It is by the same

mechanism that our blood travels through our body. We assimilate and disassimilate like it. — We differ in this: it aims at a state of things where happiness would be organized for all, once and for all; while we are already in search of the happiness which will replace the one we are aiming for and which we have not even achieved. We differ again in this: the mass hates, hunts and pursues, through its herd instinct, anyone who attempts to undermine the average conception that it has drawn up for itself of life, whereas we are the eternally dissatisfied, the forever discontented, dissociators from the herd.

#### DILETTANTES

I do not deny that among individualists we find dilettantes or amateurs. These are especially those who have lingered to look at the units of the human herd, considered one by one, and to analyze too finely the secret motives of men's actions. Besides, “dilettante” or “amateur” are not terms synonymous with “insensitive” or “skeptical.”

#### LET US NOT FORCE OUR TALENT

There is no great merit in mounting the mount of an unhorsed rider. “What a fine rider!” exclaims the crowd, clapping their hands, and the dashing horseman, intoxicated by the din, forgets that it was not he who tamed the animal.

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No one forces you to become a doctor if you are ignorant of the art of healing. No one forces you to accept a mandate if you do not feel up to the task of fulfilling it at the discretion of the principal. No one forces you to take responsibility for a deposit if you are not willing to return it intact to the depositor.

BY THIS LANGUAGE, I RECOGNIZED SOMEONE  
FROM MY WORLD

Someone writes to me — “Your desire to live stops at this life. Not mine. It will certainly be too short for me, even if I live intensely in everything. And I find it desirable that other existences allow me to later satisfy all my desires and realize my dreams...”

This is only a wish which has no more value than if I found it desirable to live a thousand years. There are so many facts that I would find desirable to see manifested, so many gestures that I would find desirable to accomplish... And these facts and gestures remain in the state of wishes. As "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," I prefer to accumulate experiences during my lifetime, so that, when death comes, I welcome it, serene and without regret, sated with enjoyments, as others are satiated with years.

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This same correspondent adds: “I have the desire to know more and to maximize the possibilities of enjoyment that are within me... wisdom is no longer in watching the days pass, but in using them.”

In this language and whatever ideas he may entertain on the hypothesis of successive lives, I recognized in the person who wrote to me someone belonging to “my world”. And one of my own. This is of all things the one that matters most to me.

RISK AND DELIGHT

I am the resolute opponent of any precarious organizational plan that eliminates risk and banishes adventure. It is through his effort that the individual must achieve the enjoyment of his

life. Where the adventure has disappeared, all that remains is the settled; where there are no more poachers, only the game warden remains. Where risk has been banished, all that remains are beings cut or made on the same model: automatons. civil servants, administrators. Where bohemia is dead, there are only tidy people left.

I rebel against religions or moralities that preach, teach or advocate contempt for delight. What is delight? — if not a special state of our sensitivity that allows us to appreciate, to enjoy with extreme intensity and violent passion the various aspects of life. It is not only the sensual aspect of life that can be felt with delight: all aspects of life can be appreciated in this way: the pursuit of scientific research, the accomplishment of a manual task, the undertaking of a journey, the making of a poem, the composition of a piece of music, the cultivation of a piece of land, even eating and drinking. He comes very close to the individual type, the one who has acquired or conquered an ability to enjoy his life, such that, whatever he feels, creates or imagines, he moves in an atmosphere of delight.

#### THE COMPLEX LIFE

Living a complex life is not easy after all. I believe that we could count on our fingers the human beings capable of living a truly complex life, that is to say, of leading several existences simultaneously, which neither entangle nor confuse each other. What a flowering of the faculties in beings capable of manifesting themselves, of spreading themselves in several activities, none of which would upset its neighbor! What knowledge of oneself and others would result! What wealth, what capital is this accumulation of experiences! It is infinitely probable that the typical man of the future will not be the man of a single purpose — "the man of one purpose" — but the man

with multiple designs, with multiple radiances, powerful enough and energetic enough to lead several lives in parallel and simultaneously. I like to believe that he will be wonderfully helped by the countless voluntary associations that will then exist and which will set themselves the goal, each in their own sphere, of leaving unexplored none of the areas where it is open to the human being to pursue his investigations and to achieve achievements of one kind or another.

#### YOU SEEK PRAISE

You're spreading yourself too thin. Are you that sure that all these young people understand you? I'm afraid that they only know how to acclaim and adulate you... How great you were when you walked alone or almost alone and your giant silhouette faded against the pale contemporary intellectual horizon! Some of us followed you from afar, barely daring to glance at the peaks you made your home. Now, behold, the crowd surrounds you, now that you linger on the plains, but it is no longer to hear the apostrophes that sting the soul, — it is to seek words of praise.

#### THE DIN OF MORALITYISM

It is the fittest who survive. — I perfectly understand the individualist who prefers ten or fifteen years of intense life, consuming himself, wearing himself out without reserve and without restraint to existing for fifty, sixty or seventy years, taking great care not to spend too much on only once. I understand that we don't want to go past spring. I have met so many who regretted having let their good days pass without getting everything they would have had the right to expect. — All in all, it is up to each of us to use our lives as we see fit. The important thing is not to impose your conception of life on

others. — Stop moralityism, even wearing the mask of anarchism!

### EXERCISE EACH FACULTY

Every faculty, every aptitude that we do not use is lost, and the Individuality is diminished to that degree. Its development is also hindered to the same degree. The faculties and aptitudes find their reason for being in the use we make of them, not in abstention from their use.

### RECIPROCITY

It is quite obvious that I do not behave in the same way towards a comrade as I do towards a stranger – bourgeois or petty bourgeois. I know very well that there are “strangers” who are only so in appearance; who deep down are “my own.” Their way of being towards me makes me recognize them immediately: they do not seek to cause me avoidable suffering, they do not take malicious pleasure in making it worse, they strive to dissipate it in a spirit of conciliation; their relationships with me are determined by good will and the desire to assimilate my aspirations through reciprocity — we are “friends” who are unaware of each other. For the others — the “strangers” for real — I do not feel bound to them by any commitment, any promise. I always feel ready to break, without notice — as soon as I have an interest, advantage or pleasure — any contract that circumstances could have led me to subscribe to with them. They are not from “my” world or they are no longer in it. And I know, from experience, that they would not spare me if necessary. I simply return the favor, and this is an aspect of exercising the “method of reciprocity”...

## I AM "ME"

“Here I am as I am” declares the individualist, “with my qualities, but also with my faults, to speak the language of today, that is to say with my physiological and psychological attributes.” I proclaim myself neither inferior nor superior to any of my fellow earthlings. I am Me and I strive to use all these attributes to the advantage of the development of my personality. I no more think of getting rid of any of these attributes than of amputating one of my limbs.

I do not intend to renounce — an insane work indeed — either my inclinations, or my habits, or my passions. I don't want to give them up any more than I want to give up myself. I want to use them for MY highest good. I underline “my” on purpose, because “my good” has nothing in common with the “good” of today, a good that ignores passion, or pretends to ignore it, which is worse.

## ASOCIAL, BUT SOCIABLE

A reader says to me: “The more I read your work, the more it seems to me that your philosophy reflects your temperament. To tell the truth, it seems to me that you have built philosophy for your exclusive use.” — It is obvious that, as an individualist, I choose a philosophy that pleases me, that is consistent with my temperament, my aspirations and my experience of life. It is also obvious that it is to my own measure, practical or theoretical, that I have tailored my philosophy: you would not want me to make myself the slave of a philosophy imposed on me from outside — I suffer enough constraints without that. So much the better if my conception of life finds itself shared by a certain number of individuals, in quantities more or less large. Asocial — this does not mean that I am unsociable.

## TO CREATE

To create and to destroy come down to the same thing, for, in the end, everything that is created will disappear. To create is also to innovate, to deny the utility or value of what has existed in the past — to substitute a new value for the old one.

Whoever denies existing values creates a new value, for negation is not skepticism or indifference. It is an aspect of intellectual activity.

## JUSTICE

The idea of justice proceeds directly from the demands of instinct as well as the idea of morality, but civilization has so transformed it that it often aspires to the opposite of what instinct desires.

## THE ABSOLUTE

The absolute is an armchair notion. Everything is relative and there are only relativities. The absolute is itself contingent on our powers of conception and comprehension. In practice, the absolute is, for us, some passion pushed to the point of paroxysm, some sentiment that has come to its furthest functional limit. And even then, the extreme development of a passion or sentiment is always related to the physiological and psychological aspects of our temperaments.

## PERSONAL DETERMINISM

When the Individualist proclaims that he wants to do “his” will, he is aware that he will do nothing more or less than what his “self” determines him to do, in other words the sum of all his attributes, considered in their various psycho-physiological



aspects. Therefore, he knows that he will only do what his qualifications, his faculties, determine him to do. But he intends to increase this personal determinism, complete it, amplify it, to oppose it as much as possible to the determinism of the and even, if possible, make it triumph if the latter pretends to hinder his development.

## YOUR CAUSE

I have never said or written that “devotion” to a cause or the “sacrifice” of money and time to a given thing — whatever the motive may be — were incompatible with the practice of the individualist conception — as long as it is not imposed or accomplished under the influence of a religious state of being... On the contrary, there is no act more individualist than to voluntarily assimilate oneself to a cause in general or the cause of one individual in particular. To the point when it becomes your cause, that you consider it as such, that you cherish it as such, that you make it prevail as such.

## I LOVE IN THE INDIVIDUAL WHAT I HATE IN THE CROWD

I love in the Individual what I hate in the Crowd — spontaneity, enthusiasm, the mad rush — it does me no harm. I am not forced to subscribe or to contribute. I do not like to see, in the individual, too much reason, too much analysis, too much reflection — it develops at the expense of that freshness of sensibility, that intensity of emotion that makes physical ugliness and advanced age bearable.

## HAPPINESS

In summary, we only form an individual conception of the adaptation of our organism to the environment — we only reason about life, our life — with a view to happiness. Now, happiness is the sum of everything we experience, feel, realize, see with our eyes, feel with our hands. In complete liberty: without constraint, without reservation, without ulterior motives. And if we go to the intellectual encounter of the expressions that others use to note, record, depict their emotions, their observations, their experiences, it is because they appear to us as reminders of our own sensations, documents or distractions. And it is in this sense that closing our ears to the other side of the story is restricting our happiness.

## POLEMIC

When the beast of the herd — draft animal or simple head of cattle — engages in controversy, it is always the private life of his opponent of ideas that he attacks. And that's understandable, the question of ideas coming second to everything else. The beast of the herd collects gossip, collects hearsay, sifts through police reports, and, with the help of this jumble of faked or lying information, puts together his files. The beast of the herd exults when it has been able to establish the secrets and details of the existence of his antagonist, provoking scandal and yelps from its peers. We will carefully exclude from our polemics the private life of the person whose doctrines, opinions and public activity we are discussing. His private life is none of our business. His daily actions cannot interest us. For them to hold our attention, it would be necessary for them to have an impact on the development and fulfillment of our own lives. Or that the person or persons concerned ask us to intervene, which we will only do

with the most extreme circumspection. We believe that to concern ourselves with the affairs of others is to commit the most serious encroachment on them. And it is not to be inconsistent ourselves that we demand this consideration from others. So, our personal controversy — when it concerns a writer, a propagandist, an activist, and it is this controversy to which I am referring — will relate to his public activity, his writings, his speeches, the works for which he solicits the attention, sympathy or support of the public. In other words, however ardent, vigorous and irreducible it may be, the individualist polemic can only focus on the part of his life that the individual delivers to the outside world: making it focus on the portion of existence that he intends to keep to himself is nonsense and an act of violence.

#### THE BLACK CABINET

Everyone is indignant against the “black cabinet,” but we find “comrades” who very well accept that letters are read to them that were neither addressed to them nor intended for publicity — in the absence of course of those who wrote them. How would you qualify them?

#### HE CHOOSES

I am so convinced of the ineffectiveness of the polemic of ideas that I reserve the option either not to respond, or to respond, but at my discretion, that is to say when I please and where I please. I would stop attending a group or collaborating with a newspaper where they would pretend to force me to respond to a controversy that I did not ask for. To the controversy of ideas, I prefer the confrontation of the opinions of different fellow writers on a given subject. Everyone expresses themselves according to their nature, without any

desire to show themselves superior to others, to take out grudges of one kind or another on them, to make the gallery laugh at their expense. The reader chooses, between the theses presented, the one that seems most appropriate at the moment to the aspirations of his intellectual or sensual temperament. He assimilates it, he makes it his own; he uses it as a way to increase the joy in his life, to provoke new modalities, to acquire new knowledge or new subjects for reflection. He thinks, he compares, he chooses. He is not haunted by the idea that he is being used as a closed field where the two antagonists will try their best to stuff his skull, to drown his own reasoning, under the flood of their dialectic. The presentation of personal opinions without any ulterior motive of controversy, this is true "initiation," fruitful and long-range.

#### TO REPEAT YOURSELF

It happens that we repeat ourselves or feel the need to repeat ourselves, because we have the very clear feeling of not having exhausted a subject, of not having presented it with all possible clarity, of not having developed it fully. It is common for months and even years to pass before we come back to it. We know well that we did not treat it the first time in a satisfactory way. We had to, for lack of anything better, be content with an incomplete exhibition. Then circumstances arose that forced us to leave the matter aside. However, in the deep drawers of memory, there remains the idea that one day it will be necessary to take up the subject again and treat it more thoroughly. A debate, a reading, a conversation are enough to wake up, to recall this idea. It takes precedence over all the work to which we devote ourselves at the moment and we do not rest until we have studied the question in depth, so as to be satisfied. We can thus return to a thesis ten times before having drawn from it all the development that it is

capable of providing.

## MISTRUST

“It is no longer enough to rant about the rotten world; we must provide positive and practical methods that can be applied now...” Applied with whose help? — Not of special and separate beings, descended from other worlds, I bet, but of those we meet on our path — with the help of “humans,” such as they are. Well, I claim that these positive and practical methods, whatever they may be, can only be implemented through a complicated mechanism based on constraint and obligation. We will therefore maintain our attitude of distrust and self-defense towards them. We prefer to remain the irreducible deniers, the unrepentant critics, those who neither compromise nor make pacts, those who are always outsiders. We refuse to trade our proud, adventurous insecurity of tomorrow for your self-confident, servile feel-good dish. You can be the strength and the numbers and enlist us in spite of ourselves in your “organization of happiness.” — But if you register us, it will be like the worm in the fruit, don’t forget that.

## QUITE SIMPLY MUSH!

There are sympathizers with our sayings and writings whose whole activity consists of stewing in their own juices. They are neither the hearth nor the flame. They are the bit of dead meat that cooks, cooks, cooks in a pot, on the lid of which one reads, in large letters, “Individualism.” And, through all that cooking, the poor bit of meat gradually evolves into a gelatinous, formless mass. As individualism — that is quite simply mush.

## TO ACCEPT OR REJECT

I know how boring this is for many of our contemporaries, but we must take the individualist as he is or reject him. An individualist does not split or section himself. We are not asking him for concessions; he is not asked to be held accountable; he is not expected to act in accordance with an "a priori" of conventions or prejudices; he cannot be expected to bow to the conclusions of an editorial committee or the wishes of a board of directors. When he works, he does individual work, that is to say "egoist" in the deep sense of the word. If his work pleases, we support it; if it displeases, we leave it aside and everything is said.

### THE LITERARY "FREE TRIBUNES"

The ideal journal of ideas is not an open forum. The ideal organ seems to me to be a collection where three or four writers, no more, present their personal point of view of the trend represented by the publication to which they collaborate. When they have said everything they had to say, they shut up for a while, unless they start again later. There is a lot of time wasted and paper wasted in repeating, mediocrely or poorly, what others have been able to express so well. The lines follow one another, the pages fill up and nothing clearly original appears. "There are things that are good to come back to often." I wrote this myself. But what applies to the field of theory seems to be incompatible with literature — whether we should call literature the too many pastiches or plagiarisms with which the literary forums teem.

### THE PROPAGANDIST

At the risk of appearing naïve or being accused of not being on board, I am wary of the priest who lives from the altar and the

administrator or editorial secretary of the journal of ideas who receives untimely monthly payments. Where is the time when it was difficult to imagine that avant-garde journals could bring anything back to their editors or administrators? We studied, we administered, we wrote as best we could, in an attic, at night by the light of a pale candle. We ate when we had time; we lived, I believe, on ideas, on clear water and on love. But what we wrote, we meant it. Today we “realize.” The print runs go up, the paper sells.

— So you want the “propagandist” to die of hunger! — Certainly not. On the contrary, I want the “propagandists” to understand that their propagandist needs to clothe and feed himself, which they too often forget, contenting themselves, while crying out against exploitation, with exploiting his good will and his courage, to benefit from his production without untying the purse. But what I want above all is that we cannot suspect the announcer, the sower, or the stirrer of ideas of mercantilism or careerism.

## DECADENCE

A movement falls into stagnation or decline when those who have played a leading role in the presentation or propaganda of the ideas that form its framework abandon, corrupt or soften some of these ideas, while continuing to claim to be the representatives of the movement... The least educated — and they are the majority in any movement — stumble, hesitate and ask themselves where they are.

## A PREJUDICE

I call “prejudice” an opinion, habit, convention or formula of an intellectual, political, economic or religious order—or even relating to manners or customs, etc.—that you adopt or receive,

or to which you submit, without thinking about it, without discussing it, without examining it, simply because everyone accepts it or adapts to it, or pretends to accept it or to adapt to it; and because you do not want or dare to act differently from everyone else. And this even though this opinion, habit, convention or formula—this prejudice, finally—hurts you, offends you, embarrasses you, clashes with your convictions, is not in accordance with the results of your studies or your personal observations, is antagonistic to your reasoning or hostile to your feelings.

ADD: AS FOR ME...

A frequents Z because of his intellectual, brilliant and deep conversation; B frequents Y because of his pretty and loving partner; C frequents X because his table is more appetizing than his own. I only see different motives there; I do not see one being inferior or superior to the other.

The reason that pushes someone to perform a given action may displease you. But just because you don't like this reason doesn't mean you have to label it "inferior" or "superior." However, it is up to us to add "as for me." So say, then: you Z, "I find that A exploits my knowledge"; you, B, "I'm jealous;" you, U, "X is too frequently my guest." But do not pile doctrines on theories to define for us what can be explained very simply.

TELL THE TRUTH

Tell the truth to the crowd, proclaim that the masses are suffering, but at the same time recognize that part of this suffering goes back to itself — and this by invoking one's own criterion of good and evil. Speak the truth to the multitude; describe it, in front of it, as it is, like it is, present it for what it is worth. For that, courage is required. And I'm not just talking



about the populace, I have in mind all the crowds: the crowd of proletarians and the crowd of bourgeois, the crowd of manual workers and the crowd of intellectual workers, the crowd of honest people and the crowd of outlaws. Each unit of the crowd in some way violates its own moral and social commandments; each would like it to be others who bear the burden of laws and social constraint. It is a rarity to find someone who, in the daily details of life, does not contradict the average conception that the crowd adopts as a standard of moral and social existence.

#### BE MORE EXPLANATORY

You tell me that X is the most deceitful and miserable man who has ever set foot on the planet. I tend to agree. But how have you only noticed it the day he no longer shared your opinions? Why was he your collaborator for so long; why did you frequent him so assiduously? I would like a little less personal controversy and a little more presentation of his current ideas, a little more detail on the events that led him to change his mind. He's a rascal — why not? A scoundrel — let's go! But as a result of what avatars has he become your opponent in ideas, that's what I'm first curious to know?

#### IT IS, ABOVE ALL, FOR THE NEIGHBORS...

Alceste can't get over it. He has been greeted in a neighboring house, not as a recipient of the Monthyon Prize, but as asocial and amoral. He is soon the very best of friends with the mistress of the house and her daughter — he returns home so late at night that the whole neighborhood comes to think of his hosts as good-for-nothings — he dances a disheveled cake walk on the grave of the family's favorite sociologist. And now the poor creature is accused of not preaching by example (?). He doesn't understand. Me, I understand. Nine out of ten of the « en dehors

» desire above all to preach by example to their neighbor, for, nine times out of ten, it is above all for the neighbors that they are “on the margins of good and evil.”

## ESCALUS

My friend Escalus complains of being boycotted by the so-called advanced press. It was through incredible effort that he managed to set up a newspaper, and no one talks about him. Do you remember, Escalus, the days when I found myself in the same situation? I used to complain stupidly as you do now. But you objected to me that it was of little or no importance to be appreciated or noticed by others — that the essential thing was to feel satisfied, oneself, with one's effort... Besides, it is understandable that one do not make any claim or publicity for an effort that does not please you, nor for the work of a personality whose intellectual association does not seem more desirable to you than to your friends. An individualist cannot complain about it without showing inconsistency.

## EXPLOITATION

When we both renounced, in our relations, service as police officer, gendarme or judge, it was because it is understood that nothing would occur between us to justify that necessity. It was obvious that you would not take advantage of my decision not to have recourse to the law and the guarantees that it offers me in order to assault me, for example, or to forget to give me some sum you have promised to repay at a given date date, when you know very well that without your promise I would not have lent it to you; and so on. It can't be that you wish to take advantage of my fidelity to my convictions, to profit from my loss, or to place me in a position inferior to those who have recourse to the Code to arbitrate their conflicts. You would wrap yourself in the

mantle of anarchism in vain: you would nonetheless be an exploiter.

## Chapter VII

# Free or Captive?

### EXPERIMENT

Many times, you have criticized me for not listening to the sounds of the street. For not listening to the rumors that arise from crossroads and avenues. For remaining deaf to the clamors that reverberate in the squares and markets. To the tumults of the assemblies and crowds.

After much hesitation, I wanted to try an experiment. I opened wide the one of my windows, which overlooks the public highway. Very wide. And in my studious man's room. With walls lined with volumes, theses, brochures. At the tables folding under the manuscripts, the periodicals, the piles of notes, the piles of clippings. In my room of a man who thinks, who reads, who meditates, who searches, who reflects, who composes. A torrent of screams and words rushed into my room. Like a cyclone of mixed, tangled, confused, discordant, disordered, voluminous sounds.

Without doubt, in this strange whirlwind, I perceived the roar of anger of the dispossessed, like the bubbling of the flood that beats with fury the quays, the dikes, the piers — what hinders it and what surrounds it. Without doubt, in this whirlwind I recognized the lamentations of the wretched whom an adverse and ironic fate relentlessly pursues, overwhelms and tramples. The death rattle of the desperate who exhale their last breath by blaspheming God or circumstances, by cursing Society

or Nature, by denying those who fathered or educated them. No doubt in this frightening whirlwind, I heard vibrate the echo of the din of the battles, insurrections, sacks, catastrophes, human and extra-human cataclysms that have followed one another since the planet was a planet. But I also distinguished a deafening din of calls, of replies, of insults, of exclamations, of imprecations, of interjections, of outbursts, of voices colliding, crisscrossing, trying to dominate each other, quite similar to the noise which fills, on summer nights, the stagnant swamps where frogs croak and frolic by the thousands.

Overwhelmed, stunned, blinded by this deluge and by this dust of voices and sounds, I no longer recognized my environment or myself. I could no longer imagine, conceive, or invent. My faculties of resistance, of observation, of initiative appeared to me obliterated, annihilated, destroyed. I felt like a careless bather who had ventured far from the beach, who had let the tide rise and rise again, surround him, besiege him, invest him — and who suddenly realized that he there remained for him no chance of salvation. My brain was reeling in this cacophonous atmosphere. My pulse slowed. Gathering all that latent energy I had left, in a last effort, I flew towards the one of my windows that opens onto the public road. And I closed it. Closed it tight. Hermetically sealed.

In my studious man's room. With walls lined with volumes, theses, brochures. At the tables folding under the manuscripts, the periodicals, the piles of notes, the piles of clippings. In my room of a man who thinks, who reads, who meditates, who searches, who reflects, who produces. Peace and silence have now returned. The tranquility and silence conducive to elaboration, to creation, to labor. The solitude in which creative and productive faculties grow, flourish and bear fruit. The calm and silence outside of which nothing profound or original can be conceived or achieved. Nothing that persists or resists, nothing

that lasts.

## THE PRESENT MOMENT

What is true in this risky and pessimistic assertion that the goods of life are only illusions? Very often, slave to one's education, dependent on one's prejudices, one expects something from life other than what it can give. True wisdom would be to value the present moment, not to overvalue it when it brings enjoyment, and not to undervalue it when it brings suffering. This does not prevent us from observing that a healthy being will want to see moments of enjoyment repeated (that is to say, joy or satisfaction of one kind or another) and not repeat the moments of suffering.

## THE IRREGULAR

If your door is open and your smile welcoming, the Irregular, passing, will stop and he will enter your home. He will sit next to you and he will talk about things of which you had not the slightest idea until now; new things, sometimes pleasant, sometimes unpleasant — but always new to you. His voice will not be like that of other men; its accents will not resonate in the same way; his very gestures will be different. And your house — your internal house, your brain and your senses — will be all illuminated. Unsuspected horizons will rise on the dull screen of your daily life. But whether they are gentle like the stream that murmurs at the bottom of the valley, or harsh like the winter breeze that blows on the frozen ponds — his words will disturb you, intoxicate you, transport you elsewhere, in a world other than the one where you live. Because the Irregular does not take into account acquired situations or social ties. He calls you to live a new life, a life of boldness that contrasts with the life of dragging routine that is yours; a life today that breaks with the

misery of your existence yesterday, of all the past yesterdays.

For a few days, a few months, a few lustrums perhaps the Irregular brings with him the fire that consumes, the flame that devours... But this flame blazes, but this fire burns. And here you refuse to hear any more. You shy away from the experience to be tried. You close your door and dismiss the Irregular. Poor you! It is freezing now in your inner home. Resplendent just now, it is now only illuminated by the smoky glow of unoriginality and monotony.

### THE DOCTOR AND THE SICK

One day there was a patient who would have liked to be cured and a doctor as full of ideas as a turkey full of truffles. "I want to be cured and leave the hospital as soon as possible," the patient proclaimed; but instead of asking about the liberating potion, the doctor gave him endless speeches about competition. In vain, the patient shouted "herbal tea, herbal tea!" — the doctor responded with speeches, speeches. And after each visit, he left his bed rubbing his hands and humming joyfully: "The idea works."

### TAKE ME AS I AM

I have never refused to allow anyone to walk in my company. I always respond to calls addressed to me. But I ask anyone who wants to walk with me, for a little or a long time, to take me as I am, not as they imagine I am. The cup that we will drink together will perhaps be filled with a liquor other than the beverage supposed. We will see. But I don't like those who, having put their hand to the plow, look behind them. I like those who continue the experience to its ultimate consequence. And this in such a way as not to make an erroneous assessment of the experience itself. I would much prefer that before setting out

with me, we scrutinize each other, we question each other, we wonder if we are willing to empty the cup that I will present. By doing so, we would both be spared unnecessary suffering.

## PRISON AND PHILOSOPHY

We hear ignorant people maintain that such a writer, such a propagandist, such an imprisoned idea-stirrer should find consolation and comfort in his philosophy. Before expressing such an opinion, it would be at least elementary fairness to determine to what propaganda the walled-up man had devoted himself, and what philosophy of life was his. Asking a being in love with life lived in all the fullness of its manifestations, asking a being for whom living is much more an art than a function, to resign oneself to the gloomy, drab, vegetative existence of a prison — aside from the depressing regime he endures, and the deleterious environment in which he languishes — to ask him this is to expect him to act like a hypocrite and lie about everything he says and writes. And when I find myself confronted with the insistence, it seems strange to me, and I reserve myself wondering in turn who is playing into the hands of those who seem to transform these ill-founded opinions into free advice. Because it is the rulers and the dominant who have an interest in seeing men of thought resign themselves to their fate when they are thrown between the four walls of a penitentiary establishment. A man of action, a man of struggle — and I am only speaking here from the point of view of ideas — is not at home in prison, any more than in any place where his activity cannot be practiced.

## THEIR EXCUSE: NOT KNOWING WHAT IT IS

I am aware that it “feels good” in a newspaper article to assert that, “in these times,” it is better for an intellectual to be



imprisoned than exposed to being gagged by government censorship, reduced to not being able to express his thoughts as he would like. This seems correct at first glance. And perhaps the situation of a political detainee is no worse than that of a thinker forced to curb the expression of his thoughts. But, truly, to risk a comparison between the situation of a man at liberty, even reduced to silence, and that of a recluse, with all the insults, with all the humiliations that accompany a stay in a penitentiary establishment, you must not have the slightest idea of what the life of a prisoner is like. This is the only excuse for such sentences thought by someone who writes them in his study.

#### THE ACCIDENT OF WORK

“When you speak or write about a comrade having accomplished what you call a gesture, especially a friend who has suffered a somewhat long imprisonment, you seem to grant to his act, to his stay in prison, the value of a bonus! All in all, prison is an accident of the anarchist labor.” — Yes, comrade, prison is an anarchist work accident, but liberty is what the anarchist cherishes most in the world: so it is normal that the comrades of the imprisoned who have enjoyed freedom while he was languishing between the four walls of a jail ensure for him, if I may put it that way, “the pension” that capitalist governments guarantee to work-related injuries. By this I mean that those of his people who feel the most affinity with the liberated will do their best to make his life sweeter, to better understand his tastes, his desires, and to satisfy them. Yes. I said that and I do not deviate from it... I remained in the spirit of reciprocity, of the practice of camaraderie, as I understand it. I remained in the individualist notion that it is the pain, the difficulties that the product costs (in this case individual life), that will determine the appreciation of its value, the premium of the production.

## IRONY

There is no possible rivalry between the unfortunate man who lies in a hospital bed and the healthy one who engages in action that suits him, having in his possession the manual or intellectual tools of production necessary for that action. There is an irony that ceases to be irony in the face of certain tragic situations.... It is no longer anything but wickedness

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A wise man said: "When I can no long live amidst the paneling of Epicurus, I hasten towards the cabin of Epictetus". But there are times when even Diogenes' barrel is lacking.

## "NOBLE" EMOTION AND "IGNOBLE" EMOTION

There are people who would like us to make what they call "a distinction" between what they call "noble" emotion and "ignoble" emotion. I don't understand what that means. I only know emotion and I believe that everything that vibrates in nature resembles me. The emotion produced, at night, by a tree leaf that the wind drags across the road. The emotion that takes hold of a little boy at the moment when, for the first time, he is about to open the sideboard where the jar of jam he covets is kept. The emotion caused by the gesture of a young mother offering her breast swollen with milk to her hungry child. Where do you want me to discern the noble and the ignoble in these three aspects of emotion?

## FACE TO FACE WITH A FOOL

More than once I have found myself face to face with a conceited person or a fool. Each time I felt as weak, as helpless as

a small child, as incapable of repartee as the most boorish of the boors.

#### MY PRIVATE LIFE AND MYSELF

Why do you want to know more about my life than I have resolved to share with you? My public life is entirely yours — my public life, that is to say my intellectual activity, my activity as a propagandist. Apart from this activity, what do you need to know about my existence other than that which our more or less close relations require? Do you think that I rebel against the curiosity of the State or of the police, to place myself voluntarily under the yoke of your own curiosity?

#### THE CROWD PASSES

What do the crowd care about my broken heart and my tears? It passes, happily, songs on its lips — it's having fun, and worrying about my pain would prevent it from enjoying its pleasures. This is fair, after all. I'm not asking it for anything. All I want from it is this: that it recognizes in me the complete capacity to not interest myself in its sufferings and its demands, when they do not correspond with my aspirations. That it not force me to take up its own quarrels, when they have nothing to do with my own development.

#### SCIENCE AND POVERTY

It is very interesting and very instructive to know if it takes hundreds and hundreds of years for the soil of the planet to fold a few meters and that the unit of time to which geological developments should be related is the "million years." It can be very consoling to think that social evolution goes hand in hand in this respect with geological evolution. But to the poor person

who does not know what he will eat at noon and where he will sleep this evening, this sounds a bit like a heavenly trumpet blast: We then understand that in order to escape from his material poverty, he either renounces existence — and it is the act of a resigned person — or, in a stroke of audacity, he gambles his all — and this is the act of a rebel.

#### WHAT IS IT TO "BE PURE"?

“You are not pure” — a moralist remarked to me. What does it mean “to be pure”? — When, on a beautiful summer afternoon, I discover a pond with clear waves, I feel the urge to swim in it without underwear, without worrying about whether or not it is appropriate. When, on a beautiful spring day, I see a lawn dotted with flowers, I feel like rolling around in it, without worrying if it belongs to a hoarder. When, on a May evening, I come across a woman whose lips call for a kiss, the desire takes me to place mine there, without worrying about whether or not she has “potentially a husband” or a “boyfriend.” Is this pure? Is it impure? I have never asked myself that. It is enough for me to feel, to experience in my heart of hearts that it is natural, that is to say that I do not feel led to these gestures by a drug or an imperative external to me.

#### WALK AT THE SAME PACE AS ME

I do not scorn the weak and staggering soul that comes towards me, with a heavy heart, in search of advice or a pat on the shoulder. I have dried tears — I have given advice — and I have not refused the pat on the shoulder. But I have done so when I could. No out of duty. But for pleasure. Because I feel joy in giving of myself. Because also I believe this outpouring of the Self is necessary. Now, the whirlwind of life — of my life — carries me too quickly for me to stop for long and you can hardly

be « my own » except insofar as you walk at the same pace as me. Inevitably, I would add willingly. But not all of those who follow the path I have taken proceed at such a rapid pace — and those others have more time — they are better able to extend a hand to the timid and cure the stammerings.

#### THEY PASS ON THE OPPOSITE SIDEWALK

There are "good friends" who pass on the opposite sidewalk when they see, coming towards them, a individualist who is known, and therefore compromising. There are others who respond that they are not there when a comrade asks them to go to the factory or office where they work. There are still others who would not try to place an avant-garde journal in the smallest bookseller in their locality for fear of the material consequences that this gesture would entail for them. They allege a thousand excuses, each better than the last. But no matter what adjective they decorate their individualism with – it is "craven" individualism. The individualist "for real," I tell you, in truth, does not fear compromising himself, does not fear exposing himself, because he is a fighter.

#### I AM NOT A "CEMETERY MAN"

Because I am an anarchist, I am not a cemetery man. I live in the present or, to speak more precisely, in an incessant becoming. Now, the cemetery is the past; it is the regret of the gestures and forms of the past; it is the lingering contemplation of the circumstances, the events, the intentions, the achievements of a past which will never be represented again, never again. The cemetery is the continuation of the authority or moral or intellectual influence of those who are no more. I am an enemy of authority. I fight any control of authority over my individual life. I do not want the memory-authority of those

who were any more than the reality-authority of those who are. I have enough to do to rid myself of atavistic influences and cure myself of ancestral defects without yet feeling the shadow of yesterday's activities hovering over my activity today.

What matter to my evolution or my development are epitaphs and tombstones, moldy caskets and emaciated skeletons. I want life and creation: the cemetery is the symbol of rest and decomposition. I want to react against authority, to conquer my liberty: the cemetery is the persistence of the influence of what has been formed or thought.

I am not heartless, however. I have not forgotten the missing or distant beings who were dear to me. I consider the effort of my spiritual antecedents. But I am not a cemetery man; I love life and I have other things to do than visit the dead. It is wasted time.

#### IT IS NORMAL THAT HE MOANS

To refer a human being to his philosophy when he finds himself prey to an ordeal that reduces him to impotence and which extracts from him, as it continues, more acute cries of pain, more bitter complaints; referring him to his philosophy is an excellent thing, but you must first know what this philosophy is. If it is a philosophy related to Stoicism, if it is a doctrine of renunciation of oneself and of life, very good. — But if the philosophy in question considers life from a dynamic point of view, as a series of successive experiences, none of which completely exhausts the one that precedes it, — uneven, eventful experiences, in continual evolution, demanding in order to be pursued the fullness of the means that a being can have at his disposal, for example a perfect ease of movement, or some other faculty of this kind, then it is wrong to invoke against the despair of this man his own philosophy. It would be, if he resigned

himself, if he did not protest or moan, if he showed himself insensitive to his lamentable state of existence, then it would be appropriate to accuse him of inconsistency.

## THE TYRANT

There is no god that we must fear in order to begin to be wise! Only the one who has the power to take away your liberty and your life is to be feared — the tyrant, that is to say the judge, the policeman, the jailer, the executioner. Your god, your gods are the supreme crystallization of all these harmful beings, who are themselves the embodiment of organized compulsion. I proclaim insurrection against the gods whose fear is the beginning of wisdom.

## PRISON AND THE PRISONERS

You can get used to one of your own — someone loved and cherished — spending months and years in prison, living the narrow life of the walled-in. You can get used to it to the point that it becomes ordinary not to see your loved one or to only glimpse them from time to time — for a few moments — behind a wire mesh. It is true that we get used to the factory, to the barracks, to censorship, to war, to despotism. This confirms the fact that the animal “homo” was the most adaptable of higher vertebrates.

Every prisoner promises himself to regain lost time once he is “outside” and to reconnect the threads of his interrupted life. But lost time is never regained and he forgets that when the detention lasts several years, the ends of these broken threads are extremely difficult to find. Circumstances and people have changed. Furthermore, the unfortunate imprisoned person forgets the damage that long months of imprisonment will bring — with rare exceptions — to his vigor and intelligence. And,

upon his “exit,” it is this observation that embitters him perhaps more than all the other consequences of his forced exile.

## THE "ILLUSION" OF LIBERTY

I am not unaware of the thrilling interest in discussions of free will. I know that the volumes or theses published on this question would fill libraries and libraries. But imagine being transported to prison, in the situation of a poor bird confined in a cage, on which all kinds of vexations relating to its individual dignity would be inflicted. Well! Despite everything that anyone could tell you or teach you about the illusion of liberty, you would still persist in thinking that there is an immense difference between seclusion in a building from which you cannot escape, either day or night, obliged to observe restrictive regulations of your movements — and the possibility of going here and there, of walking, of talking, of running, of singing, of moving and of acting at will, finally.

— But, friend, you forget that this liberty you enjoy is that of being led by the tip of your nose, so to speak, by your personal determinism.

— I have learned it and have I discussed it. But based on my experience, I believe that this word “illusion” does not correspond to the reality of things. The man who lives in freedom is free compared to the one who lives in prison. The man who is bound by only a limited number of obligations is independent compared to the one who is the slave of a large number of commitments. And so on.

## COMPARISON

Someone who lived in freedom, eating and drinking to his heart's content, studying as he pleased, lit and heated by electricity, found it strange that a prisoner only accepted his fate



with difficulty. "Aren't you a man?" he wrote to him. It's as if we were reproaching a nightingale locked in a cellar for no longer warbling joyful songs..

## THE WALLED-IN

To remain "oneself" in an environment where one does not feel an affinity with any of its components, one needs an unusual force of resistance. But in an abnormal life such as that of the walled-in person, one needs more than this force and it is then that we cannot help but dream of the superhuman.

O SERF!

What I have against you is that you are still under the influence of the idea of sin! You always try to apologize for having been caught *in flagrante delicto* in contempt of the received text. We met you, my comrade, with a woman who is not your ordinary companion — or, my comrade, tenderly embraced by a man who is not the companion with whom we were used to seeing you. And here you have stammered out pretexts, excuses; how your eyes have begged for pity or forgiveness.

I clearly understood the reasons for your attitude; when you deviate from current morality, it is not with complete conviction that you do so; no, you are giving in to the "evil" within you. O slave! And why were you hiding that book you were reading when I came in? Awkwardly, in fact. So much so that my eyes immediately focused on the object of the offense and I read the title: "The Imitation of Jesus Christ." O serf! As if there wasn't as much to glean in the "Imitation" as elsewhere. But you were afraid that I would judge you ridiculous.

Don't you understand that the ridiculous thing about you is claiming to be a freedman when you are only a wearer of chains.

## OUR RE-CREATION

It does not matter to the dignity of the human person that one is constantly serious, morose, withdrawn; gravity and coldness, when they are artificial and affected, have an almost inevitable tendency to destroy or distort recreational manifestations, of whatever nature they may be. What seems to me to be inseparable from individual dignity, on the other hand, is that one accomplishes with conviction, putting into it all of "one's own" of which one is capable — like a masterpiece if you will — the cheerful, joyful, pleasant demonstrations to which one is driven by one's temperament or impelled by certain emotions whose origin is external to oneself. What remains unworthy of an individual is not so much to abstain from pleasures, when his nature invites him to do so, as to practice them as if it were a "commanded service." I have met men who gave themselves over to pleasure with something constrained or reserved, which sullied all the charm, if I may put it that way. I pity such beings and what they call "pleasure parties" look like "chores." I like, I would like us to have fun, to be entertained. with enthusiasm, with passion and not that we appear to be having fun or being entertained with an ulterior motive, a mental restriction. When I write that we must take "life seriously," this includes the leisure or recreation that it leaves us or that we take away from it.

## LIBERATE YOURSELF

What does it matter to me that you devote all your time to propaganda. As much time as your strength allows. All the time left to you by one of the thousand stopgaps you resort to to ensure your meager pittance. What does it matter to me that you are selfless. That not an atom of vanity enters into your effort.

That you do not seek to attract the sympathy of the masses. That you are indifferent to the applause of those who listen to you. And that you do not care about the opinion of those who read you. What does it matter to me that you are one of those who do not want to please the crowds. That you say what you have to say, without concessions or restrictions. Without baseness to gain you success. Without excesses to exalt your reputation. What does it matter to me that you work, if it is to the detriment of your dignity. What does it matter to me that you get agitated and stirred, if it is in the company of beings that you underestimate and from whom you dare not separate yourself, under pain of having to renounce your (?) propaganda. What does it matter to me that you spend yourself, if it is like a slave? The believer supports unworthy priests. And the alcoholic endures vile promiscuity. Whether your master is called Baal, Mammon or Propaganda, what does it matter to me! It is still a master. And if your worship of it pushes you to abandon your pride, what more are you than a servant? Because there are two possibilities: either you do propaganda out of taste, out of pleasure, out of pure satisfaction, or you do it out of duty, out of dedication, out of obligation. In the first case you are a Man. In the second you are a Serf. By what aberration do you claim to be delegated to call others to freedom, poor idolater? Start with yourself! Heal yourself first, devotee, of your superstitions. First, drunkard, give up the poison. It is when your propaganda has freed you, O propagandist, that we will begin to believe in its effectiveness.

#### SIMPLE PERSONAL PREFERENCE

I know well that you can die or vegetate miserably for the ideas that are dear to you, or that you propagate. Die of hunger, die in prison, die on the scaffold. I do not deny that loyalty to

ideas that you have made your own can lead you to break with your family, your best friends. I also know that you can mint money with your ideas. Temperamentally, I prefer those who have to suffer for their ideas; their selfish way of being pleases me more.

## HUMILIATION

I know of nothing more painful than hearing yourself repeat that you are understood, that you are approved, that what you write is made bedside reading; afterwards — when you offer the opportunity to put into practice the theories so admired — to see those who told you such beautiful things pass by and disappear. Although we may have experienced disillusionment and experienced bitterness, we find ourselves no less humiliated, having believed we were doing a profound job, to have achieved such a poor result.

## ON AGE

You are only as old as you feel. Never accept being any other age than that. Or, if you do, it is because the time has come for you to retreat from life.

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It is not extraordinary, at twenty years old, to be young. This is what is most common. What is original is to have remained young and to act like a young woman or a young man at seventy-five.

## I HATE THE CROWD

I hate the crowd for its fickleness, its thoughtlessness, its cruelty, its enthusiasm, its herd spirit in short. I hate the crowd,

because they are ready to trample the shepherd and rush on the dog, as soon as they are no longer in a position to be feared. The crowd was still cheering Caesar yesterday. But today Caesar is no longer all-powerful, the hand of Failure has struck him. So woe to him who wears his livery!

#### MORAL PRESUMPTIONS?

Someone came to me the other day accusing one of our comrades of base crime. I urged him to provide me with proof. He only had "moral presumptions." He forgot that with "moral presumptions" investigating judges and public prosecutors led innocent people to prison or the scaffold. I have no sympathy for the magistrates — you know that — even if they are "in camaraderie."

#### BUDS OF SPRING

Sunny days, swallows, warm evenings, nightingales singing in the moonlight, glow worms — it is spring. The trees, which stretched out bare and desolate branches barely eight days ago, display a glorious foliage.

A hundred and fifty kilometers from here, it's the furnace, it's the horrible melee, it's voracious death by a thousand machines, each more terrible than the other.

But life persists and declares that war is for it only a banal accident, like any epidemic, eruption or vacillation of the earth's crust. If there were no longer an able-bodied man left on the planet, when spring came, the birds would be chirping among the leaves, and the flowers would be prickling the green of the meadows. It is the alpha and omega of knowledge.

## TO GROW OLDER

To know that you are growing older; to realize that your hair is turning white and your face is wrinkled; to feel at the same time that you are as rich in sentimentality and illusions as you were in the flower of youth, this is the observation of one who is wise. What is not wise is to suffer from it. What does it matter, after all, if white hair and wrinkles appear? What matters is that I don't feel old or old-fashioned. We are only as old as we feel; we only have the age we feel we have. There is social ridicule and there are the conventions of the herd, it is true, but the one who is not in a condition to face them is never more age than they are given or display.

## MY FRANKNESS

I would rather to be taken for a curmudgeon, for an impolite, unsociable fellow, than to be obliged to associate with or make room for people for whom I feel no sympathy. I prefer to remain silent and pass for a fool rather than be forced to conceal my true feelings.

## PLEASING YOURSELF

"You speak to please yourself," shouts an interrupter. It is true. In all my words and writings I try to please myself and there is nothing that I say or write not intended to please myself. I never express anything that does not correspond to this that I feel or feel. My greatest pleasure, when I speak or write, is to see others feel a pleasant sensation, similar to mine. But even if none of my sayings or writings aroused the slightest echo of sympathy, it would be enough for me to have pleased myself, to say to have expressed myself with complete frankness.

## I ADDRESS MYSELF TO CAMARADES

I have never pretended to write for scholars, academics or “leading lights” of literature and art. — My work is addressed to comrades, that is to say to you — as you are.

### NO CONCESSION

People said bad things about me. And you listened. This outside of my presence. And you read these letters which were not intended for you. I can be worth little — nothing less than my personal determinism wants — nothing more; but were I worth a hundred times less still, you would surely be no better than me. Everyone talks bad about me, you say. Big deal! And on everyone's opinion, without even knowing me, you base your opinion. This proves that you are not better than everyone else. That is to say, definitely not much. It is also possible that I have my weaknesses. And I make mistakes. And that by the effect of a movement of intensity, I lose the fruit of my labor. But I never prided myself on always being logical or being perfect. I only declared that in my work there was no concern for popularity, no idea of making personal financial profit. I explained that I worked because I liked it, because I considered it useful, because I liked being in the company of people who were sympathetic to the ideas that were dear to me or who shared them. I explained that to obtain success or achievement, I would make no concession of fact or form — that I would prefer solitude to careerism and quality to quantity? Who will convince me otherwise?

### WORDS, NOTHING BUT WORDS

It is true, to speak and to write one uses words. That's why, in speaking and writing, I have always been careful not to be

dogmatic. I have been content to give views, opinions, presenting points of view, proposing formulas that can be revised according to the evolution of individuals and adapted to various personal temperaments. I tried to act on mentalities, to make them reveal themselves to themselves, not to indoctrinate them. All I desired — and desired fiercely — was that my theses, my opinions, my proposals should not include or display anything that is based on, supported by or relies on statism; governmentalism, capitalist or clerical exploitation. I had to use words to say all that.

## EQUITY IN EXCHANGE

We could have escaped from social hell, as so many others did. To escape, not completely, not absolutely, that's understood. But enough to be only slightly or less disturbed by the turmoil of the struggle for life. We could have settled into some official situation, we possess the necessary skills — to keep quiet there, to pretend to always be on the side of the manche, to support the interests of the master of the hour and life would have flowed for us, oily and humdrum. Endowed with a daring temperament and devoid of scruples, we could have — like so many others — gone into business and, in this game or this battle, risked all our gifts or all our assets. We could have failed, but we could have succeeded, that is, made money, since these days the winner is the one whose wallet is swollen with banknotes. The vanquished — that is to say, the unlucky — would have been jealous of our gains, envious of our victories; however, provided the price was paid, they would have provided us with almost everything we asked for to satisfy our desires and satisfy our lusts.

Now, we did not want this, We did not want to humiliate ourselves to the point of bowing down to the arrivists, nor to lower ourselves to the point of being arrivists ourselves. We



balked, and proud, hungry for fresh air, with quivering senses, we accepted being defeated, accepting the fact that we were crazy. We have left the way of the world and gone to those who disdained money and did not bow down to the shepherds of the human flocks. We joined them and worked among them. We have been one of the companions of the small handful of rebels who do not bend the knee before the entities, of the small band of outlaws whose heavy sticks bring down the idols within.

But in joining you, brothers, we have not come to you as resigned or diminished; not by renouncing a single one of the appetites that goaded our flesh, by imposing silence on a single one of the dreams that haunted our imagination. We have come to you unappeased and unfulfilled. No doubt, we have renounced being victors according to the world, succeeding according to the current formula, but not extracting from life all that it can give in terms of voluptuousness and enjoyment. We, the vanquished and rejected of the world, by coming towards you, others vanquished and rejected by the world, we have swelled your environment and we have helped you to swell it. We made our effort, all our effort. It is fair that we find with you, among you — blood of our blood and flesh of our flesh — what the world would have more or less provided us had we not wanted to follow its path: appeasement and satisfaction.

## HIGHER, FARTHER

Because our path has been strewn with experiments, because our field is dotted with a thousand varieties of flowers, because it is not always the same note that has flown from our throats — you believe us to be less tender or less receptive, less impressionable. Think again. It is because our experiments have not succeeded as often as we would have liked — because the flowers in our gardens have not always had the brilliance and

fragrance that we had expected — because our songs have not been listened to as much as we would like — we are more sensitive, more emotional, more understanding. Because we are often disappointed, we understand your disappointments better. Because we are frequently disillusioned, we understand all the better the disillusionments you have suffered. Because we have the appearance of having lived a lot, while it seems to us that it is only from today that we begin to exist — nothing that moves you is foreign to us. Whether you are at the dawn of life or the sun is setting on your path. Because we have never ceased to be and we always are — your feelings are known to us. Because tomorrow again, it will be possible for us to attempt a new experiment, to try something new, to enjoy life for the last time perhaps, we are not disillusioned, if we do not deceive ourselves. As long as we have not exhaled our last breath, we will still desire, we will not block the pores of our sensitivity, we will not close the fangs of our perceptibility.

#### I AM ADVISED TO AVENGE MYSELF

I am advised to avenge myself. Tempting voices whisper eloquently to me that I am equipped for the attack. And in an irresistible way. That it only depends on me to pick the tasty fruit of revenge. I am reminded of my comments on those who impose a breach without prior agreement. Or terminate a contract without notice. Once, broken, stung, bruised, did I not react? Against the bite that burned my flesh, Against the scalpel that searched my heart. But yes, in seductive voices, but yes, so I reacted. Brutally, Clumsily. Thoughtlessly. And I recognized it. But I had been so cruelly affected. If malignantly aimed and injured. Take revenge on ANÉMA? But she showed herself to be so inferior that I would only find in my revenge a taste of ashes. Take revenge on someone who so brazenly displays their

mediocrity? Let me wonder what slip covered my eyes then! I could hate a woman who I feel is superior to me. Out of spite, out of envy, even out of stupidity. And all this could be explained and justified. But one who I feel collapsing on the lower floors. Even in the cellars where sincerity is trampled; where one cultivates lack of good faith, careerism, fear of public opinion!! I can't blame Anéma, really. Not even despising her. I can suffer from seeing my golden dream lose a little more of its sweetness, its purity, its freshness each time. I can suffer excruciatingly because where I was promised sure friendship, I only encountered a broken reed. But I cannot hate. Since this Palace with its sumptuous rooms, whose chests contained the treasures of the interior life, has turned into a smeared facade. Since upon analysis these very pure diamonds turned out to be coarse beads. I can only blame myself for my naive blindness. We do not despise a broken reed. We pull it out, if necessary, and abandon it on the edge of the pond to rot. We do not take revenge for a misleading sign. We go our way and we swear that we won't follow it again. We don't despise broken glass, we don't trample on them, as we could cut ourselves. We can joke, hide under the sparkle of a good word the pain we feel at having fallen into such an obvious trap. We can hide, with a witticism, the awareness that we have of having taken as loyal solidity the *trompe-l'oeil* of "making believe." We can shield our candor with irony. But to go beyond that? *Fi then!*

#### ON FRIENDSHIP

1. I love my friends for what they are, just as they are. Not for what I would like them to be.

2. I take pleasure in seeing them develop, following the phases of their individual blossoming.

Not because their evolution takes place according to my own

desires or preferences, but instead because in this way they fulfill their reason to be as human beings. And the happier they are — the more they realize their individual conception of life — the stronger my joy becomes.

3. I do not love them on this side of good and evil. That would be to love them in the manner of the moralist, the legislator, the slavemaster or the inquisitor.

Because love that wants to bind others or feels itself bound by others is no longer love. It is oppression or torture. True love flourishes in freedom. Otherwise, it is only the worst form of slavery.

4. Why do I love a friend? For a characteristic trait of their character, a tendency of their nature, a detail of their way of being, a mode of thinking, of expression, of action or of realization that makes a corresponding fiber vibrate within me.

As long as that vibration persists, they remain my friend.

5. Beyond good and evil, certainly, in disgrace or in triumph, in inconsistency or in fidelity, in vice and in virtue, even if the search for their individual equilibrium leads them to commit all sorts of acts that are reprehensible to the great majority and incomprehensible to me.

6. As long as the vibration persists, I will remain faithful to my friendship.



# PART TWO

## UNCOLLECTED REFLECTIONS

[Collection in progress...]



## Chapter VIII

# Beyond the Fray

### LIVE YOUR LIFE

“Live your life:”... To live one’s life is just the opposite of spreading it out on a platter. How can you claim to live your life when you are unable to keep your secret to yourself?... To live your life is not to live for those close to you, not even for the closest, but to live for yourself.

### FLAKES OF SNOW

From a recent issue of the *Mercure de France*, I extract these reflections from G. Palante on feminism: “For us, feminism is Dameism, the influence of the Lady with the scale of values that she protects, the intellectual lowering, the narrow-mindedness that it involves: this feminization of values against which so many excellent minds have protested from Schopenhauer to Proudhon and M. Berth...” I am simply quoting.

### MARCH DOWNPOURS

Have you noticed this feature, among all those that the censorship has let us know about the change of Russian social reason: the re-incarceration of common law convicts in prisons!

When, according to the book of Acts, in Jerusalem the angel of the Lord delivered Paul and his companions, all the prisoners were delivered at the same time. Which proves that the angel of



the Lord had less prejudice than the bourgeois who turned the discontent of the Petrograd workers to their advantage.

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In *La Caravane* our friend Maurice Wullens is surprised that *par delà la mêlée* is unanimously passed over in silence. And he adds "the avant-garde organs seem to me to be either poorly informed or strongly imbued with bias." You are a "blue", my dear Wullens — allow me this current expression — you will learn later what it costs to place yourself "outside" for real, to stand apart, not showing so-called advanced sheets in the editorial offices or soliciting, open-mouthed, the support of pontificating nullities. You will understand, subsequently, the ostracism of anyone who does not want to clap their hands, act like a careerist, and "be on the train." And remember that so-called "advanced" intellectual circles are no better than concierge lodges: we slander there, we meditate there, we distribute patents there, we judge with criminal arguments there, we condemn without appeal. Above all, we fear the gossip from the neighboring lodge.

A fact: there is a magazine in Paris to which a publishing house is attached. We give the publications that come from it publicity, like no other newspaper of our kind currently does. However, it did not even occur to the administrators of the said magazine to send it to us in exchange. And this while it is exchanged with publications that have neither the circulation nor the influence of this newspaper. Let's pull up the ladder, shake the dust off our sandals and continue on our way.

#### MORE LABELS

I have nothing against the label that is stuck on the bottle. It is a classification that can be useful. What I rebel against is the

false label.

## BUDS OF SPRING

In an article in his magazine *The International*, Geo Sylvester Viereek talks about his meeting with H. G. Wells and analyzes his latest book on the war, *Mr. Britling Sees it Through*. On this subject, he gives this opinion of the powerful English novelist: "Wells is rather over- than under-sexed. The sexual note saturates everything he writes. It even slips into his books about war. It makes him human, very human. It lends richness to his style, spice to his conversation. Wells is always interesting because he is always amorous."

It is true and when we compare to a cold philosophical dissertation the ode of Sappho of Lesbos to a beloved woman, of which here is the translation:

This one seems to me equal to the gods who, sitting  
opposite you, listen closely to your sweet speech;

And your kind laughter: they make my heart quiver in my  
bosom; the voice no longer reaches my lips.

My tongue breaks, a subtle fire runs quickly under my  
flesh; my eyes no longer see anything, my ears ring;

An icy sweat floods me, a tremor seizes me entirely;

I am becoming greener than the grass, it seems that I am  
going to die;

Well! I will dare anything since my misfortune...

we understand that you yawn at the hearing of the philosophical dissertation, but that reading the ode of Sappho moves you, because it pulses with life.

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In the last issue, under the signature of A. Lorulot, I read that

the characteristic of the degenerate is that he passes without transition from desire to action... Adieu, charming spontaneity and alert presumption: you are the prerogative of degenerates. And you, poet who grabbed your stylus and your tablets as soon as the impulse pushed you; and you delicious lovers for whom only one meeting was enough to throw you frankly into each other's arms, you are nothing but vile degenerates. But hello to all, to those who imagine 420 mortars, projectors, asphyxiating gases or torpedoes for submarines; for years and years, you have floundered over formulas to develop your inventions; through patient research, you have succeeded; here you are in all your glory perched on a Himalaya of corpses and mutilated people. You are one of those who have not passed without a transition from desire to action... O the miseries of logic!

#### ALONG THE WAY

Despite all the sympathy they inspire in us, we must recognize that the Russian revolutionaries bring nothing new to the world. They present themselves with a well-known program: electorate, government of the whole by the majority; influence of more or less conscious minorities on the majority; moral or spiritual authority of chiefs, of "leaders" over this more or less conscious minority.

They bring us nothing more than what the Revolution of 1789 introduced us to: duality of powers and fragmentation of authority. Yet no, they produced before the world two new values unknown at the end of the 18th century: socialism and women's suffrage.

And in the shadow of the unknown, beyond the probable internal conflicts, beyond the struggle to conquer public powers, we sense a formidable gestation at work: a Bonaparte of the steppes.

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We await the socialists at work, not without curiosity. When it comes to women's suffrage, we know better what to expect. Emma Goldman, in the latest issue of *Mother Earth*, exposes their actions throughout and recounts how, in England, it was on the corpses of hundreds of thousands of men killed in Flanders that they won the right to vote. Emma Goldman points out that one of the great feminist arguments was that granting the vote would make unnecessary the degrading necessity of appealing to the sexual instinct. However, it was by appealing to this instinct that the English suffragettes pushed a crowd of young people to enlist. It is the same in America: the prettiest members of the suffragist party use their attractions for the same purpose. And it seemed that granting women the right to vote should renew the political atmosphere!!!

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An *an-archist*, *a-crat*, *a-kyrian* individualist society — why not? An immensity of groups or isolated individuals, governing themselves as they see fit, practicing all kinds of combinations or economic, political, scientific, sexual, literary concepts - I have never been opposed to it. A forest of individual or collective achievements. Here, communism and everyone receiving according to their needs. There, individualism and everyone acquiring according to their effort. Here, barter: products for products. There, the exchange: products against representative value. Here, the property does not belong to the producer. There, the abandonment of the product to the whole. Here, omnivorism. There, vegetarianism or some culinary arrangement in ism. Here, the couple and the family. There, freedom or even sexual promiscuity. Here, materialists. There,

spiritualists. Here, offspring to the mother. There, the children in the group. Here, the search for artistic or literary emotions. There, the search for scientific experiments. Here, institutes of pleasure. There, schools of austerity... I have never been the enemy of such a society (?) Far from it. I want it, provided that it is understood that everyone has the ability to move from one environment to another or to isolate themselves from any environment. This without the strongest groups being tempted to monopolize the weaker groups, or the groups being tempted to include isolated individualities.

Can you tell me in good faith that the mentality of men in general. is capable of practicing such a social life? — Can you seriously maintain that propaganda other than that of individualism can, not prepare it. come, but at least accustom minds to hearing such a societal concept expressed and discussed?

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Yes, I nourish this conviction rooted in the depths of my being that the state of equality, amorality, asociality ensures the individual a fuller, more eventful life, richer in experiences and enjoyments of all kinds. Back to instinct. Why not ? To animality? No, because - individualist - I only conceive this state outside based on respect for the conviction and personality of others - no matter what this conviction or this personality is. Anyone who does not feel capable of respecting the individuality of others - thought and activity - is not made to be an alegal, an amoral, an asocial.

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A courtesan famous for the beauty of her figure is pregnant: here is a beautiful lost model; the people are in

desolation: Hippocrates is called to make her abort: he causes her to fall, she aborts; Athens is rejoicing, the model of Venus is saved.

We know that Mr. Mesureur recommends draconian measures against "abortionists", measures including the invitation to denunciation and the suspension of professional secrecy. When I read this news in the newspapers, I thought of this trait of Attic morals, recorded in the Greek Courtesans, a small book printed in exile and written by Emile Deschanel, father of the President of the Chamber. And I said to myself in petto: fortunately we proclaim ourselves "an Athenian republic". If we were not such a republic, what could Mr. Measurer recommend?

#### TO RESTRAIN THE PASSIONS!

To restrain the passions! To narrow the horizon of the enjoyment of living? Christianity has attempted it and failed. Socialism will try to reduce humanity to a similar denominator of necessities and it will fail. Fourier saw clearly when he coined this masterful expression: "the use of passions." — The reasonable individual uses; only the fool suppresses or mutilates. "To use their passions," it is quickly said, but for the benefit of whom? — For my own benefit, in order to make myself more "alive," by which I mean more accessible to the nuances of the sensations that life offers or arouses.

#### I PREFER SPARTACUS

A man told me: "I am cynical. My morality is that of the classic Polynesian: the good, for me, is to possess the neighbor's wife: the evil is that the neighbor possesses mine, therefore..."

— "Not another word, please," I retorted. "I like your

cynicism but I prefer the Spartacus who will free your slave — your wife — and that of your friend the Polynesian.”

#### FARTHER ALONG THE WAY

In the School of the Federation, issue of July 7, someone who signs P. M. during a series of articles on the “Workers’ Circles” speaks “of the reproaches that were made yesterday... to anarchist youth, of fall into individualism and lead... to the repugnant caricature of free love.” What is this, the caricature of free love? P. M. undoubtedly wants to allude to these people who, without having passed through the town hall, show themselves to be as jealous, as exclusive, as tyrannical, as demanding of sexual fidelity, as disrespectful of the loving freedom of their “friends” or “ friends”, only if they had the code and the police at their disposal. If that is what P. M. meant, I approve of it with both hands. But what did this ugly caricature of free love ever have in common with individualism?

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The said P. M., in the same article, deplores that socialist or anarchist groups were “places of passage”. — He would have wanted us to be there, to feel like we were there for life. — Not feeling like a socialist from any point of view, I will not discuss what concerns socialist groups, but isn't life movement? — Be part of a group, leave it when you no longer feel an affinity with its components, return to it, help create a new group more in line with your aspirations, provoke the liquidation of such an old group in decay - but that's life. A group that is constantly renewing and rejuvenating itself through the entry of new units and the departure of old constituents who go elsewhere is in a state of development. The others are schools of petrification.

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In the streets of a very large provincial town, I see posters announcing the reappearance of a certain weekly magazine which has been suspended for two months. "The only free, the only independent, the only clean, etc..." Slowly, gently, dear friends. There are other periodicals, less regular, less widespread, less noisy which are just as free, independent, clean, etc. that the weekly in question... "Poverty", – at least limited circulation – is not vice, as the popular adage says. I am beginning to understand the state of mind of the peasant tired of hearing the term righteous applied to Aristide ringing in his ear.

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Passing through Saint-Etienne very accidentally, I spent a few hours in the company of André Lorulot. We cannot imagine what amount of work goes into the material design of his little magazine *Idée Libre*, which he composes and prints himself, two pages by two pages, on a tiny proof-printing machine. André Lorulot has been much suspected, much slandered, and perhaps his evolution towards a democratism strongly saturated with libertarianism - what barbarisms! — is she no stranger to this ill-natured hostility. — But among his fiercest detractors would there be many who would have shown, given his state of health, similar courage when it came to overcoming adverse fate?

THERE ARE READERS...

There are readers who imagine that I write to make paper lighter or to have the pleasure of reading my signature at the bottom of an article. You wander, like beasts of the herd. I describe not only what I think - which would already have its value - but what I feel, as I feel there is not a line that I have given



to this journal, since its creation, which is not a fragment of autobiography... intellectual or practical.

## MY KINGDOM IS OF THIS WORLD

My Kingdom is of this World — my Kingdom is of the earth — It rises from the Earth, my mother, my possibility of being — My Kingdom is planetary matter, terrestrial substance, telluric energy — It is love, it is knowledge, it is beauty, it is strength. It is instinct, it is reason, it is passion, it is wisdom, it is pleasure. It is wheat, oats, barley, rye, vine, potatoes. It is mountains, oceans, plains, hills, streams. — My Kingdom is of this World — It rises from the Earth. It is born, it grows, it perishes on this Planet — It is trees, fruits, meadows, flowers. It is days, nights, dawn, dusk, solstice — My Kingdom is of this World — It is desires, pleasures, worries, dazzling marvels, falls, raptures, bitterness. It is experiences, visions, achievements, aspirations, dreams, realities, doubts, enthusiasms, shocks, harmonies. It is lovers, friends, comrades, little girls, toddlers, “tax collectors and sinners” — My Kingdom is of this World — It is the search for happiness, pursuit of the new, refinement of pleasure, race for better being, achievement of the palpable, tangible embrace — My Kingdom is of the Earth — Of this land that will receive Me, eternally resting, once my effort is accomplished — All Me, this Bag of skin that contains so many organs, My kingdom which is of this world.

## JUDAS ISCARIOTE

What I have against you, O Judas, is that you handed the man of Galilee over to authority. You could have broken with him, run out on the band that clung to his footsteps; you could have undertaken a propaganda or preached a doctrine contrary or antagonistic to his, pursued him with your reasoning,

overwhelmed him with your taunts, fought him face to face; but you delivered him up, sold him to his enemies. And when you felt regret or remorse—or I do not know what feeling—for the baseness of soul that had made you act, those who had paid you no longer knew you—as is customary for the snitch or the discredited spy. That is why, O Iscariot, every time I hear your name spoken, it seems to me that I hear, in echo, the clinking of bad-quality coins—the wages of the traitor.



## Chapter IX

# To Make You Think

### TO HAVE PRINCIPLES

A person who has principles is, in the common language, one who adopts, once and for all, a given rule of conduct, in accordance with what the herd calls “behaving well,” and conforming to it throughout their existence, despite the events they encounter in the course of their life’s journey. The anarchist also organizes their life according to certain principles: but, apart from this condition that he cannot diminish himself any more by exercising than by submitting — at his discretion at least — to authority, his rule of conduct remains variable and flexible, and modifiable over time and through experience, news and new acquisitions. He is not a slave to his rules of conduct. He imagines or constructs them in order to use them and obtain the “maximum” benefit for his personal development.

### TAKE THEM AS THEY ARE

There are characters, very likable, of course, but from whose lives it is impossible to eliminate, as they are so notorious, certain scabrous elements. Also, to maintain a good tone, it is customary to describe their depravity as “naivety.” We will say, for example, that it was out of naivety that X... writer, committed such acts which would have brought any navvies to the benches of the criminal court. So take your heroes as they are. They were “depraved,” you say. It was an aspect of their

temperament, an attitude of their personality, and there is no evidence that, without this element, they would have been the exceptional individuals who won your attachment.

## OF TEMPERAMENT

I call “temperament” the sum or resultant of the physiological or psychological actions and reactions of an individual at every given moment of their development, of their evolution. In this “temperament,” this sum or resultant, I include and encompass all of the influences absorbed by the individual human in question: currents and influences of heredity, education and instruction, all sorts of company kept, professionally, in travel, etc.

## THE AGE OF THE EARTH.

We don't know exactly how old the earth is. The figures vary depending on whether we are dealing with chemists, geologists and geodesists.

Chemists base this on the quantity of sodium chloride (salt) found in the oceans, which would reach six billion tonnes. According to them, the saltiness of the sea comes from the salt that was carried by the rivers that flow into it, which seems quite curious. Knowing approximately the quantity of salt carried into the sea each year by the rivers, they divided the tonnage above by this quantity. They thus arrived at a figure of 90 to 100 million years.

Geologists address sedimentation, that is to say the geological layers which, in the bottom of the seas, are layered one above the other, sedimentation constituted by the contribution of particles from the material coming from river beds, shoreline demolitions, debris from living organisms. One calculates that it takes 1,000 to 10,000 years to form a geological

layer one meter thick. It would have taken 180 to 600 million years for the formation of the deposit of all the stratified rock.

An American scientist calculated that the primitive terrains required 540 million years to be formed, the secondary terrains 180 million and the tertiary terrains 65 million, in total: 785 million years. If we add so much time to the crystallized Archean terrains, we must postpone the sedimentation of primitive seas and probably the origin of life more than 15 million centuries ago.

As for the times that preceded life, when the earth broke away from the solar nebula and began to condense, it counted, according to astronomers, by hundreds of millions of years.

How childish, in the face of such numbers, appear the figures provided by the Genesis of various religions, particularly by the Bible.

#### THE GROWTH OF THE BRAIN AND THE REDUCTION OF THE LENGTH OF THE BODY IN THE COURSE OF THE DAY.

In a very substantial and well-documented article, Doctor Devaux shows that it is because of the extension of the period of breastfeeding that man owes his cerebral development. It is the only mammal that, comparatively, remains incapable of providing for itself for so long. This is why, compared to anthropoids (gorilla, orang, chimpanzee), man is very inferior in terms of reproductive functions.

According to this scholar, we must not force the human child to eat, to walk, or to act too soon. This is absolutely harmful for the intellectual future of the young person in training. The sooner, in fact, the child displays an active cerebral life, the sooner the nerve cells of his brain differentiate and are consequently made unable to multiply. There is no reason at all to be pleased to see a child gifted with precociousness. This is a

sign of cessation of brain development.

It is during breastfeeding that the foundations of future intelligence are built. The prodigious growth of the human brain during the first months of birth is due to its lack of activity. The little child, in fact, has eyes that see, but do not look, ears that hear, but do not listen; he is barely aware that he exists, he no longer moves, he can only move about in place, he only knows how to suckle. During this long period, he can stock up, accumulate numerous nerve cells. As soon as the child begins to act voluntarily, to live cerebrally, his brain no longer grows or almost no longer.

To speak of the prodigious growth of the brain during the first months of life is not saying too much. The adult brain normally weighs 1,300 to 1,400 grams. At birth, brain weight is 371 grams for boys and 361 grams for girls; after one year, it is 967 grams and 893 grams respectively; at 3 years old, it is 1,100 grams, average weight.

These are indications which show how right those who want to move back the age of learning for children are right.

One of the recent proceedings of the Society of Biology contains an interesting communication on the shortening of the length of the body during the day. The human body gradually shortens from sunrise to sunset and returns to its normal length during the night. The reduction does not reach two and a half centimeters, is not influenced by weight and decreases constantly with increasing age, the back becoming more rigid.

#### THE REPRODUCTION OF EELS.

The Grande Revue of August 1924 contains a study which is a veritable chapter in a scientific novel on how eel reproduction takes place. Four centuries before the common era, Aristotle wondered where and how eels are born. It was only two or three

years ago that we were able to give a satisfactory answer. After a patient search, we discovered that from England, from the coasts of Scandinavian countries, from Portugal, from Spain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, West Africa, up to Senegal, eels, when they have reached their seventh year, abandon rivers, lakes, ponds, to go to a place located at 50° longitude and 30° latitude on the eastern edge of the Sargasso zone, not far from the Bermuda Islands. Laying takes place in spring, at a temperature of 20 degrees. Exhausted on their journey, the eels die on the spot, after giving birth to billions of larvae.

During this journey, a curious and very suggestive anatomical transformation occurs; on both sides of the head, their flippers lengthen into fins: their eyes, normally set high towards the forehead, move away from each other towards the sides and transform into enormous eyes, similar to those possessed by marine animals destined to live at great depths.

The laying, I said, takes place in spring. When the young have reached 25 millimeters, they begin to leave the Sargasso region. The following summer, they are twice as long and lie roughly in the middle of the Atlantic. In the third summer, 75 millimeters long, they are found off the coast of Ireland, the Faroe Islands, the English Channel, above the continental base of Europe. When the marine larva reaches its fourth year, it transforms into a glass eel, a freshwater fish 6 centimeters long, and there it enters the English Channel, the North Sea, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, and it is the rise in all available streams.

Along the way, it goes without saying, millions and millions of individuals were lost. The males stay on the coasts and always remain small.

Why do eels go to the Sargasso Sea to spawn? Its migration is instinctive. There once stood a continent on the site of the current Atlantic, which sank underwater in fits and starts



throughout the Tertiary period; its last vestiges — its eastern coast — still existed when the first European civilizations were formed. The eel is a fish that Europe and America (note that the American eel has seven fewer vertebrae) inherited from Atlantis. When this continent sank, the eel had to seek ever further to the west and east the fresh water necessary for its complete transformation, without however losing the habit of returning, for reproduction, to the territory where its ancestors used to gather.

These observations show what energy is contained in this instinct which leads a freshwater fish to complete a journey of 6,000 kilometers to reach the seabed which originally served as its habitat.

These observations also demonstrate that the legends relating to the existence of Atlantis — which Plato had echoed are based on reality. Moreover, legends are rare, very rare, that do not have some element of truth.

#### ANOTHER WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY

There is no doubt that in antiquity methods were known to communicate remotely and quickly the events that there was interest of making known.

We can see the process by this which is currently being done in South Africa. An Anglican missionary, the Reverend Ridont, recently explained the system used in Natal to communicate over great distances, in times of peace, the orders of the chief in times of war, the news of victories or defeats.

Each village has a telegraph operator who holds a drum made of a dry gourd, on which a specially prepared kid's skin is stretched. All you have to do is knock so that the sound produced can be heard eight or twelve kilometers away. When necessary, the attendant makes his instrument emit sounds that vary in

duration and which are separated by more or less long intervals, depending on what we want them to mean. Other telegraph operators within the hearing radius collect these sounds and reproduce them in turn. In a very short time, they are transmitted to the ends of the country.

During the Anglo-Boer War, news was transmitted with as much accuracy and greater speed than by the electric telegraph.

Ridont was able to realize that through this system one can communicate up to a distance of 1,500 kilometers and hundreds of localities were simultaneously reached. All African tribes use similar means of communicating over long distances.

We see that there is much to be said about the inferiority with which the “civilized” denounce the “savages” so gratuitously.

[The translations presented here in PART TWO are just a sample of the hundreds that need to be completed. Collecting the aphorisms and short articles available from the period 1901-1939 will probably result in a volume of 400-500 pages, without including Armand's book reviews, which will be collected in a later volume. The poems from the section "Realism and Idealism Mixed," which appeared at the end of the original edition of *Fleurs de Solitude...*, will appear in the expanded edition of *Thus Sang an « En-dehors »*.]