

NOICA ANTHOLOGY

for the Benefit of the Students that
Noica Was Never Allowed to Have.

edited by C. George Sandulescu

Volume Two. General Philosophy.



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Constantin Noica: Volume Two *General Philosophy*



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by **Vremea**, București (188 pagini).



First published 1944 *Philosophical Journal*. p. 48
by **Editura Publicom**, București (123 pagini).

PART TWO : Texts written and published after 1964 (when Noica was let out of prison).

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First published 1978 *Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*. p. 63
by **Editura Univers**, București (168 pagini).

First published 1981 *The Becoming within Being*. p. 92
by **Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică**, București (392 pagini).

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The Editor's ForeWord.

1. Please note that there is a fundamental distinction to be made in this book between [Part One](#) and [Part Two](#): namely, the excerpts published in **Part One** had not been subjected to Communist censorship. Whereas the excerpts published under **Part Two** were indeed subjected to the censorship of the then Communist Establishment.

After so many years of obligatory domicile at Câmpulung Muscel, and after the years in jail, Noica was acutely aware, as he told me himself, of the existence of the finest restrictions & permissions of such "Cap Limpede, or C.L." Censorship.



He was able to master it so well that he managed to beat it out of existence. Where? & How? In the book *Pray for Brother Alexander*, which is entirely made up of letters, the texts of which, sent to his own wife Wendy in England, managed to beat absolutely all his prison Censors. All, except one, who must have stopped one of the letters, as the Translator Wendy Noica points out in the Preface.

The point I am making here is that by the time he left prison, he was **a consummate Censor himself**, able to beat all the Agerpress ones! In his writings and in his Eminescu statements.

Everything he published after 1964 is minutely self-censored. Before it was officially censored. My Big Question at this stage is the following: Would Noica have written the same way, if he had not deliberately self-censored all his writings so carefully? And my answer is: **Certainly not.**

His wife Wendy testifies to it herself, when she writes in her brief biography of her husband that **he did not publish anything after he was let out of prison**. In a sense, she is right in saying that! Because she is in the know. His self-censorship had turned him into a philosopher that she was no longer able to recognise. A philosopher that was no longer himself as a free-thinker. They had both worked together, and translated together throughout the 1930's and a large part of the 1940's. And on the basis of that, she knew what she was talking about. And she knew full well the kind of philosopher that was in him. But he had learnt Censorship the



hardest way, and was a past Master of it... I beg all Romanians to understand the complexity of this statement.



There is more than flagrant TEXTUAL proof of what I advance! Here it is:

It occurs in CONSTANTIN NOICA's *JURNAL FILOZOFIC*, published in 1944:

6. Noi nu avem un termen românesc pentru „devenire”. Avem câteva pentru ființă, dar nu avem pentru devenire. Am fi putut avea termenul de: petrecere (se petrece ceva, care e mai mult decât se întâmplă, are loc: are desfășurare). Dar l-au expropriat cheflii. Singura noastră devenire este în chef, în distracție, – în înstrăinare.

6. We do not have a Romanian term for “becoming”. We have a few for the term “being”, but we do not have one for “becoming”. We could have had the term “petrecere” (happening – something is happening, which is a little more than just occurring; for it has “development”). But it was taken up with other things... Our only development lies therefore in entertainment, in estrangement.



50. „Eu sunt cel ce sunt”, spune Dumnezeu lui Moise (Exodul 3,14). Nu-i spune: „Eu sunt cel ce este.” Chiar când îl îndeamnă să se ducă la ceilalți, Dumnezeu îl învață pe Moise să le vorbească despre „cel ce se numește Eu sunt”. Ce curios sună: „Eu sunt m-a trimis la voi”!

Căci Dumnezeu nu este. Numai noi știm ce e aceea „este”, ființa. În unele cazuri privilegiate, în filozofie, știm pe „ești”, ființa subiectivizată. În comunitate știm pe „suntem” sau „sunteți”. Numai Dumnezeu știe pe Eu sunt; ca să nu mai aibă nevoie de ești, este, suntem...

50. “I am what I am”, says God to Moses (*Exodus* 3: 14). He does not say “I am He that IS”. Even when He pushes him to go to the others, God instructs Moses to refer to him as “the One who calls Himself I AM”. How curious it all sounds to say: “It is I AM who has sent me to speak to you”!

Just because God IS NOT. It is only us who know what it really means to be IS. In other words, The Being. In certain privileged cases in philosophy, we know only too well the “ARE”, in other words: the subjectivised being. When we are within the community, we know full well the “ARE” all over the place... But only God fully knows the “I AM”. So that He is never in need of any of the Other Items.



57. Nu există decât două filozofii mari: filozofia greacă și filozofia idealismului german; filozofia **ființei** și filozofia spiritului. Iar ce e interesant, e că amândouă s-au născut în marginea **devenirii**. Refuzând **devenirea**, filozofia greacă a găsit **ființa**. Integrând-o, cea germană a găsit spiritul. Poate că prima și ultima problemă a filozofiei e: curgerea, pierderea, viața.

57. There are only TWO great philosophies in the world, and two only: the Greek philosophy, and the philosophy of German Idealism. The Philosophy of Being, and The Philosophy of the Spirit, in other words. But what is interesting in both of them is that they were — each separately — born on the fringes of the Concept of Becoming. The very first problem of philosophy as well as the very last problem of philosophy is the flowing, the passing away, Life itself.

Where is God and St. Augustine in the SECOND PART of this volume?

They are not at all there.

They have been removed by the invisible hand of Censorship.

2. That is the Major Reason, in more senses than one, for which a Noica *Bibliographie raisonnée* will never be possible. Many of his works



had been conceived, part on paper, part in the Mind only, over the years, as I will be giving circumstantial proof further down.

Unlike living beings, a text is endowed with *several dates of birth*: The date of writing, the date of publication, and finally, the date of our own reception.

We do not possess the exact date of actual writing of many of his published texts. And we do not have any clear indications either about **the degree of censorship adjustment** the author himself performed on his nascent ideas over time.

Nobody practically talks about the actual Noica Manuscripts. Where are they? In addition, there is a lot of Noica correspondence, largely addressed to his family and close friends, at the various periods of his life. No notables seem to be interested in all that at all, at all. This being just another symptom of the post-Communists tendency to deliberately marginalise a major Romanian thinker-writer.

The postCommunist Establishment tends to treat him like... **just another writer** – bracketed together with dozens upon dozens of others “as good or even better...”. He may be good enough for the making of some more money for one publishing house or another.

3. Both the principles and the details of the present **Anthology** have at length been discussed and agreed upon with philosopher Constantin Noica in person, during the days he spent holidaying in the



Principality of Monaco, at my house, in September 1985. He instructed members of his family to cooperate in this major undertaking that he himself welcomed most enthusiastically (cf *His Holograph List of Writings*).

The sole purpose of this Anthology is **to put excerpts of his writings at the disposal of as wide a public as is humanly possible** in the language of his own English wife. It so happens that now – almost a quarter of a Century after his death – **English** is the sole language worth the notice in the world, largely thanks to the internet and the world impact of the Olympic Games.

4. A last few words about **Jacqueline de Romilly**, *membre de l'Académie française*, who died yesterday, 97 years old. I used to know her fairly well because she had given a few talks in Monaco over the years. Also, Madame de Romilly was present at the last Noica-Cioran-Eliade meeting in Paris in September 1985 (which I discussed in greater detail in the first volume of the present Anthology; and was also discussed by Alex Noica-Wilson on pages 55, 56 and 57 of her book of *Amintiri*, published by Humanitas in 2007).

As a homage for her thought and work, Jacqueline de Romilly had been made a Greek citizen in 1995 and given a Greek passport, for her services to the country. How incomparably greater and more gentle a gesture, particularly when related to Noica being given a **posthumous seat**



in the Romanian Academy... (Is there really an empty seat with his name on it over there, as Nobel did the other day in Oslo for the Chinese prisoner who received the Peace Prize?) Or is it just empty words?

C. George SANDULESCU

Monaco, 20 December 2010

Post Scriptum:

La Première Partie est si désinvolte!

La Deuxième est très crispée. Parfois gênée...

G.S.

Monaco, 18 janvier 2011.



JACQUELINE DE ROMILLY**“Du chemin de la vérité.”**

A Member of the French Academy

Speaks about the Life and Work of Constantin Noica.

I met Constantin Noica several times towards the end of his life. At first, I just saw him (and what a clear memory I have of him...) as a fine gentleman, wearing gaiters, speaking French with an elegant accent, behaving with such courtesy. But one could hardly suspect his inner force and superb erudition. And yet, behind his kind smile and his gentle manners, how could one fail to sense, armour-like, his rectitude, that absolute firmness of one whom nobody will ever swerve from *the path of truth?*

I was well aware that he was a philosopher in the strongest sense of the word. His work, but also his life, made him one. How could a Hellenist like myself fail to be touched by those features that brought him so close to



Socrates? Socrates had been forced to drink hemlock: Constantin Noica had spent ten years of his life in forced residence, and six years in prison; he was living in a place in the mountains, a cold narrow room, he ate poorly, and was indifferent to physical misery. Just like Socrates, he had never given up teaching others how to think: an isolated man who had disciples almost everywhere. He planned their readings for them, he moulded their minds, he set their spirit free. Far from inculcating his doctrine, he taught them the very meaning of rigour. They often diverged from him in this or that matter, they sometimes struggled free (Alcibiades makes it quite clear that any master's teachings will bring about the student's response): he turned them into philosophers – and, in a country like Romania, that was quite an achievement. Even in prison of all places, he attempted to make the young man he had shared a cell with see the light. **When one believes in something, how could one not be obsessed by the need to share that belief with others?**

It may be hardy of someone who is not a philosopher to start explaining what Noica believed in.

I can say, at least, that he believed in culture – the culture of Europe. His mind fed on authors he had translated and commented upon – the Greeks, to begin with: Plato, Aristotle, as well as the Pre-Socratic philosophers, and a number of treatises regarding the reception of Aristotle's philosophy at various times, until as late as the 17th century. And then there were Saint Augustine, Descartes, Kant and Hegel: he meditated and wrote about them all.



We must not forget, though: he also meditated and wrote about the meaning of European culture. Isolated in his own country, cut off from the world, he never forsook that tradition, and he explained the reasons of his faithfulness to it with remarkable lucidity. I am all the more touched by those reasons, since they are the very reasons that brought me, too, close to ancient Greece, where the foundations of this European culture were laid, where its broad horizon and spirit of universality were born. As Constantin Noica himself said: “Europe is that space where the *logos* is at home, and European culture is the result of a number of revaluations, by means of which all foreign elements have been welcomed, assimilated and reshaped; its renewal never ceases.”

It is along these lines that he made full use of his whole life to build his own system. A logician above all, he aspired to universality; he stayed away from the temptations of the *pathos*. And, what is more, he managed to combine his perception of a long tradition of philosophies of the Being with the idea of Becoming, and he authored the Concept of “Becoming into Being”, which is the core of his thought. This book [*Six maladies de l'esprit contemporain*] translated into French mirrors these fundamental aspirations. In it, Noica aimed at describing, in a global effort to classify (not unlike Aristotle...), the various deviations of the spirit which is caught between the general and the individual. Quite often generating great works, these “maladies” build a kind of philosophical anthropology; they also reach beyond this line of thought, and embrace the Being: between too much and too little, they scrutinize it, and have high hopes of mapping it as a whole.



I have mentioned here a belief in European culture; I am pleased to find this highly stimulating conviction existing there in Noica's work. But I must make a point of stressing the fact that he maintained it against all odds, as he was living in the Romania of his time. A Romanian he was: a Romanian he remained! It is in Romanian that he translated all the texts I have been talking about. He was in love with the Romanian language, and he at times relied on some of its peculiarities in order to structure his meditation (for example, *întru* – used as “Becoming-within-Being”): he was in love with the traditions of the Romanian villages. He certainly had to reconcile his inclination for the general, which meant Europe in this case, with his belonging to one particular tradition. It is a well-deserved tribute paid to him that the works of this European thinker, coming from Romania, should now be translated in the various European countries, and should reach an ever wider public.

As far as I am concerned, while trying to capture in a few words here a life and a work that both stood under the sign of high philosophical requirements, I am overwhelmed by remorse while writing about him. When, one day, several years back, I was introduced to this unpretentious gentleman and his courteous smile, did I really perceive the true nobility of his life and thought? I wish I had asked more questions, and paid far more attention to his answers. It is not often that one comes across such strong minds and such moral integrity. And one is always left with the regret that one did not make better use of the opportunity at the time.



We have his work, at least: in order to say what he thought, this particular Socrates had no need of a Plato: late in the day it may be, but we must approach him in all humility and gratitude.

Jacqueline de Romilly
de l'Académie française

Translated into English by Lidia Vianu



A Biography of Constantin Noica

written and published in England by his wife Katherine Muston in 1992, introducing the manuscript *Pray for Brother Alexander* - a book assembled from his correspondence by herself.

Constantin Noica was born on 24th of July 1909 on his father's landed property of Vitanesti, county Teleorman, Romania.

He went to two of the principal secondary schools in Bucharest. In 1927 he started writing articles for various Romanian magazines.

Between 1928 and 1931 he studied Letters and Philosophy at the Bucharest University. Between 1932-34 he was librarian to the Seminar of History of Philosophy. In 1932 he became a member of the literary society "Criterion" for which he lectured and he also contributed articles to the "Vremea" ("Time") newspaper. In 1934 he was awarded a prize for his first book "Mathesis".

Then followed a year of studies in France (1938-39) and in 1940 he took his doctor's degree in Philosophy at the University of Bucharest.



During 1940-41 he was given a job as a reader for Philosophy at the German-Romanian Institute in Berlin.

During the war he continued to publish books and articles on a variety of subjects as well as delivered a series of very popular radio broadcasts on various subjects ranging from religion and philosophy to contemporary problems of the society as a whole, all very original and challenging to the reader or listener.

In 1948 Constantin Noica and his English wife, Katherine Muston, the translator of this book, decided that in order to spare their two children a "life" under the communist regime imposed on Romania by the Soviets, the only solution was a divorce, which would have enabled his wife to return to England and take her children with her. It took years of hardship and intense frustrations before she managed to obtain an exit visa from Romania and she eventually arrived in England in 1955.

Between 1948 and 1958 Constantin Noica was taken into custody by the dreaded Romanian "Securitatea" and sent into "compulsory residence" in the mountain village of Campulung. As during his "compulsory residence" Noica continued with his philosophical studies and many young intellectuals who shared his views used to visit him in his poor home in Campulung for discussions and debates, the communist authorities saw this as an open opposition to their regime and as a result in between December 1958 and 1964 Noica was imprisoned as a "political detainee".

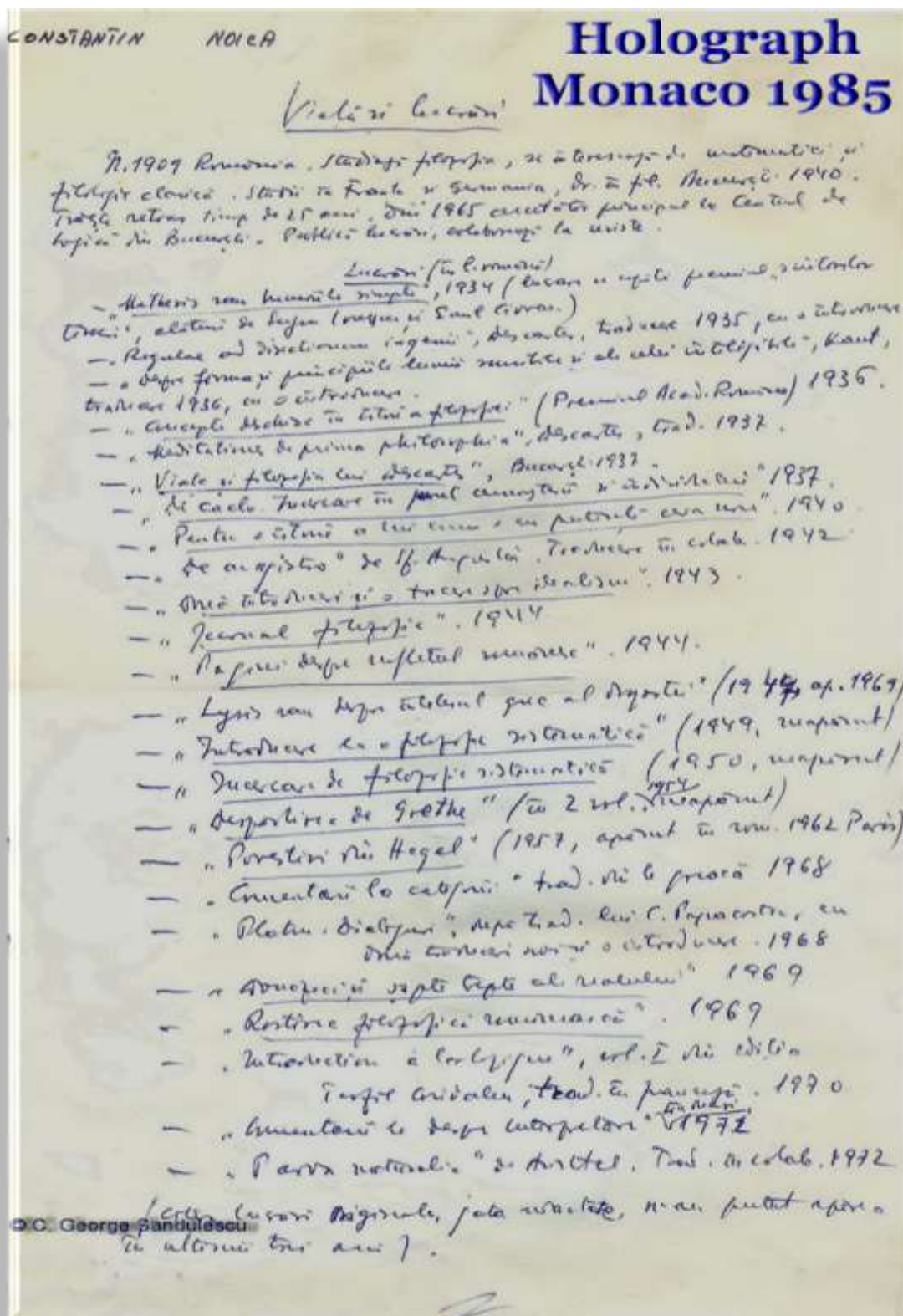
His time in the communist political prisons is the subject of this book.



After his release from prison, as part of a UN campaign for the release of all political detainees in the Communist world, he became a pensioner in 1975, when he retired and spent the last 12 years of his life at Paltinis, a small village near Sibiu in Transylvania, where he became the spiritual mentor of [a] whole generation of young Romanian intellectuals. Before his death he visited his family in England twice, in 1972 and 1983 and although he could have easily applied for political asylum and stayed in the West, as many Romanian intellectuals of his generation did, Noica felt that his duty to his people was best served by living in Romania and not in exile.

He died on December 4th 1987 at Sibiu, but it was only after the fall of the communist regime in Romania that his philosophical ideas, his books and articles were published in Romania, causing a tremendous impact on the Romanian people, most of whom had sadly been unaware of the existence of such a brilliant and original mind amongst them, due to the communist censorship of men and ideas deemed to be "enemies of the people".





*Life and Work. Holograph text**written by C. Noica in Monaco in September 1985.*Viață și lucrări

N. 1909 România. Studiază filozofia, se interesează de matematică și filologie clasică. Studii în Franța și Germania, dr. în fil. București 1940. Trăiește retras timp de 25 de ani. Din 1965 cercetător principal la Centrul de Logică din București. Publică lucrări, colaborează la reviste.

Lucrări (în l. română)

- "Mathesis sau bucuriile simple", 1934 (lucrare ce capătă premiul "scriitorilor tineri", alături de Eugen Ionescu și Emil Cioran).
- "Regulae ad directionem ingenii", Descartes, traducere 1935, cu o introducere.
- "Despre forma și principiile lumii sensibile și ale celei inteligibile", Kant, traducere 1936, cu o introducere.
- "Concepte deschise în istoria filozofiei" (Premiul Academiei Române) 1936.
- "Meditationes de prima philosophia", Descartes, trad. 1937.
- "Viața și filozofia lui Descartes", București 1937.
- "De caelo. Încercare în jurul cunoașterii și individului" 1937.
- "Pentru o istorie a lui cum e cu puțință ceva nou" 1940.
- "De magistro" de Sf Augustin, traducere în colab. 1942.
- "Două introduceri și o trecere spre idealism". 1943.
- "Jurnal filozofic". 1944.
- "Pagini despre sufletul românesc" 1944
- "Lysis sau despre înțelesul grec al dragostei" (1947 ap. 1969)
- "Introducere la o filozofie sistematică" (1949, neapărut)
- "Încercare de filozofie sistematică" (1950, neapărut)
- "Despărțirea de Goethe" (în 2 volume, 1954, neapărut)
- "Povestiri din Hegel" (1957, apărut în rom. 1962 Paris)
- "Comentarii la categorii" traducere din lb greacă 1968
- "Platon: Dialoguri", după trad. lui C. Papacostea, cu două traduceri noi și o introducere. 1968
- "Douăzeci și șapte trepte ale realului" 1969
- "Rostirea filozofică românească". 1969
- "Introduction à la logique", vol. I din ediția Teofil Coridaleu, trad. în franceză. 1970
- "Comentariile despre interpretare" traduceri 1972
- "Parva naturalia" de Aristotel. Trad. in colab. 1972

[câteva lucrări originale, gata redactate, n-au putut apărea în ultimii trei ani].

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by **Vremea**, București (188 pagini).

First published 1944 *Philosophical Journal.* p. 48
by **Editura Publicom**, București (123 pagini).



NOICA 1934 *Death of the Tomorrow Man*

(published in a Bucharest periodical called *Criterion*, year 1, No. 1 page 5, on 15 October 1934. Its pair article on the same page was written by Mircea Eliade, and was entitled "The Day After Tomorrow".)

A highly prophetic vision? Yes, but not quite. For the then Romanians, yes, very much so. But for the whole world, in 21st Century retrospect, not at all:

After the fatidic 1933, Hitler started at once building his so famous **speedways**; after 1922, Mussolini was building his voice-carrying **auditoriums** (I used to lecture in one of them in Rome); and ever since 1917 both Lenin & Stalin were more than busy sculpting **New Man**. (Noica himself was prophesying here his prison brainwash.)

In letters, Aldous Huxley published *Brave New World* in 1932, (**Read It!**), and Mussolini's good friend Ezra Pound was patiently radio-lecturing that Capital is Good: profit from capital is Evil. (**Read that too!**) Hitler had already drawn his own conclusion... Auschwitz & Katyn (q.v) were on the shadow cards.

Noica was just looking around him, seeing, and writing. Opening Romanian eyes with pieces like the following.

(The difference? None of The Three Great (H + F + C) Ideologies was asking The Individual **TO THINK**. Only God (the 4th Great Ideology) was... and not exactly Him either!)

G.S.



CONSTANTIN NOICA

Death of the Tomorrow Man.

What are we in the process of doing now, d'you know? We are in the very process of serving the Man of Tomorrow. We have brushed aside all other things that we were doing, and are most feverishly preparing optimal conditions for the man of tomorrow. The Charities have already set up proper hospitals where the man of tomorrow will be put on the path of the suitably required hygiene of life. Building engineers are making highways, and the architects are designing buildings full of light... For whom, you may ask? For the man of tomorrow.

Medical doctors are in the process of finding remedies for all possible diseases – also for him. Politicians, high and low, big and small, are devising ideal conditions for living in society; also for him. Girls, who are sure to grow up to be genuinely beautiful, are being born for his exclusive enjoyment and benefit too.

The tomorrow man will be full of health, will be surrounded by comfort and congeniality. And will have the Radio at his disposal. Only at *that* moment he will be able to think. Never before.



No matter how indignant the philosopher might be who had once said: it cannot be that the sole goal of civilisation is to devise speediest means of carrying booze for the benefit of thirsty individuals. Such a philosopher cannot possibly be right. But for the time being, that is our sole goal: to do it all in such a way that the man of tomorrow should not remain thirsty – not for a single split-second. Otherwise, he feels disturbed. And won't be at all able to think.

That is the very reason for which we could not think. We used to live, you see, at first in caves; and life in there was hard and difficult. We then started shepherding: who at the time could think of anything else except good green grass? Then we came round to ploughing the land with the express purpose of creating “far better living conditions”; but then the Barbarian invaders came. And with them came the wars. And we have been warring ever since.

Slow but steady, the peoples began to take a settled shape against the background of History: but fighting never ceased – not for a second. There was no longer a tribe fighting another: there was a country fighting another. And a race fighting another. And in the very turmoil of total general fighting, there were barely more than few Egyptian high priests who found the leisure to think. So very few of them. At any rate, far fewer than the Greek thinkers, who were not at all many either. History never gave Man time to think: for it was constantly bullying him to proclaim the advent of tomorrow's man.



When Jesus emerged, we thought that would mean the end of the world. We had, until then, lived within time. But He was taking us out of time. Until then, we had been bowing to and sweating for The Man of Tomorrow. He presumed to take That Man out of our heads. You, too, are the sons of God, He kept telling us. Stop thinking of The Other One. Go kill the Man of Tomorrow that resides in you. Concentrate only on your own salvation. At the end of the world, everybody will come back alive and will be of exactly the same age.

And the world was just about to come to an end. But no, not yet. That would have indeed happened if all men, all of them, had become Christian. But who really chose to become Christian? With every passing year, nay, with every passing Century, the initial teaching was gradually forgotten. And everybody started focusing their attention on the tomorrow man, more and more.

We were all very pleased, for everything was postponed: our sole target was the hunger of the Body; whereas the Spirit was put to sleep... But something was missing – it was the Doctrine. There was acute need for a smidge of Theory, just in order to be able to create within ourselves the feeling of full achievement.

It was at that point that Marxism came about. How relieved we felt in our very hearts! For how very long we had all been waiting for the king of kings to tell us: “Eat first! And think afterwards!”



We had been waiting for that injunction since the beginning of time. “Postpone all the needs of the Spirit until you have fully fulfilled the needs of the Body!”

Go on engineering the world further and further: for perhaps then, the man of tomorrow will feel even better, and will begin to think!

Are you feeling all right, you, The Man of Tomorrow? No, he is still not feeling quite all right... He is still badly in need of a cushion under his right elbow... The electric light is too strong for his eyes. The Radio is far too low. Is it all right now, You, the man of tomorrow?

I sometimes wonder how it will all end. What if, in spite of all that, He won't start thinking?

At that point, it seems to me, we waste our lives.

Translated into English by C. George SANDULESCU.



MATHESIS, or the Simple Joys.

First published 1934
by **Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol II”**,
București (80 pagini).

PREFACE

Why do we like to deal in half-truths? The author of these lines is fully aware that he is not always right. He would have liked to be right, and was angry at himself.

He went on the road to excess, he looked for excess. As a relief. But there are so many excesses around us, the life forms – all of them – seem to be so unnatural from the viewpoint of truth – that this unnatural attempt too can in its turn be forgiven.

In fact, somebody once said: “If lost in a wood, do be steadfast in a single direction and one only, and you will become a path-finder.” This is indeed an invitation to excess. For perhaps we are not talking about new paths. But rather about passages, ways of life, beaten paths pure and simple – and all in a world in which nobody knows much at all about anything anyhow.



I.

It is today clearly ascertained in science that the whole of the universe, in point of form, can be effectively wrapped up in a formula of the kind $f(x, y, z)$. There was even a scientist who declared himself able to put a whole statue in formulaic shape – the Venus of Milo, for instance. It would be a long equation for sure, and most probably quite repelling to look at. Ever so many symbols would be needed to replace that simple and direct beauty! But what does it all matter? It would indeed be an equation, would it not? It would represent a new beauty, the *other* face of Venus of Milo. Will we ever learn to see her too?



The statement we are trying to make is the following: our culture is of a **mathematical** type, a format that is in absolute opposition to the **historical** format.



What at first sight characterizes a culture of the geometrical type is its ideal: the universal science – *Mathesis universalis*.



Our culture privileges “the manufactured” over the already given.



But what then is the meaning of a culture of the historical type? It is a culture in which destiny is paramount. It is in consequence a blind culture. It is true that it is full of presences. But in order to live close to



presences, in order to become them, in order to exist in and with them – means either to give up human status, or to surpass it.

In order to live as a member of a human culture of the historical type perhaps means to lead the life of trees, or of birds, or, who knows? that of angels. It signifies a life that is culturally different from the life of man. It is either too little, or far too much. Historical culture is biological, and hence angelic. Religion has handed us the second option. Does Historicism mean to push us back to our biological parameters?

We are told that this is not at all plain biology. For we are being proposed a transfigured biology.

A transfigured biology, you say? It seems to us that behind this transfiguration lies mere respect for biology. Culture was born in the process of disregarding biology, being sheer excess in its regard. At least half of our culture – everything that is geometry and geometric in it – lies far beyond biology.

Culture itself seems to have been born between two heart-beats of life – in an intermission, if we can put it that way. But that does not necessarily mean that culture is not life. Culture is not only life: it is what is most generous in it – namely, excess. It is not at all suitable to say Culture *and* Life. For culture grows of itself out of the excess of life over itself, and as such it stands as a lengthening of it.



We are, possibly, spirit. We are emotional capability, universal in its very nature. Divided as we are in the world, we are, in spite of all,



rhythms. Let us allow our own rhythms to make us solidary. If culture is supposed to give us anything, it is to save us from the shame of lying outside rhythms.



To promote form does not mean to kill life. Never believe scientists when they say that they are calm and unperturbed. Never believe Pascal when he says that philosophising calms pain. His apparent peace hides another inner turmoil, that's all. It is a displacement, it is a shift from biology and its effervescence on to formalism and its dramatic setups. Noise becomes song and imbalance becomes elegance.



Up to a point, all that may be a justification for the aspects of interior life to be expressed in the subsequent pages. It represents the search for a new excess, for a new absurdity, the range of our standard human absurdity. But a veritable interior life is being described, and it is a life which falls quite in step with the very premises of our culture. It is an outline of geometrical experience, the outward rhetoric of the new geometries.

All this is only mere suggestion. A single hope: to make the others smile an occasional smile. If nobody happens to smile, then everything was done in vain. All the more so, as we are firmly convinced that this is indeed **the real sense of our culture** — about which I do want to deal with here — as well as **the real fate of man**: both of them are bound to be ridiculous. Kant's moral man is ridiculous. The fully formula-adduced man must



necessarily be ridiculous too. This is the highest level of understanding of historical life – to feel how thoroughly ridiculous it can be. The ridiculous residing in the culture. The ridiculous residing in yourself... you who try to make, you who must try to make your own making... at a time when everything else merely is.

Existing alongside us are many things in the world, some are living organisms, others are not. They do not see, and they do not understand. But if one special day they would suddenly understand, it is more than certain that they would make fun of us. And far beyond our own world, there is a cheerful, merry god who does understand things genuinely and truly, and he does roar at us with laughter.



I am now waiting for night to fall over everything. The day has been so full of light, and I could see everything so awfully clear, that now I realise that nothing makes any sense at all.

There are far too many colours in the world. And by far too many shapes. This spider with so many legs is monstrous and so very repelling: it is called The Earth.

I am waiting for the night to come. It emerges slowly with “its calm full of wisdom” stretching over all things. It wipes out the colours, blurs the contours, keeping only major relations going, the truth reality gives us as shapes.

All-simplifying night!.. It is only now that I can understand. Now I can **see**, just because it is dark. I follow shapes with my eyes, I finish barely



sketched contours, I am acting in homogeneous space which is almost black. I do round the shapes which seem too pointed. I know, I begin to know, in a vague, faint, and highly blurred way as much as I need to know. My senses are becoming free from obsessions, colours fail to insist in any way, no sound is too sharp. The spirit is free, and its dialectic can well begin.

High up, on Plato's sky, on that sky which he used to identify as the most overwhelming teacher of mankind – the stars have started making themselves noticeable one by one: they look like random points within the geometry of darkness...

Whenever I begin to look at history more attentively, it seems to me – I don't quite know in what way – that I have all inside myself, and also, that it moves **from left to right**. It is most certainly so, just because I am in the process of reading it; because I find it in books; and the already perused pages lie all of them on the left of me. When you finish a book, the whole of the book, with all its contents lies on the left of me. It is somewhat annoying that, but that's how it is indeed. I do feel the need of a one-way system, simply because such a one-way system is required by history. The one-way system is in itself psychologically significant to me: and that is why, it must be moving from left to right.

In consequence, whenever we look inwards, and contemplate the Eighteenth Century, the only thing that we are doing is visualising it to the left of the Nineteenth Century. And is it indeed the latter that emerges, unfolds, and detaches itself from the former? But how is that done? Is it in



the same way in which one truth detaches itself from another truth? But then, they do not take place in space, and they do not have “directionality” either. History does occur in a closed space, and moves in one single direction only. Exactly so: it moves from left to right. Does anybody believe anything else? What is on top, that comes only afterwards. And it only occurs in close conjunction with the laws of truth, which are the same everywhere: in both History and Geometry.

Plato lies to the left of Aristotle, never to the right of him. The causes of a war always and invariably come to the left of it, and never otherwise. Here lies the irreversibility of history. Unicity, that “only once”, may happen to be more than just that. Left-to-right directionality – that indeed is the most extraordinary lesson that history gives us. What about the rest? Well, the rest you can very easily discover in any other field of research you wish.

But history! How can I not hate it, how can I not reject it with every single fibre of my whole being! This history, which is so undisciplined. This history which is so asymmetrical. This very fact which happens to hang more to the left than to the right; which goes astray; which goes the wrong way. This non-geometry, to say the least...

Why is man so very drawn by historical perspectivism? What is there in the essence of the fact of history that makes it be so very convincing?

I have proved that unicity is pure illusion. That it lives, that it is flexible, and fluid? Let us try and prove then that it is neither alive, nor is it flexible, or fluid.





Science is characterised by a certain principle, which is called The Principle of Solidification. Given a function f with several variables, we can particularize some of the variables, granting them specific values – which means “solidifying” them – and afterwards investigating the variability of the given function. Afterwards, successively **liberating** each and every one of the solidifying elements, one obtains the variation of the function in relation to all its variables.

You thus confront the historical fact, which is allegedly alive, flexible and fluid with this very principle of solidification. Is a historical fact alive? Is it both rich and abundant in value elements? Quite on the contrary, it only embodies and represents only one of the range of possible values. This signifies the equal and homogeneous death of all possible lives.

Is it then flexible? On the contrary: it is that least of all. How can it be flexible, and how flexible can it be, as it moves in a closed space, and its very destiny is to be positioned in one particular place and time?

As to fluid, in a certain sense it is fluid, for it runs: it does run like molten metal, or like hot lava, that will soon solidify just because it had from the start been conceived under the sign of solidification. The flow of history is a heavy flow, and a low one to boot.

I have always asked myself for what reason should I admit Blind Fatality in order to explain history, rather than a geometry God. For the whole of history is perhaps pervaded by a spirit of finality, which ultimately boils down to a vast application of The Principle of



Solidification. History appears as the solidification imposed by a generating spirit... unable to instantaneously detect the variation of a function dependent on several variables. In that case, history is one special and particular value, taken at random, a mere God-given exemplification. Have you ever thought that all of us, taken together, carrying all our history on our backs – we could all be mere instantiations?



As I was passing in front of that house, the one which was being pulled down, with dust emerging from all quarters, and all that was left of it was a solitary door-frame – I remembered the problem of the parts related to the whole, as well as of Leibniz's more than memorable question: Can the whole house vanish through a door? a question that nobody had managed to avoid. As to the house, which no longer and in any way was still a whole, it gradually vanished – piece by piece – through the very door, which was itself a part of it... while the workers went on quietly demolishing not only walls, but also the beginning of a problem.

Why then does the problem still linger on?



It occurs to me, sometimes, that it is not us who are the *real and true* humans.

Translated into English by C. George Sandulescu



DE CAELO.

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The Pythagoras man – how strange he must have felt himself in his skin. Enveloped in the seven spherical heavens, a prisoner in a world seven times locked up – he must have been contemplating, in his immobility, the dizzying movement of seven superimposed vaults. If only he could by chance perceive the sound harmony of the vaults, which appeared so disharmonious to the eye, each wholly ignoring the others in their respective movements. But the ear only records discontinuous harmonies. Whereas the vaults let go permanent sound. But then, let us imagine that the Pythagoras man **did hear**. Did that mean it was an additional freedom? Not at all: it was an additional slavery. Sight and hearing joined hands in order to make the man aware of the order surrounding him... in other words, aware of his own imprisonment.

The ancient man was destined to remain a long time in that cosmic slavery, which he in fact adopted and even justified in his own social order. The sentiment of belonging to nature – The Naturalism, if such a phrase



could be coined – was indeed the most representative doctrine of antiquity, quite in spite of the desire of certain historians to turn the Greeks into notable humanists. The first philosophers are also called naturalist “physicists”, on account of the fact that they attempt to solve the cosmological problem by trying to detect the fundamental components of the world. But they could also be called thus because they let themselves be moved by the same propensity, so very characteristic of the Greeks, of accepting nature: of searching its meanings, remaining at the same time conscious of their subordination to it. And was not Aristotle the most systematic and most authoritative philosopher who was a thorough naturalist from one end to the other of his whole philosophy? Was he not a thinker who only understands the world as a hierarchy, and was he not explaining Man only by inserting him in his proper place in the universal order of things?

Such a philosophy came perhaps in the natural way of things to a man who considered himself locked up under so many vaults of heaven. The seven heavens, as Pythagoras willed them, were not enough. A whole range of astral movements remained without any explanation at all, and Eudoxios, in order to be able to give a comprehensive explanation, was obliged to increase the number of spheres from Seven to Twenty-seven. Pure and simple. As if that was all, and that was the end of it. But astronomer Callippos, correcting Eudoxios, increased the number to Thirty-four spheres. But it was Aristotle himself who went as high up as Fifty-six.





No matter how small modern man feels himself to be, with the whole globe of the Earth and all that, when faced with the infinity of astronomical space, he cannot help feeling the following: although limited, or better said, precisely because they were limited, Aristotle's vaults were more oppressive. Within the universe of today's science we *might be able* to feel a greater degree of freedom and evince more creativity than within the universe of ancient science. The new vision of the sky perhaps gives a new kind of freedom to the human being... Aristotle's man was imprisoned in a closed universe. The man of today could well feel more master of himself in a world deprived of limits, or within the immense frame proposed by Einstein (of 84 thousand million light years). Or, at any rate: the Aristotle man knew that between him and the universe he belonged to, placed in his appropriate corner, there was indeed a common measure; today's man could well drop overboard that prejudice.

In just a couple of words again, our man of today could feel that he is not nature (in the sense of outward "being" – that of belonging to something, and of being part of something). He could well think that his relations with the rest of humanity are not quantitative, not an infinitesimal point in a vast endlessness. He could further conceive, that he does not take a place in a hierarchy, where the substance making up the individuals placed in a higher echelon can be more noble than his own substance – as was the prevalent belief in Aristotle's time. And finally, he could as well



leave the area of space and no more be obsessed by the idea that he is bound to a particular spot in a particular place.

What would happen, however, if – just in order to avoid the objection raised by the naturalist thesis – the consciousness of the present-day man would one day become aware of something providing clear evidence that he does indeed occupy a place in the astronomical world? What would happen, for instance, if as was for a long time suspected (and probably it is on the cards today) other rational living beings would be discovered on another planet, who we could communicate with, and whose existence would make us conscious beyond certainty of the place we are occupying in space? For, in that case, we would most surely be holding such a place, at least if only in relation with the newly discovered planet. And having such a place, and being fully aware of it, we would feel as being part of the whole – part of Nature.

There is one question though: how would we become aware of the existence and rationality of others, how could we communicate with them? Through Formulae, is it not? Through some formulae which would stand for certain truths. It has been proposed that in such a case communication should take place through the illumination of a gigantic figure representing the squared Hypothenuse: it would illustrate the fact that the square thus constructed stands equivalent to the sum of the squares thus constructed. If the beings on other planets are indeed rational they would necessarily understand the truth represented by our figure. It is only in that case that we have the right to ask the question: what is of greater interest – the



Place, or the Idea? Our place, the place of each and every one of us, or the great element we detain, namely, The Truth, in which we find ourselves, all of us creators, all of us consciousnesses of the overall world?

It is quite certain that there is something quite primitive in Modern Man. With a view to saving him, today's historian declares him, quite lucidly, desperate. And indeed, if you consider the ready-made world, God-given, endowed with both angels and inter-planetary space, possessing a destiny, and crowds of humans, and its own History. But you are a desperate, exactly the way primitive man before he had discovered Magic, for instance. Primitives without magic, superstitious folk without any belief, fallen angels prone to paralysis, positiveness and boredom – that is what basically is our own mentality. In order to preserve a tiny particle of of the privileges that the individual has gradually lost, we should imagine that if we do not signify anything in the world we woke up in, we have the satisfaction to realise that this very world will come to an end together with us. We are at the end of the world: it will go down with us. If we are nothing, we have at least the satisfaction to know that in a relatively limited time from now, the whole world around us will come to nought.

It is this very conviction that betrays our primitive mentality more than anything else. It goes without saying that there exist among us genuine philosophers of culture, who see, understand and explain all the phenomena of the contemporary world. If they find signs of decadence, symptoms pointing to the end of the world within itself – in other words,



if they conclude that our times wind up a whole cycle, their explanation has been based on a wealth of facts, which in itself is far too rich and far too relevant to be brushed aside by the remark that the idea of end generates a sentiment of The End. It gives birth to a sentiment that is present in each and every one of us. We are not here taking up the ideas of the great minds of the time, but rather ourselves, the rank and file, the ones who evince feelings without going too deep into the facts. Such a sentiment, not quite filtered by our critical spirit, and to a large extent uncontrolled, is being born from, and thrives on the apathy fundamentally characterising us. And what could presume to shake our passivity somewhat? That can only be done by Noise, Sensationalism, and... The Apocalypse. We like the hullabaloo. We are very much looking forward to the Big Endings, we eagerly expect the most resounding ones.

The fundamental need of Sensationalism that modern man acutely evinces has often been emphasised. Absolutely everything must needs be so very noisy for the hearing, and so colossal for the sight. Within the moral order too, we constantly look for effect, for surprise; and in the world of letters we cherish the paradox. It is quite true that we are also endowed with a sense of discretion and measure at times. Present-day jazz is pure noise, though it also retains a sense of reticence at the same time. But if our primitive essence moved towards becoming civilised, it could only do so by preserving an intact initial core. At other levels, our inherent yearning for the sensational, the use of a whole range of “strong” terms – the so-called superlatives –, the need to exalt the actual feelings and uplift



the whole being do provide unmistakable proof that having a sense of measure is but a ploy. We ardently aspire to be constantly frenetic, or to permanently see things frenetic. Frenzy, however, invariably comes out in bold relief only if we are, occasionally, in states of peace and calm.

As to us all – the multitude – the arduous lovers of noise and of apocalypse, the end-of-all-in-the-world fans, it was one who lives among us today that uttered the wisest and most profoundly peaceful word: “The tree falls with loudest crack: but it does grow in utter silence.”



The ones who popularise of science, and the positivists adoring it to the point of compromising themselves, do insist that Science can predict. For instance, they declare that a total eclipse of the sun will take place on 11 August 1999¹. Nobody doubts the astronomer in his prophecy: but the victorious positivist inquires whether similar predictions might not be feasible in the moral domain. The answer, of course, is: yes, that can be done. And that is precisely why societies are not completely deprived of the force of Will. We have no idea at all how the various human societies making up Europe would look like on the eve of the year 2000¹. Who can predict today the thorough-going changes that will take place until then? However, certain things could be known: with a certitude widely different from the astronomical one, but as solid. Namely: whatever the shape of European societies in 1996, they are sure to be celebrating 400 years since the birth of Descartes. And whatever the societies of 2032, they are sure to commemorate 200 years since the death of Goethe. There is no doubt



whatever about that: those two certainties are as certain as the 11 August 1999 sun eclipse.

¹ Please remember that this text was written by Noica in 1937.

Translated into English by C. George Sandulescu



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[Entry Numbering inserted by the Anthology Editor.]

7. I dream of a school in which there should be – practically speaking – no teaching at all. To live in peace and quiet, somewhere on the fringes of a human settlement, and the youths, a handful of young men from around, to come there with the specific purpose of freeing themselves from professorial tyranny. For lessons should be given by everything and everybody. All there is must be learnt from outside, and inside out. They are allowed one thing, and one only: to ask questions, from time to time. But don't you see that they too have something to say? And don't you see also that we might not always have anything worth the saying to them? We are mere middlemen between them and their own selves. (Though not even that should be told them.)

▣



8. The disciple comes to you to ask for something. You must make him understand that he has nothing to receive; that he must grow up. The disciple would like to become an ivy bush. You must let him be what he must be – even a smock of weeds... And your own most glorious end must be – the climax of fertility – to be drowned by weeds.



10. All our moral life is here included: sandwiched between the prodigal son and his brother. We lose our way, and we repent; or, if not, we harden up our heart. It is bad not to obey. But it is equally bad to know that you obey – and bear that in mind.



11. The thought of a School where nothing at all is being formally taught obsesses me. States of mind – that is what we are in duty bound to pass on to others. No hard information. No advice. No teachings. It is for that very reason that the lessons become wholly redundant. Even when somebody asks you something, there is no need whatever to give him “lessons”. A book taken off you library shelf, a Bach Prelude played in the quiet of an evening, or a mere instantiation of intellectual serenity – all that is endowed with a far greater educational value than a Lesson. The young do notice that you are giving body to a new idea and they begin to do exactly the same thing themselves.

I believe that such a school must come into being.



20. Yesterday I was looking for possible premises for such a School: a house on the outskirts of town – for me and a friend of mine. There is a newspaper stall at the exit point out of town, towards the Ștefănești woods. “Who exactly are you trying to find?” asks me the fairly talkative new vendor.

I am taken aback. For I was in point of fact looking for... myself. I was going there with the predetermined intention of meeting that weird being that is indeed oneself. Perhaps projected in the future. But I didn't quite have the strength of practising philosophy with a tobacconist. So, I tell him about a sort of teacher abiding there, without pupils, in a school in which there is nothing practically taught. “Haven't you heard of him?” I ask. “Oh, yes. I think I have. There is one...”.

The man did know. I for one was not yet aware – but he, he did know. He did know all the others might be in need of... knowing.



28. Bach playing a fugue with his right hand on the clavier, while his left one was warmly clasping Anna Magdalena round her waist. “Perhaps this might be the very last thing I'll be thinking about,” she thought.

Somewhere up there, among the hordes of angels, there might linger a wisp of jealousy...



34. I took a friend with me to show him there, on the outskirts of Bucharest, the School cottage I had last time chosen. Leaving the town wholly behind, meeting the sheds and the mud on the roads – all this



made him indignant. “Don’t you see how ugly it all is?” he said. No, I had not in fact noticed that. The actual cottage pleased him a little better. “But the so flat landscape, how monotonous it is...”.

These humans who never see anything else except the beauty of things. But landscapes do become transfigured. An individual who **goes through** an experience does create a space for himself, he has a landscape of his own. “It’s not only flatland,” I hurry to add. “There are hills as well, if you attend to visualising it properly.” But the cutting reply comes down most ruthlessly: “It goes without saying that Dulcinea was a most beautiful woman for the eyes of Don Quixote, and as to the windmills...”

Such platitudes again! But he is quite right: the Quixote experience stands valid, absolutely valid. We must live like that: within our own world. Though I’d rather adopt the stand: why not? If we compare, let’s compare: another Spaniard – El Greco, by name – was always working, when his friends found him, with his blinds drawn down in the middle of the day. “I want to see **my** colours in a better light,” he used to reply.



35. No, we are not into cheap idealism at all: it is us ourselves who create the world around us. But, for God’s sake, it is never the World that will teach us what is to be done, when it is our own fate at stake, and NOT the fate of the World. It is even deprived of meaning to be living in such a beautiful surrounding that it becomes valid for itself and in itself. How inadequately prone to philosophy is that little corner of Ermenonville which Jean Jacques Rousseau had deliberately chosen for his philosophy!



It was only and merely suitable for a temple – with nobody ever officiating in it. We must each live according to our measure, with the mud around us, with the shabby huts in which we live, with flatland all around – but with **sincerity** above all. And also, and moreover, without Rousseau-isms.



44. A young man will come to the School complaining bitterly that he does not know enough. But does he not feel all the joy of not yet having come into contact with Goethe?

O ignorance, what vast life there lies in you!



51. A school in which the teacher does not himself learn anything is a patent absurdity. I think I have found a motto for my School. It is that Léon Bloy's most extraordinary phrase: "One never knows **who** gives and **who** receives."



91. Those who you fail to teach how to doubt are your **own** failure. If there were to exist a branch of medicine for the souls, its meaning should be quite contrary to current medicine: its main job being to make them feel unwell.



106. I feel worried about something Paul Claudel says in *Le Soulier de satin*: "Which doctor is ultimately more useful to malaria sufferers: the



devoted medical man who sits by their side day and night, or that good-for-nothing who was instrumental in discovering the quinine?”

What an encouragement that is for the prodigal son!



120. We were standing there, frozen, face to face, tense, eyeball into eyeball, he the dog and me the man. I was sensing he was afraid of me but, me too, could not help feeling afraid of him. Neither of us moved, in order not to break the already established equilibrium between us. Something quite obscure, quite primitive was binding us together into such a unity, that I felt we were – he the dog and me the man – the two facets of an instance of existence.

Nicholas Berdiaeff is absolutely right: the man can stand in metaphysical relations with the dog.



121. Absolute solitude? I sometimes conceive it thus: in the train, on a crowded corridor, sitting on the suitcase. You are then so far away not only from any other human being, but more especially so from those who prevent you to move. You are so very far away from any fixed point in space. You are somewhere, between one railway station and another, torn from something, on the way to somewhere else, taken out of Time, taken out of your own, carried on rails, carrying within you another train – full of people, situations, objects, ideas, all of them topsy-turvy, put in carriages which you leave behind at certain stations, you may lose between stations,



you forget in space, thus emptying the world, speeding through the world, alone, more alone, ever so alone.



142. This moral brother of mine, I visualise so clearly, that I am able to hear him pronouncing judgments about today's world, taking stands, holding courses of lectures, saying **YES**, but more especially so, saying **NO**. Just because he is a curious man, like any being of free will, will come to see what we are doing at the School. Somebody present will throw at him: "You are the brother of the prodigal son." He does not hear so very well, as all self-centred persons are in the habit of doing... they are somewhat deaf. Therefore, he is bound to say: "Excuse me, I am The Professor...", and will be expecting that somebody should ask him the subject-matter that he is in the habit of teaching. But nobody will ask him.



154. When you are young, everybody will be doing their best to teach you how to succeed. But a far greater virtue, and at any rate, far more useful, than the way to success is that of knowing what to do with the absences of success. Not only that it is hard to succeed all the time, but it is also sterile. You become the invariable Prize-winner. And, thank God, the prodigal son was given some of **them** too.

But as failures do exist, there is – without specially looking for it – a certain voluptuousness in the defeat, a voluptuousness that must be cultivated in the young. And that quality the prodigal son is indeed endowed with. And he makes it a point to be prodigal it too.





167. Reading *Iphigénie*, I realise all of a sudden why I do not like Racine. Though he is a moralist, he remains a humanist in the poor sense of the word, namely a pedagogue. This brand of people are most anxious to undertake everything; and resort to a lesson in the most direct and indiscreet way possible. And if that were not clear from the start, you have full evidence of it in the Prefaces.

Racine's Prefaces... How full of lack of poetry they are! The barrister behaviour – in most cases. A critic breaking beauty to pieces. Iphigenia must needs **not be** his offer. “Quelle apparence que j’eusse souillée la scène par le meurtre horrible d’une personne aussi vertueuse et aussi aimable qu’il fallait (!) représenter Iphigénie.”

And in spite of all that, the logic of aesthetics requires that Iphigenia should die. I defy anybody who feels that there is destiny here to be aesthetically satisfied with a solution that would miraculously save Iphigenia. But the logic of a moralist and of a pedagogue requires a different solution. Iphigenia is virtuous – and, in consequence, her life should be saved. What would the spectator say otherwise? Would he not be scandalised? And then, “j’ai été très heureux de trouver dans les anciens cette autre Iphigénie”, somewhat vaguely mentioned, it is true, but that is quite enough for the humanist Racine. After running her down in several respects, he takes up the other one – the good, the virtuous Iphigenia. In order to impeccably finalise her absolute perfection, she is given the pedagogical happiness of getting married to Achilles.





178. An artist begins as an artist the moment he is able to turn all his characters into righteous personalities. You only give life to a character the moment everything is in proper equilibrium, and when everybody is presented in the just way. That is the case with the Aeschylus heroes. Each in his own righteousness. Eteocles is right to defend the city of Thebes against his brother Polynices, who surrounds it with a foreign army. But Polynices is right too in order to undertake its siege, on account of the fact that Eteocles deprived him of his part of reign. And how splendid it is that even the Choir is divided in the end in *The Seven against Thebes*: half of it follows Polynices fighting for his rights; the other half follows Eteocles, who had died for his rights.



181. A verse from Luke scares me: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.”

For, I think, that is exactly what the scribes and the pharisees want: that it should be **they** that exist. And when they are inside the graves, these should be **their** graves, **their own** graves. What greater pain can there be than that Luke speaks about – to lie in unknown graves? We are perhaps all the time stepping on the unknown grave of the squanderer son’s brother.



189. How wise! exclaim the others, seeing that he knows how to accept defeat, that he knows to take defeat with serenity. He is almost a stoic. He has achieved indifference, disregard, the state of ataraxy.

But most individuals do not know that there is also a positive indifference, the one belonging to life, leading to fullness. It is not at all a question of the suppression of desires, but rather the reduplication of each of them – that is the solution. There is a wisdom which presumes not to love anything. But there is also the one asking one to love this and that. Loving the alternative. Whatever happens in any given situation is good. Double your desires – do not kill them – and you'll be happy.

To put it in the terms of the prodigal son: “If my sin succeeds, it is good. Because I have achieved voluptuousness. If my sin does not succeed, it is good again. For I have achieved virtue.”

But it is preferable to operate in your own terms.



192. I am at the School, waiting for the shy guy. Timidity contains something highly valuable: it keeps. More particularly, with the populations that reach maturity fairly easily – as is the case with the peoples that you might wish to call Latin –, timidity is an educational factor of very great value. The important thing is to prolong youth. By any means, including timidity. For all “superior animals” do have a long youth. (Biology has taught me that.)

From this arises the fight between true Teacher and Parent. The common teacher conspires with the parents in the process of turning the



young into mature beings. That means passing on the required knowledge, they say, in order to prepare them for life, say all the others. It is then that the teacher intervenes. The young have no idea how to protect themselves, how to defend their only valuable treasure, namely their youth. For the young themselves evince certain impulses leading them directly to maturity. Though in his heart there lies a high-quality nostalgia: they seek apprenticeship, they seek the master.

How beautiful are the things happening between 20 and 25 years of age! The parents are pushing you out into life. The teachers are delivering diplomas. The surrounding world is opening its gates. The instincts pushing one to assert oneself are mushrooming. And what does the youth do? He still hesitates. But it is as clear as crystal, they say: here is a job; here is a girl to marry; there is a possible opening. What are you waiting for?

But NO! He is waiting... He is waiting for something. Something makes him tarry. Happy are those, who in that hour of decision, are being faced with a delaying factor.



195. These people think that you are constructing a paradox when you say a bridge or a railway engine is not something concrete. When you consider them a mere applied abstraction. An abstraction materialised. That the brother of the prodigal son is something concrete, but a highway is an abstraction. It is in fact their business to think that way. Each and every one of us moves in universes of their own choosing.





201. The prodigal son has only one thing – voluptuousness. The brother of the prodigal son is endowed with curiosity and pride. Which one is the greater sinner?

Or, perhaps, curiosity characterises both of them. But the prodigal son opens the door. His brother only peeps through the keyhole.



206. It seems to me sometimes that I know what philosophy is: it is the adventure of the universal when it becomes particular.



231. How lucky are the Revolutions that are fully aware of what they are fighting against: against all those wearing shoes, or against all those with a remarkable past. But on this side, there exists something which is both subtle and paralysing: it is the fact that the enemy is ever nearer. It is not the stranger, not the crook either, it is not at all the man of yore, not the good man, not even your comrade... until you realise that it becomes part of yourself. “Then you must become something else.”



234. “All rivers flow into the sea, and the sea never overflows.” How funny this Ecclesiastes! If the sea were to fill up, it should say: “The rivers flow into the sea, the sea fills up and overflows, and the rivers, reborn, flow on again into the sea.”

As everything is, and must be – just vanity.



243. Whenever I see a teenager I keep thinking what adverse fate the present-day world has in store for him. It was quite different in the days of the Greeks. I know full well: the evil mouths of history have pushed us in another direction. But lying beyond the gossip and the scandals, there is here **a problem**. We should be well aware of that.

Having in front of him an 18-year-old girl, any wise man of the earth would evince extra care in point of both attention and understanding. For him, she does exist. Academicians and other learned old men gather all around her, and all of them place themselves at her disposal, with awkward grace. (The Greeks are sure to laugh their heads out at us!) But in the meantime, what moral status does an 18-year-old enjoy? “We are going to discuss about that later.”

A girl at eighteen is everything – that is quite, quite true. She knows and understands everything. Her fight from now on will be hold and to keep what she has so far kept. And in much the same way in which she would desperately cling to her youth, she would simultaneously try – through culture, experience, and memory – to know just as much as she knew, **at one gulp**, then. I admit that, in a sense, she is more interesting. But in one sense only. Because she has no future. And if you do indeed value the future, the boy is the one who becomes more interesting.

Let him come nearer you; or you try to be closer to him. You must take his soul in your hands, and fashion it. Weigh it in your hands, as if it were a measure of wheat. How heavy is it? What prospects of fertility does it have? If you can, try not to play the part of a knowledgeable farmer.



Rather, try to be the rain, that autumn rain which does not care a damn about harvesting and all that...



244. The School. That School of mine. I haven't the slightest idea whether it'll ever come about. But, at end of life, I'd be more than happy to be able to say: "I've done nothing else all life long!"

[N.B. The above excerpt contains 28 entries out of a total of 250.]

Translated into English by C. George Sandulescu



PART TWO : **Texts written and published after 1964**
(when Noica was let out of prison).

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth.

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SIX MALADIES OF THE CONTEMPORARY SPIRIT.

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FOREWORD

In the margins of a work on Being, we have attempted to bring to light some of the great, often beneficial, maladjustments of the spirit.

Giving names to states and processes as if they were “maladies” (the spirit itself was sometimes named a malady of creation, when its glory could not be seen), we have striven to find a modicum of scientific rigour in the disorder under which man has lived and continues to live.

Perhaps we have not achieved rigour. However, we hope that, in the last instance, through the description of these major human orientations (for they are orientations, and not maladies properly speaking) we shall be able to demonstrate what exactly our historical moment is and how, to borrow a saying from Dimitrie Cantemir, the “delicate essence” of our people inscribes itself within it.

THE AUTHOR



TABLE OF THE SIX MALADIES.

Besides the somatic maladies, identified for centuries, and the psychological maladies, identified for barely a century, there must also be maladies of a higher order, of the spirit let us suppose. No neurosis can explain the despair of Ecclesiastes, the sentiment of exile on earth or of alienation, metaphysical ennui, the sentiment of the void or of the absurd, the hypertrophy of the I, rejection of everything, and empty controversy; no psychosis can explain economic and political tumult, abstract art, the demonism of technology, and the extreme cultural formalism that nowadays leads to the primacy of empty exactitude.

There can be no doubt that some of these orientations have resulted in major creations. Nevertheless they still represent a great maladjustment of the spirit. But whereas the somatic diseases have an accidental character (even death, it has been said, is accidental to living being) and the psychological diseases are somehow contingent-necessary, because they arise from man's



individual and social conditioning, both of which are still accidental, the maladies of the spirit seem to be *constitutive*.

What we shall be trying to argue in these pages and those that follow is that the maladies of the spirit are in fact maladies of Being, ontic maladies, and for this reason, in contrast to other maladies, they may well be constitutive of man, since, although the body and the soul also participate in Being, it is the spirit alone that fully reflects it in both its power and precariousness. Diseased Being also *is*, in one of the variants of "is". Living and dead things can be left blocked in one of the maladies of Being, which they then conceal with their apparent certitude, but which man, with his higher incertitude, reveals. However, Being may not only be diseased but also false.

If, for example, a scientist achieved interminable prolongation of life and placed the procedure at the disposal of mankind, he would have to be showered with laurels in the first instance and then brought to trial in the second. He would be a falsifier of values, specifically a *falsifier of Being*. Just as there are falsifiers of money, so too there can be falsifiers of values other than money, for example falsifiers of truth or beauty and, in particular, falsifiers of good. (One part of modern technology poses the question of whether, by producing certain types of useless goods, it falsifies the idea of good). Insofar as Being is a value, or even "the value" at the heart of the real, it may thus be falsified: just as some people pass on false money, so the scientist in question would offer us false Being.



Though we can do without false money, it is likely, however, that we would not be able do without the false Being thereby obtained and that the falsifier would go unpunished. Rather we would use false Being in an attempt to endow with sense and ontological plenitude an existence which, within its ordinary limits, cannot very easily discover its Being. In other words, with a false Being (like the existence of the amoeba, which in duration surpasses all other terrestrial existences) we would aspire to compensate for a void in Being.

Perhaps only then, through the dilation in time of human life, would we see our *emptiness* of Being, the same as in the Romanian folk tale *Unageing Youth*, which admirably shows how dreary man's life would be if it were projected onto the screen of eternity. One does not have the *right* to demand the prolongation of such a life, burdened as it is by chronic anaemia or a veritable spiritual haemophilia. One *cannot* accept the gift of its prolongation. But one can ask oneself, once one understands that eternity is not sufficient condition (and perhaps not even necessary) to confer full Being, whether somehow it is not something other than the fact that he is "transient" that makes man, as has been said, the diseased being *par excellence*. Beyond the *chronic* malady of human being, that of being mensurate in time (if indeed this is a malady), the true maladies of man would come to light, as a Being in time which is incapable of finding its measure within time.

Given that the interminable prolongation of life is an extreme example, let us, in order to reveal the deficiencies of Being in man, select



another example, one that is closer to hand and will soon appear before our very eyes. The ontic maladies, which in man are reflected in those of the spirit, will appear in a startling way once people start dwelling, as has been predicted, in space stations for long periods. Such men will lack something which we realise from the outset will have to have an essential impact on full Being: the Individual. He will breathe the same air, but it will be an air which is conditional and general, not *this* air, the always particular air of earth; he will feed himself, but with universal substances; he will experience and know things, but these will be essences rather than particular realities; he will take pleasure in looking at a plant, but it will be a greenhouse plant. He will lack something: individual reality, the definite thing, or “*tode ti*” as the Greek philosopher once put it. His malady will, let us suppose, be *todetitis*. Neither those around him nor he himself will possess the character of a definite reality, but rather that of generic realities. It will be necessary for man to return to earth from time to time, or else permanently, in order to cure himself of *todetitis*.

However, sufferers of *todetitis* already exist, as they have always existed among great theoretical spirits, like the heroes of Dostoevsky’s *The Devils* or, perhaps, like various characters in the novels of Thomas Mann, with real society providing examples aplenty. Plato himself occasionally suffered from *todetitis*, as when he strove, as if under an obsession, to implant his ideal republic in the real Syracuse. On the other hand, to the extent that it will receive ever more theoretical construction and programming, in the society of tomorrow it is possible that the malady of



totetitis (the need to rediscover the Individual) will become more and more widespread. But up to now the opposite malady has occurred with greater frequency, the malady in which not lack of the Individual but lack of the General is the cause of suffering. Invoking once again the term Greek, this time for the General, “katholou”, we might name this malady *catholitis*.

In one sense, *catholitis* is the spiritual malady typical of human Being, tortured as it is by the obsession of elevating itself to a valid form of universality. When, by an elementary act of lucidity, man emerges from the narcosis of the general meanings by which he has always been manipulated, in the interests of the species and of society, he then seeks in all kinds of ways to cure the inconsolability of the fact that he is a mere individual existence without any distinct signification of a general order. In the majority of his deliberate engagements, he then seeks to take *generalialia* by force. Often he allows himself to be captured by the ready-made *generalialia* (such as “ideologies”) he encounters at his hour in history, thus curing himself only in appearance and allowing the malady to remain hidden. But *catholitis* reappears virulently, even in ordinary human natures, whenever the act of lucidity is prolonged sufficiently enough for man to see the vanity of the General he has chosen.

Literature (meaning life) also offers abundant examples in this respect. In the *Life and Adventures of Salavin*, the French writer Duhamel describes the anxiety of a mediocre man who, ordinary man that he is, cannot find any other way of elevating himself to general meanings than



by quite simply deciding to become a saint in the midst of the world. The malady of catholitis, which is latent in everybody but here deliberately aggravated, this time has a rigorous and slow, somewhat serene, development in the disaster that it brings: the hero gradually detaches himself from society, from family, from ordinary life, and, ultimately, from life itself, under the gentle obsession of a general order that does not fit within any of them. On the other hand, the same malady had a hysterical complexion in Balzac's character César Birotteau, leading to the convulsive pathos of his attempt, at the level of ordinary man, to confront Napoleon in person, which in reality was an attempt to elevate himself to a level of general affirmation through confrontation with a destiny that he thought possessed maximum generality. These are, it would seem, two extreme clinical cases, within which fall the nuances of the countless forms of catholitis that affect us all, beings bereft of the General that we are.

But in the depths of our spiritual being we are also affected by a third malady, along with catholitis and todetitis. The lack of the appropriate General in catholitis, like the lack of the appropriate Individual in todetitis, are not the only causes of the spiritual crisis of man. He also needs appropriate *Determinations*, thus manifestations which ought harmoniously to correspond both with his individual being and with the general meaning at which he aims. Because the malady in this case depends on the failure to acquire *Determinations*, let us call it *boretitis*, thinking of the Greek term for "determination" – *horos*. The malady thus expresses the torture and exasperation of not being able to act in accordance with our own thinking.



In European culture there is an extraordinary prototype for the horetitis sufferer: Don Quixote. His entire anxiety is to give himself determinations. But these are denied to him, in their truth, in the first part of the book (they are windmills and flocks of sheep), because it is he who invents them, while in the second part of the book they are not real Determinations for him, because everything depends on the invention of others.

As in the case of catholitis, however, there may be a less aggressive clinical form of the malady, which leads to the calm and serene, although futile, wait for Determinations during the course of an entire life. This is what happens in a book by a contemporary author, Dino Buzzati, entitled *The Desert of the Tartars*, in which the hero allows himself gradually to be overwhelmed by the malady of horetitis, as he waits at a frontier post for an eventual battle with an unknown foe. But the real foe will be mere death, that is, the *ultimate* determination that appears in the lives of men, lives which, for the most part, lack any meaningful Determinations. And again, *between* these two extreme clinical forms there may fall any other kind of horetitis, as the third spiritual malady of man.

Thus, from the above, it has occurred to us that we may identify three spiritual maladies, which reflect in man the potential deficiency of the terms of Being: the General, the Individual and Determinations. As though in *alternative* medicine, we have given them names, not without a smile, of course. But what more can we do except give them names, if the maladies appear so distinctly in man and, as “situations” of Being, perhaps also in things? And the list of the maladies of a superior order does not end here.



It seems to us that there may also arise a further three maladies, this time not due to deficiency but rather due to (man's) *rejection* of and (things) inaptitude for one or other of the terms of Being. Since the first three had to be given a name, we cannot refuse the other three which will appear in the table of the maladies of Being or the spirit. We shall name them: *acatholia*, *atodetia*, *ahoretia*, and we shall now allow them to present themselves on a larger scale in man, as they are somewhat strange at first sight. We shall illustrate their presentation by means of three cultural artefacts, since, for the spiritual life of man, culture is the enlarging mirror.

1. *Don Juan and the rejection of the General*. Let us take the case of Don Juan for the malady of *acatholia*. This is a case of a limit human destiny, where the General turns out to have been categorically repudiated – or else has become a mere stone statue. In such a destiny, the syndrome of the spiritual malady in question can unmistakably be read.

Don Juan fully incorporates *the first term of Being*, the Individual, as he is a true “individuality”, which is to say a man severed from the inertia of common generality. Not everyone is an individual person. People, like things, are usually mere particular, not individual, realities, respectively particular cases of the human species and the imperatives of society. If nevertheless we wish also to name the particular case an “individual”, as it is indivisible (in the same way as a bean is no longer divisible as a bean),



then we shall have to say rather: not just any man rises to the level of individuality.

Thus, Don Juan has torn himself away from the inertia of being *in* something already given and he has provided himself with an image of his own. He no longer wishes to be caught in the truths (prejudices) of society and belief. He is a libertine and as such he does as he pleases. In this sense, he has individuality, but not yet personality; for he has emerged from one order and should now open himself to another, an order of his own. However, in a deliberate way, he is not within anything. He is pure individual. He is the devil's chap, says his valet Sganarelle (in Molière's version), which is to say the individual of anomie, of rejection of the General.

Severed and suspended as he is, the individual person attempts more than to float away on the waters of the world or let himself be pulled in every direction by the world; it is *he* who gives himself Determinations, it is *he* who takes the initiative for the occurrences which will come to describe him. A libertine like Don Juan thus brings into play *the second term of Being*, Determinations, as libertines are precisely those who give themselves free determinations. In this respect, his Being and actions can perfectly be likened to those of the natural life below man. The usual comparison that one makes, which is that Don Juan is like a butterfly going from flower to flower, has a literal sense, just as it would make sense to say that he is a natural element subject to attraction and repulsion. However, in the case of



man, two new notes appear under the heading of Determinations: infinity and, above all, guilt, which is to say responsibility.

Molière's Don Juan does not quite keep a list of the Determinations which he gives himself, the "1003" female conquests, but rather he brings into play an "infinity" of such Determinations and explains his urges to Sganarelle by constructing a theory of human infidelity to any kind of determination, to any kind of given love. How can one limit oneself to just one?

Someone else had also theorised this necessary infidelity in matters of the Eros: Plato. But whereas this infidelity to a single or however many beautiful embodiments *ascends* towards the Idea of beauty, which is to say towards a General in which all the transcended Determinations are contained, infidelity for Don Juan is blind and remains at the same lowly level. The only thing he wishes is to "do justice" to the beauty in all the beings he encounters. But what he does not know is how to do justice to mere beauty, to the General. This is why he loves conquest for its own sake, for the "little advances" he day by day makes in breaking down resistance, and this gives him the feeling of being a conqueror on a par with the great. He feels like an Alexander, he says, capable of conquering, in his own way, the entire world. It is here that the words which reveal his perplexity occur: he wishes there were also *other* worlds, so he could make erotic conquests there too, ad infinitum.

Although he thus possesses the first two terms of Being, Don Juan rejects the third, the General. Rather than the General of Hegel's bad



infinity, we have the infinity of yet more and more. It precipitates Don Juan towards nothingness, the same as it transforms into nothingness anything that is mere self-repetition or blind rotation. There is no longer any need for society's moral condemnation, nor the religious condemnation of heaven invoked by Sganarelle, or Don Juan's father, or even Elvira. The mere fact that he has fallen into the bad infinity of Determinations condemns him. While this occurrence of Being, that of falling into a bad infinity, can after all also be the lot of inert objects or of inferior lifeforms, what Don Juan adds, as a second note, truly characteristic of man, is *guilt*: not so much the contravention of an earthly or heavenly law, which is to say of a given General, as much as the guilt of repudiating the General as such.

What is interesting in Molière is that *this* is in effect what he has to say, in contrast to his Spanish predecessors, who placed the emphasis only on divine vengeance. After the presentation of the hero, the entire play concentrates on the confrontation with the inert, stony General. Don Juan is described as arriving at his final hour, when the mechanism of Determinations, in the absence of the General, also breaks down. Instead of the hero continuing to enjoy, as he had said, the "small progresses" of conquest and subtly to exercise them in special cases, he conquers only simple country girls, by the most rudimentary, and unsubtle of means: the proposal of marriage. Perhaps Don Juan might still have fascinated a valet like Sganarelle if he had employed more refined means. However, Sganarelle is exasperated by this mere disorder of his master, which is not



even compensated by the refinement of sacrilege or, seemingly, even by jaded pleasure at this final hour. Don Juan's disorder is perfectly reflected in the disorder of the speeches addressed to him by Sganarelle, who now desperately wants to put him back on the right path.

Here, still in the middle of Molière's play (and in the middle of a plain, which is to say *anywhere*), the statue of the Commander, Elvira's father, whom Don Juan has killed, appears before them. Inert generality can, indeed, appear anywhere. The lowest order, inert matter, is now brought into opposition with disorder. At least this ought to tune the fury of Don Juan's senseless Determinations. The appeals of others, of his father, of Elvira, even of Elvira's brother, whose life Don Juan had accidentally saved, are seemingly just as many premonitions of the statue. Nor does Sganarelle himself sense anything except an empty premonition of the General when he asks: "You don't surrender to the amazing marvel of that talking statue?" To which Don Juan replies: "There is certainly something in that which I don't understand; but whatever it may be, it is not capable of either convincing my mind or shaking my soul". What he does not understand is that even nothingness speaks in the name of order, if you have been incapable of finding any other.

Nevertheless, total disorder does not yet appear in him, since he knows how to control himself and to be defiant, but it does appear in the mind of his valet, who now, in the second scene of the final act, loses his mind and deliriously argues: "Man is in this world like a bird on a branch; the branch is attached to the tree; whoever attaches himself to the tree



follows good precepts...” He continues to rave in this manner until he reaches the conclusion, which is perfectly justified in itself but not at all inferred: “You will be damned to all the devils in hell”. At the end of the play, the General now arrives (but from without) bearing non-Being into a world which has rejected any opening within Being. First it is the General in the form of a woman's face beneath a black veil, a harbinger of death, who tells Don Juan that he has but a moment left; then it is the General closest to the final inertia, naked Time, scythe in hand, who does not even tell him so much as that; then it is the Stone Guest, the statue of the Commander, who takes him by the hand. At the touch of the stone (of the inert General), Don Juan senses the annihilating flame.

In older Spanish and Italian versions, the play is precisely called “The Stone Guest”. In Molière’s version, probably everything except the title is more artistically accomplished than the plays of his predecessors. For the *guest* is an admirable image of the General defied by man and accepted by him only as a guest, not as a true master, as is its due.

Acatolia is the malady of the human slave who has forgotten all masters, even the inner one.

2. *Tolstoy and the rejection of the Individual*. Compared with acatholia, which privileges real individuality, with its provocative rejections, *atodetia* has a more faded character, because it brings to the fore the General, with its more discrete resistances. In the name of the General, thus in the name of



an entity or law, what now also takes place is the refusal that is no longer an act of defiance - proceeding from rebellion, as with Don Juan, or superior irony, as will be seen in the analysis of acatholia - but rather an act of compassion for the world, or one of indifference to it and the Individual. Perhaps acatholia was characteristic of the European world, where individuality takes precedence, whereas atodetia occurs rather in the Asiatic world, in the form of indifference, at least to the Individual. In any case, there was someone situated *between* these two worlds who assumed the onus not only of describing the rejection of the Individual but also of experiencing it for himself: Tolstoy.

The ordinary world does not realise that its actions and manifestations are bound to laws which sweep away any individuality, even a Napoleon. Whereas in acatholia the repudiated General reappears, ultimately bringing a dissolution of the Individual, in the malady of atodetia the Individual has its revenge, causing atodetic man to have neither grounding, nor secure identity, nor dwelling. *War and Peace*, the work by which it seems we can illustrate atodetia, does not suffer as a work of art because of this, just as Molière's *Don Juan* was artistically undiminished by acatholia: as with everything that is great art, they are nourished by and flourish on the suffering and maladjustment of man. It was Tolstoy alone who was destined to suffer, because of the failure to fulfil his ideas and life. His work, however, *theorises* atodetia, even if, as a work, it often denies it.



The rejection of the Individual dominates Tolstoy's entire novel, occurring from the very first scene, with Anna Pavlovna Scherer's reception. All the characters who appear on the stage (except Pierre Bezukhov, whose authenticity will be required so that the author can structure his novel around it) bear in their being the stamp of a society well-defined in its generalia, a society which no longer knows how to leave room for individual authenticity. If, during the book, the artist in Tolstoy nevertheless does not allow him to turn them into "typical" characters, the author in him at least places them in typical *situations*. However, when his characters, with their living truth, threaten to give him the slip, to break free from the control of generality and become triumphant individualities, he will crush them by persistent recourse to the General, spurred by his atodetia. He does this on a higher and lower scale: with Napoleon and Tsar Alexander on the one hand, and with Platon Karatayew, the "type" of the Russian peasant on the other. Between these two extremes, all the characters are ready to burst with life and individual pulsation; but general signification tries, and sometimes also succeeds, to impede them from hatching.

As a case in point, between these extremes all the characters, primarily the lucid personalities, are made to feel their own and others' vanity. Andrei Bolkonsky, who lies wounded on the battlefield at Austerlitz while Napoleon inspects the scene of his victory, tells himself that the latter represents nothing compared with the height of the sky. The next day, having been carried from the battlefield and placed among the



more highly-ranking wounded, he clearly senses the “vanity of greatness” when he sees the emperor once more. Countless times during the novel, the wave or rather the tide of the General comes to raze and wash away all that tries for a moment to take on an individual shape. However, as if the novel risked contradicting its own atodetia, Tolstoy is forced to resume the problem of the non-existence of the Individual at the *end* of the work. “What really possesses Being in history?” he asks.

This problem, of what really *is*, or, more exactly, of the real *force* that causes historical events and thus historical narrative to possess meaning and consistency, is explicitly that of the great novel’s *Conclusion*. Tolstoy’s theorising is usually viewed with indulgence as the weakest part of his work, even if it is admitted that the visionary in him as well as the prophet he became towards the end of his life are unitary with the artist. It is nonetheless hard not to see the *honesty* of Tolstoy’s creative nature in this theorising, while from the perspective of atodetia, which in his prophetic vision is striking as a malady constitutive of the man, his theorising possesses something just as troubling as the work.

We shall not reiterate that art itself brings the Individual into play and that, after all, it represents precisely a conversion of the Determinations of the Individual into the General, respectively the withdrawal of things from their “catastrophe” in order to save them “anastrophically” from fall, instead of annulling them; nor was the artist in Tolstoy capable of not saving them in this way, however much he may have talked about their annulment. We shall, however remark that his



theoretical lucidity is just as surprising and sometimes just as appealing as his artistic inspiration, although at other times it seems to run counter to the latter.

It is impossible directly to capture life in order to describe it, as Tolstoy says in the *Conclusion*, even the life of a single nation. One cannot provide all the Determinations of the great individual reality that is a nation and one cannot say from the outset which force motivates a nation. For, indeed, what force, what law, what reason creates history? Divine will, observes Tolstoy, can no longer be invoked; the will of the masses can never be adequately formulated. There can be no question of the action of the “heroes” or major figures brought into play by recent historians in place of the divine will, if you see them as human, all too human, as Tolstoy saw Napoleon and Tsar Alexander. With his soul open to the whole of humanity, Tolstoy sees history as a product of *all*.

Every man is, in his way, an agent of freedom, as his own conscience tells him. But at the same time every man feels his will dominated by laws, and reason reveals laws even in history, such as statistical laws or politico-economic determinism. In fact, says Tolstoy, the same thing happens in history as in all the sciences: certain forces manifest themselves in the form of laws. The force of humanity is freedom, just as the forces of nature are gravity, inertia, electricity, and vitality. Yet, Tolstoy asks, what do we know about them? Just as little as about the essence of freedom. But we do know one thing: if there were a single body that behaved other than according to



the laws of mechanics, the whole of natural science would vanish. The same goes for freedom: it must, *at its limit*, discover necessity.

The objection to Tolstoy is that this is the way to fatalism. Contrariwise, one might say that he accords too much to the human masses and to each separate individual, thus arriving at the “infinitesimal” of human freedom, as he himself says, and ultimately abolishing the human person. By invoking the “free” will of great men as the cause of history, you are not writing history, says Tolstoy, because you are obliged to arrive at the infinitesimal freedom of each self, which is nonetheless inaccessible to us. However, it is the same as in science, where without knowing the essence of gravity you nonetheless see its laws: you will never know what the ultimate historical necessity is, but you will see its laws, through the *integration* of infinitesimal elements, likewise unknown. The course of the world’s events depends on the coincidence of all wills, as the author remarked when faced with the historical inexplicability then culminating at Borodino.

In fact, Tolstoy says the following admirable thing, which is constantly confirmed by science: the relation between two series of unknown things may be something known. In the last analysis we do not know what freedom is, nor do we know what necessity is, but we do know what the *relationship* between them is. The Individual gives itself differing Determinations, which we cannot know in their totality, let alone predict; the General too will bring to bear its organised infinity of Determinations, again unknown. However, Being, in this case historical being, arises from



the relationship between Determinations, which, without conversion into something general, are nothingness, and from this General itself, about which we do not know whether it is nothingness or not. As in infinitesimal calculus, from two nothingnesses arises something determinate.

Where is the truly Individual now? Tolstoy rejected it (at least here in *War and Peace*) and his greatness resides in the fact that he attempted the impossible: plenitude of artistic vision without the plenitude of the historical Being that has been brought into play.

In reality, beyond the individual destinies which Tolstoy artistically could not prevent taking shape and beyond even the acknowledged success of *one* character, Pierre Bezukhov, the novel lives thanks to the extraordinary highlighting of a reality that is equally individual: the epoch. Historical laws cannot crush the latter, nor can they reduce it to the role of an infinitesimal element. However, what is deeply significant for Tolstoy's "atodetia" is his artistic failure as regards the *key* (albeit apparently episodic) character of the novel that was to have been Platon Karatayev. The author is no longer able to depict him as a living form but only generically, as "the Russian peasant", beneath the vain declamation of generalities. It is also the rejection of the Individual that manifests itself in the *key work* that was to have been Tolstoy's own life, with all its prophesising, and which led to the failure to ground himself in his historical world or his own existence, and culminated in the flight from "home", which is to say from any dwelling place. One might say that he is



“der Unbehauste” [the Unhoused man], like Faust, if *atodetia* were not in itself the malady typical of prophets of every kind.

3. *Godot and the rejection of Determinations*. After the rejection of the General and of the Individual comes the turn of the rejection of Determinations, with *ahoretia*, which is also a significant malady for the contemporary world (the *ahoretia* of the hippies, for example) even if in the final analysis it is one that is constitutive of man, thus in a way eternal.

There is nothing absurd, at least at the level of practical consequences, in saying that the Deity, laws or anything of a general order do not exist, as Don Juan says. Again, there is nothing absurd in saying that the individual person as such does not exist but is plunged into something vaster than himself or is quite simply in the process of dissolution, as Tolstoy says. What is absurd is to say that the manifestations of the *individus* his communication, where a human is in question, and in general the *Determinations* of the self or individual situations do not exist, or that they can be anything, or that they signify nothing. “There is nothing to be done” are the first words to be uttered in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.

Don Juan was an individual nature who gave himself all kinds of Determinations (*mille e trè*), but he was also crushed by his lack of any General of his own. The historical vision (in the Conclusion to *War and Peace*) presented the infinity of Determinations (the free wills of men) as caught up in the necessity of an ultimate General; but there was a risk that



nothing more could be known about the Individual, which was becoming an infinitesimal reality. On the other hand, like Ecclesiastes, the contemporary absurd quarrels with Determinations and throws them into disorder, commencing with communication between people and with human contacts.

Each of these three great moments in literature somewhere damages what we are tempted to name the “ontological triplet”, whose mysterious destiny is also to be reiterated by literature, a triplet which brings into play not only the Individual but also Determinations and the General. Being, and with it speech, is damaged most of all by the contemporary absurd, which, by disordering and suspending Determinations, primarily communication, runs the risk of no longer being able to say anything except in the form of saying nothing (as in the theatre of Ionesco).

It is here, more than in the tragedy of Don Juan or in the eventual tragedy of the person in the vision of Tolstoy, that there resides something of what might be designated: the modern tragedy. In contrast to ancient tragedy, which bore on the strength of the General, modern tragedy bears on the chaotic freedom of *Determinations*, and ultimately their pulverisation. Modern existentialism sensed something of the tragedy of this complete freedom to do anything, namely the torture of not knowing what exactly is to be done; the technical-scientific revolution has, in the eyes of some (the “Club of Rome”, for example), taken on the character of a horror, precisely because it enjoys total freedom of means and because therefore anything can grow in the jungle of its Determinations:



knowledge, creativity, and even demographic development liberated from the *fatum* of early death.

For a while, this freedom of Determinations did not appear to be a maladjustment, but rather the jubilation and triumph of modern man. Plastic art, liberated from ancient or religious themes, gave free rein to its freedom, expressing *anything*, starting with Impressionism and the movements that followed it. Scientific knowledge has extended everywhere and lifted the veil from all mysteries, or has claimed to have done so. The technical has created every tool, whether required or not, to the point of approaching, with its fabrication, that strange tool that is the human brain. And literature has done exactly the same, describing all lives, all epochs, all consciousness and depths of consciousness, together with all lost, forgotten or as yet undiscovered worlds.

But whither have we arrived, with this total freedom of the Determinations contained in the model of Being? Certainly not at Being, but rather at the risks of non-Being. This is something which should not necessarily be said in condemnation, but which, in our times, should be said only as a warning that man should give himself. In the plastic arts, after so much has been conveyed (any face can be the subject of a portrait, any corner of nature a landscape, any object on a table a still life), creators no longer want to convey anything that is, but in the best case produce abstract art. In scientific knowledge, where many of the mysteries of the past have been solved, new mysteries have appeared, even, in mathematics, at the most rational level, as with logical paradoxes. In



technology, where again more has been obtained than man, with his sluggish imagination bound to the animal model (bird flight, for example), ever dreamt of in the past, we have got to the stage of an assault on nature and the question of whether a brain with an artificial body or, vice versa, a natural body with an artificial brain would be the *same* man, another man or even a man at all. As far as literature goes, after having given free rein to all messages, we have reached the stage of the absence of any message, and because even the absence of a message was a way of saying something, we have reached the anti-word and the anti-meaning, anti-discourse about anti-nature and anti-man.

The achievement of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is admirably clear in this respect, for, in some way, it is an achievement. The Individual exists; the General exists, under the name of the awaited Godot (God, Gott, or their caricature, master of sheep and goats, the one who does nothing). But there are no longer *Determinations*, and men no longer even want to give themselves any *Determinations*. There is a boycott. A boycott (of nature, of meaning, of communication, of the message, of structuration) can be seen in the various creations of contemporary art. But Beckett's play is the *theorisation* itself of this boycott. "Nothing to be done", says Estragon; but Vladimir, who is always remembering something or wanting something, at least a little conversation or play, adds: "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me... And I resumed the struggle." But there is nothing to be done, except to wait for the arrival of



Godot. All that is left is the empty Individual and the empty General. Between them, there is no longer room for *almost* anything.

Nevertheless, one of them looks at a hat, as if he hoped to find something there, and the other looks at a boot, while Vladimir wonders: "Suppose we repented?" There would be room for repentance. "Repented what?" asks Estragon. "Our being born?" The reflection of the ancient poet comes to mind: "It is better for man not to have been born at all."

"You had something to say to me?" murmurs Estragon. To which Vladimir replies: "I've nothing to say to you". Then, after they have hung and suspended everything else, the first muses aloud: "What about hanging ourselves?" The other replies: "Don't let's do anything. It's safer". They are still left with waiting, the ultimate remainder possible: what will the General say? Vladimir is still curious as to what Godot might tell them. But Estragon, who is even more detached, plunged into forgetfulness and nonsense, asks if they are somehow "tied" to Godot.

While they are still alive, they are tied to a form of generality, which can be named Godot, and through this they are connected directly or indirectly to other people, like Pozzo, who now enters the scene with his slave Lucky, whom he drives by means of a rope. Pozzo has also heard of Godot. "I too would be happy to meet him", he says. Meanwhile, he will hear of nothing that is of a general order, but listens only to his whims as master, which make him jerk Lucky (his body? his tool?) by the rope whenever anything crosses his mind. In the end, he feels some sense of duty towards the two, who had nonetheless consented to converse with



him. "Is there anything I can do, that's what I ask myself, to cheer them up?" wonders Pozzo. He pities them, he feels terrible pity for the boredom of the world. Meanwhile Estragon says: "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!"

Everything is terrible, a part from the fact that they are waiting for Godot, whom one of his emissaries, the boy with stereotypical replies, says is announced for the next day. However, the next day repeats the first. Estragon has forgotten what he did the day before by the same tree, which has now come into leaf, as if to give itself the Determinations the people deny themselves. Estragon has forgotten: "What is there to recognise? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud. And you talk to me about scenery? (*Looking wildly about him*). Look at this muckheap. I've never stirred from it!"

Nor does he budge now. "There's no lack of void", remarks Vladimir of their destiny. And so, all three get down to trying on the boots and, especially, the game of trying combinations of three hats (theirs and the one left by Lucky the day before) on two heads. How many combinations of three hats on two heads can there be? We could go on. There is now no longer any need for commentary, the clowning with the hats says it all, while the return of Pozzo, now blind, together with Lucky, now dumb, also has nothing to add to the hat game except, perhaps, the suggestion that those who had been restless the day before had been far too active. Estragon no longer wants even to keep on breathing. In this complete



human entropy which has set in, “in this immense confusion”, Vladimir decides, “one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come”.

They sit huddled, like foetuses, with their heads between their legs, seemingly reverting to the primordial gestation. At the moment when the boy from the day before finds them, reminding them that Godot will come “tomorrow”, he gives the most appropriate answer to the question: “What does he do, Mr. Godot?": “He does nothing, sir”. One would have to hang oneself in a world in which not even the general has anything to do or prescribe. However, in such a world, the ropes are not strong enough. We are crawling about in the mud, as Estragon says.

It was the same in the *Book of Job*. But there the world did not end, whereas in the world of the contemporary absurd, nothing means anything anymore and any determination is superfluous. Ahoretia is the malady that sends men into the sands of the desert, or sends young people under bridges, which is to say it sends them “nowhere”. Acatolia and atodetia were still capable of making man struggle and affirm himself; catholitis, todetitis and horetitis, with their outbursts or else their calm syndrome of progressive disease, in their turn could lead to great human achievements. Ahoretia, however, is ultimately the malady of in-action. But it will prove creative in the end.

What was striking in all the other spiritual maladies was that *they do not invalidate man*, unlike the maladies of the body or soul, but conferred on him unsuspected powers, even when they seemingly paralyse him, and this will also prove to be true for ahoretia.



The six maladies. In contrast to the common maladies, which are indefinite in number, since they are caused by different agents and various external factors, the maladies of a higher nature, those of the spirit, can only be six, as they reflect the six possible situations of the precariousness of Being.

The first situation is that of not possessing, for an individual reality and its Determinations, something of a general order. Things manifest themselves in all kinds of ways but they really *are* not. *Catholitis*, in humans.

The second is that of not possessing, for Determinations which are caught up in something general, an individual reality. Manifestations can organise themselves in all kinds of ways but they really *are* not. *Todetitis*.

The third ontological situation is that of not having, for something general which has acquired an individual embodiment, appropriate Determinations. Things “happened” in principle, but now they no longer really *are*. *Horetitis*.

The fourth is the opposite of the previous, that of not possessing (or in man of *refusing*) certain Determinations for something individual which has been elevated to the General. There can be an entry into order, but things, lacking determinate manifestations, really *are* not. *Ahoretia*.

The fifth is one of not possessing, or in man of ignoring, an individual reality for a General that has specified itself through varied Determinations. Manifestations possess a definite responsibility, but they possess it without being concentrated within a reality, therefore they really *are* not. *Atodetia*.



The sixth precariousness of Being is that of concentrating (deliberately, in man) within an individual reality Determinations which are in themselves lacking in the certainty of the General. Things fixate themselves, but in something which, lacking the foundation of the General, really *is not*. *Acatolia*.

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PART 3

BEING IN ITSELF

37. Element and becoming

The problem of Being is twofold: firstly, what can be named “being” in things, thus what is the being of a stone, of a tree, of a horse, of a man, of a historical occurrence, of a true utterance; secondly, what can be named Being in itself. Consequently, Being has appeared in two hypostases: as the being of things, becoming, and as second instance Being, element.

Through revelation of the *function* of the ontological model in any immediate reality, Being as the becoming of things, in the case of their entry into order on satisfaction of the model, became apparent; since becoming, in distinction to transformation and other modes of processuality, presupposes the stage of attained order. Now, with the revelation of the *substantiality* of the model, we have obtained secondary Being qua element, defining and describing the elements in their nature, in



their manner of co-existing and of interpenetrating, in the world that they form and, in the end, in the categories upon which they depend.

What becoming and the element have in common is the ontological model. But becoming is not one with the element. At most, we might say that it occurs at the heart of the element.

In the first place, becoming is not element and does not have the element's manner of being because it is not a *medium*. It lacks any content that might envelop things, just as it lacks its own subsistence distinct from things. It represents things in their organised processuality, after their ontological maturation, and we might say of becoming that it is the *factio* subsequent to the *perfectio* of the thing. Such a *factio* has neither measure nor outline in itself. The measure is given by the real that becomes, and all that can be brought by becoming, in the absence of its own horizon, is its development as a reality along the line of the *possibility* in it. (Rather than a combination between being and non-being, as Heidegger would have it, becoming would be the combination between real and possible.) But becoming thereby reveals the intrinsicality of things, without enveloping them.

For, in the second place, since it is not a medium that might change into an internal medium, becoming will not be the intrinsicality and "soul" of things, qua element. It is the *trace* of the Being in things, its corporeal trajectory, or the body that has obtained its soul. Just as it has been possible to say that it is not the soul that is in the body but the body in and within the soul – if they might be viewed as distinct for a moment – likewise,



becoming is always in and within element, the same as living creation is situated in and organisationally transformed into the element of life and mental saying into the element of language. And the elements are those that are distributed without being divided in the things that become, while their becomings are only distribution.

Lastly, becoming is not an element because it cannot receive any of the categories of the element. It is not a “multiple One”, inasmuch as it remains in the non-distinction of processuality, without even being a unitary process. If it is possible to confer upon it the character of corporeality of *Being*, it is to the extent that it bears in it the fulfilment in the real of a model that refers the real beyond itself, the same as the body refers beyond itself. Nothing is one in becoming, nothing is multiple, but rather everything represents a pure continuity, susceptible to break off at any moment or to prolong itself for however long. – Becoming thereby does not have the character of an open totality, the second category of the element. If it is open, it does not succeed in being a totality; if it closes in the already-become and transforms itself into a totality, it is no longer open. In fact, its open character is possible only at the heart of and through an element, without which becoming would close after its first pulsation (how many things and existences do not attempt to enter into becoming, only to fall into mere transformation?), passing into the blind change of states, under the pressure of agents alien to the thing. – Perhaps less than any other category, the limitation that does not limit does not devolve upon becoming. About such a category, it is possible to speak only in the case in



which limitations exist. Becoming, however, does not have and does not establish limitations. And if we distinguish between limit and limitation, then the thing that becomes is limited (bounded from without, and not the bounding from within that would give it a limitation) and through becoming something given at most shifts its limits, but never oversteps them. – An autonomous community or a form of autonomy, with the fourth category of the element, does not at all represent becoming. It might seem the community of the successive states of a thing, but the states are left behind and perish through becoming; it might be the developing autonomy of the thing, but this is beneath heteronomy, specifically beneath the autonomy of the element. – At most, the fifth category of the element, real-possible-necessary, might seem to devolve upon becoming, which had to be understood as a combination of real and possible. But where does necessity occur in becoming? Nothing is predictable in it, as would happen if it were a matter of necessity. When, in the face of a consummated becoming (such as the historical, for example) one tries to see its necessity, one discovers only one of the branches of necessity, in the arborescence of possible becomings, each of them “necessary”, even if unrealised. However interesting an arborescent necessity might be, the margin of freedom in the choice of one of the becomings is too wide to allow a balanced sense of necessity and to apply it to future becoming.

Becoming is thus not an element and rests in subordination to the latter, like the world of bodies to that of souls. And nevertheless – to continue the comparison – to the same extent that the body modifies and



shapes the soul, becoming, in turn, shapes the element at the heart of which it develops and makes it, in its secondary Being, open, perhaps, towards a new and ultimate hypostasis of Being. We shall say that *becoming represents the great ontological promise of the world*, while the element is ontological reality situated within an order.

But precisely because ontology begins by taking into consideration becoming and is resumed with becoming after the description of the elements, it cannot be satisfied with the worn-out idea of becoming as it appears in things and above all with the neutrality or “guiltlessness” of becoming, as Goethe and Nietzsche said unphilosophically. On the contrary, becoming emerges from the neutrality in which are to be found transformation and mere changes of state, as it has a permanent relation to Being and provides forms for its fulfilment and for opening towards it, or on the contrary forms for collapse out of Being and for stagnation before it. This is why becoming refers beyond the immediate real, on the one hand, and is everywhere present in the real, on the other. Even where it does not appear, namely in the ontological precarities (which possess merely transformations but not yet becoming), its manner of being *absent* is that which provides the ontological measure of the real. Therefore, a number of modalities of becoming must be distinguished, in their possible hierarchy, comprising: sub-reality, reality as such and, finally, that which might be named ontological supra-reality.

In fact, the modalities of becoming are themselves planes of reality or ontological modalities of the real. *Prior to becoming* – both broadly, with



the cosmological, and narrowly, with each reality-situation – there can only be: chaos and the ontological precariousities. However, the same ontological model whose fulfilment led to a first form of Being takes account of chaos and precariousities, and in this sense it is possible to say, as above, that even the absence of becoming provides the ontological measure of the world, starting from chaos.

And what indeed may be named chaos – with the claim to saying something about its content as well, not just about its lack of form – is that state of things in which Individualia, Determinations and Generalia are distinct, respectively *disjecta* (“*disjecta membra*”), and in which nowhere do they couple themselves together and thereby take hold in such a way as for becoming to be possible. Chaos would therefore be the content, whether material or spiritual, in which Generalia are not Individualia, Individualia cannot be general, and Determinations provide no Generalia/laws or orders, and nor Individualia/entities. Better still, it might be said that chaos is the state in which becoming or at least its tendency cannot appear. As in the Brownian motion of particles of matter, or as in social revolt that does not attain the stage of revolution, no coupling of terms has taken place.

The real begins to “establish” itself out of chaos only by means of the primordial ontological situation and the coupling of terms, that is, through the *ontological precariousities*. Arising in six ways, as was described in the first part of the book, the precariousities have the positive facet of extracting the world (respectively one or other world, more narrowly) out of chaos, but the negative facet of not elevating it as far as becoming. To the extent that



the precariousness nonetheless can *open* towards becoming, through the integration of the two terms in the couple with a third, they are as many *semina entis*.

The precariousness give *the first ontological level*, which is otherwise the broadest: an immense part of the unconstituted material world (in the inorganic and organic), as well as the vastness of the unfulfilled human world, both individual and social, rest beneath the precariousness. However, with the emergence from beneath the precariousness qua becoming, the levels of reality will fully be modalities of becoming, and namely *the becoming that perishes, then blocked becoming, becoming within becoming and becoming within Being*.

At each superior level, thus with each new modality of becoming, the inferior modalities and levels are preserved, in such a way that, in the ever more consistent world of becoming, there is a large share of as though inconsistent world. For example, at the human level, where becoming within Being appears, not only are the precariousness preserved – with man resting, in general, under one or more of the six maladies of the spirit – but also, even when they enter into order, man can fall from becoming (losing, for example, the sense of the General), he can become frozen in the already-become (blocking himself in the General), he can enter into becoming within becoming (referring the unfulfilled General further). We shall look at in turn these stages of becoming, and thus of reality. And we shall finish by projecting becoming, which is not element, onto the element itself.



Excursus on becoming

Becoming, the most representative concept for modern thought, is also its least analysed. Assimilated with mere the transformation and flow of things, Becoming is usually represented as unitary. However, it has stages.

a) *Becoming that declines*. The first stage is that at which achieved Becoming may not be maintained. The world everywhere provides (or conceals) examples of realities which have entered for a moment into order and thus into Becoming, but which, because they have not inscribed themselves into a medium suitable for subsistence, decline from within it, reverting to ontological precarity or chaos. It is too often given to man not to inscribe his Becoming in any orbit, or to inscribe it in impossible orbits. Henceforward, it can be seen that the satisfied ontological model requires a medium for the development of the becoming obtained, and this medium will be the element adequate to the respective reality. It might be said – from this perspective, according to which secondary Being is that which invests primary Being – that the real that has entered into the becoming that declines has integrated itself into a false element, degrading itself, just as so many substances have disintegrated, unidentified precisely because they have disappeared, or just as some of the living realities established for a moment in the element are extinguished from it. The real has effectively entered into a totality, but not one that is *open*, thereby negating the first category of the genuine element.



b) *The becoming that leads to the already-become.* At a second stage of becoming, the obtained organisation of the real is maintained. It has been said of the organisation of matter and of life that these represent an accident. But once obtained, the accident confirms itself as the rule, in comparison with which non-fulfilment, however extensive, becomes an accident. Nevertheless, it is not merely a metaphor to say that the effort of arriving at becoming might not be extended beyond its attainment. The second level of becoming is thus the becoming that does not decline, but which is transformed into the already-become. At this level, becoming is preserved, but negates its nature as already-become. At first, it negated the fact that it was; now, it negates its manner of being. And at first, only the category of closed totality appeared; now, only the limitation that limits.

Thus, it is sufficient to remove the crust from things – for example, the crust of vegetation and its residues cover the earth – in order to see from what a geological tumult of becoming they have been born. In the mineral or inorganic realm in general, the traces of past becoming are preserved. However, the share of already-become, of “minerality”, stretches much farther into the mineral world (any atom is a blockage of electrons in their orbit) as well as beyond it. In higher forms of life and then rationality, becoming will preserve the already-become even more so: plants, animals and humans have, in effect, apart from the minerality in their bodies, a large share of the already-become in reflexes, instincts, sentiments and even in thought, in all of which it has been possible to read past becoming. Society too lives, to a large extent, beneath the most varied



forms of the already-become. Historic monuments and ruins are the “mineral” part of a society, the same as traditions, wisdom and invariables are the already-become. At a given moment, even, societies tend to reduce everything that is historical becoming to the already-become, under the prestige of sedimentary history. Creative limitations have come into play; but they have ended up as limitations that only limit. Nature and humans hasten, seemingly, to attain Being in this degradation of it, which is the already-become. Becoming, however, is more shaping and more “rational” than its already-become can reveal. When “to be” was manifested through becoming, it gave the latter a wider horizon than “has been”, with its limitation that only limits.

c) *Becoming within becoming.* With this, first instance Being, once obtained, is no longer lost, as in the first modality, and nor is it blocked, as in the second. It maintains itself in its suitable element. Now, the categories of the element are confirmed: the totality of becoming is open, its limitation no longer limits, and the real also satisfies the third category of the element, autonomy. Indeed, the organic now appears, with the autonomous entities of the vegetal and animal realms. (In fact, their autonomy is relative: full autonomy will be that of the element in which examples of their species occur, as they disappear in its service.)

Prior to a becoming within becoming through reproduction and repetition of self, it might seem possible to speak of a becoming within free becoming, without the re-creation of the real according to a stable code. It would be a becoming within itself a becoming, lacking any rigour but



preserving itself as becoming. The most telling example would be provided by *historical* becoming (and a history might also be conceived for nature), in which nothing is necessarily resumed. There is a Course of the World, as it has been named, one that eternally brings about novelties, without constructing anything. – But, either the Course of the World is a vast transformation, and then the order of becoming has not genuinely been obtained, or this Course has a history, with laws and an organised development, and then becoming within further becoming will acquire a meaning only for becoming within Being.

There remains becoming within becoming as a self-re-creation of the real, thus the level of organic reality, and its equivalent in humans in the areas of the spirit. It is a becoming within the *same* becoming repetition being its form of organisation as reproduction. If becoming is still not oriented towards superior forms of existence, it nevertheless does not decline into inferior forms, as in the first two modalities of becoming. And in, in humans, there will be able to occur a becoming within Being as *exit* from the monotonous chain of self-repetition, the submersion in repetition has also in humans sometimes led to the exaltation of the interminable becoming of repetition, which Goethe and Nietzsche understood to substitute Being itself. The things below humans, on the other hand, do not rest under either the joy or the burden of becoming. They *are*, through becoming within becoming, which brings with it the first direct and durable manifestation, in the midst of first instance Being, of the second instance, the element.



This is why the organic has always been a miracle for thought: it directly offered *form*, structure, the idea of real, having become entity and recreating itself as entity. The organism, as a whole that is sure of itself, reducing everything to itself, determined in such a way as to recreate itself through its mere definition (through its code) has been able even to provide the image of the universe itself, or of the “spiritual body” in religions. – But the organic, with its law, which is becoming within becoming, in fact reflects Being at one of its inferior levels, which is visible in the way in which it brings the categories of the element into play. Totality is open with becoming within becoming, but it is linearly open, not on every side, like that of a horizon; the limitation does not limit, but by means of simple repetition; the autonomy of organic creation and of its becoming exists, but it is not one accompanied by freedom; and if something of the final category, namely the possible/real, is fully a category of the organic, it does not also associate its necessity, since the apparition of the real organic is contingent and of the ideal organic also historically contingent. Reason alone brings about *necessary* possible/real and genuinely open categories. But reason will be the consciousness of the becoming within Being.

d) *Becoming within Being*. In becoming within becoming the real was sustained by element, as Being in itself but it was not *one with it* (just as the specimen is not one with the species). On the other hand, the ultimate form of the becoming of the real is Being in itself: the Becoming to which it has elevated itself corresponds with second instance Being, at the heart of



which (and not *beneath* which as in the organic) becoming takes place. Until now, becoming might fail, might freeze, might lead to mere self-repetition, and in affirming Being it always contradicted it, successively: as nothingness, as total blockage, or with becoming within becoming as total fluidity. But Being did not contradict itself: even in nothingness, there are traces of Being (nothingness is the nothingness of *something*); the blockage in the already-become bore the spectral seal of Being; and the fluidity of becoming, as self-repetition, expresses its unrest. How great a part of unrest can there be in Being? If Being cannot be total rest (Parmenides' Being of repose ultimately had to be understood as a material, one might say mineral, sphere), nor can it endlessly remain in unrest, as in the becoming within becoming. Being is, in its correspondence with the real, *becoming* within Being.

In fact, this is perhaps how Being has always been understood: as becoming within the Being of the number, of the principle, of the Idea, for the ancients, as becoming within the Being of the Spirit, for the moderns, for Hegel in particular. Everywhere it is a question of *becoming within the Being of the element*. However, it only appears openly in humans (even if it will not remain within the limits of human existence). For, humans, in contrast to the rest, bring about *consciousness* of the becoming within an element as secondary Being, and the consciousness of the becoming within Being is conscious becoming within Being. With reason thereby understood as consciousness of becoming within Being, there occurs that ontic *increase* which is the criterion for manifestation of Being. Being increases the real at



the heart of the real, just as it has been said that genius increases nature at the heart of nature.

There are four forms of becoming within Being, of which the first three devolve upon man:

The subjective becoming within Being of man as a person

The objective becoming of human communities

The absolute becoming of humanity as a whole

The becoming within Being of humanity along with all the rest.

As soon as the element of reason appears, Being itself appears. For, although reason arose in the element of life, it can double back upon life and upon all the other elements, dominating them and shaping them. If reason is not necessarily only human but also infuses the world with laws to organise it, then the final type of becoming within becoming might also make sense, within a final vision of Being.

Now it is possible to see the place and the way in which secondary Being, the element, encounters primary Being, becoming, making the latter possible. The levels of reality, with or without the primordial level of chaos, were:

Chaos

The ontological precariousities

The becoming that declines

Becoming blocked in the already-become

Becoming within becoming

Becoming within Being.



At the first two levels, the element does not appear, and its *lack* consecrates chaos qua chaos and the precariousities qua precariousities. In the two inceptive forms of becoming, the element is inadequate, or the real does not have the strength to elevate itself to the limitation that *does not* limit the element. Only with the last two types of becoming does the element bring-into-being.

Therefore, in one sense, the *second* instance of Being rests at the beginning. Or better still, the Being of things develops in something (as in the “become what you are” evident in the case of humans). The element makes possible that which makes it possible in the real, element, Idea, species, objective spirit, concrete generality. Ontology must oppose the appearance of things as particular causes of an abstract generality, which is the law, against their emergence (as the sciences of the spirit effectively demonstrate, at least in the case of man) at the heart of a *concrete* generality, which is the element.

Nevertheless, not just any opening towards the General leads to Being. In itself, the General is like a negation of the Individual, and the negation can invalidate or, on the contrary, validate things. As in the Hegelian example, a seed can be “negated” in many ways, but only its negation through cultivation shifts it into the generality of the plant, beneath whose element it is situated. Likewise, any real rests beneath various Generalia, whose particular case it represents: but it “is” not and does not become except through a *particular* concrete general, whose Determinations correspond with its own. So it is with humans: not just any



idea, engagements or opening place them into becoming, but one in particular. However, all that increases a thing is together with it.

Such an augmentation of Being emerges with *becoming* within Being. If physics speaks less to ontology than life and the spirit, it is because it cannot evoke, except within certain limits, *augmentative* becoming. This is why biology and the sciences of the spirit have been able to say more to ontology. Nevertheless, even within the limits of the physical universe, where the first forms of organisation and bringing-into-being appear, first instance Being arises through the “elements” of matter. The world becomes, that is, it is, through that which genuinely is: through element.

38. Becoming as element: becomance

Becoming is not element. But do the elements not also have (or are they not) a form of becoming? Are these tranquil ontological settlements, which are not distinct embodiments either on this side or the other of things, but *are* in a way on this side and the other of them, making possible the coincidence of the transcendent and the transcendental, to remain steadfastly equal to themselves?

If we think of the primordial elements: perhaps energy is not merely conserved but also becomes; perhaps life as a whole becomes; reason, in man together with the reason infused in the real, becomes. Just as transformation was not becoming but becoming was a form of transformation, becoming in its turn is not an element but the element can be a form of becoming. This means that Being in its “corporeal” sense,



becoming, penetrates and activates Being in its “spiritual” sense, the element. But the becoming of the latter must be one of a distinct order, one that is secondary. It no longer takes place within something else, unlike ordinary becoming at the heart of the element, but *within itself*. We shall name it: *becomance*.

The opposition between Being and becoming proved a speculative mistake. The genealogy of becoming was provided by the ontological model itself, and the same model whose fulfilment in things led to becoming was, in its free subsistence, secondary Being, the element. Except that of the three ontological terms, the element actualised and drew together, as a medium, determinations alone, while the Individual (realities) and the General (laws and orders) remained virtual.

It might be thought, for a moment, that the process of becoming in element is the *actualisation* of that which has still remained intrinsic and enveloped in it; that the element is a envelopment that develops, something in consonance with the first arising of Being in things, the closure that opens. But the actualisation and development, in this sense of self-evidentiation in the real, does not genuinely represent the becoming of the element as a whole, but only its creation or simple application in the real. *Becomance* will say more; it regards the element in itself at the level of secondary Being, at which the real is one with the possible.

Any of the modalities of becoming, even the inceptive ones – all the more so the first three types of becoming within Being, those of the human – occurred *through* the Being of the element and, in the last instance, within



it. But with the fourth type of becoming within Being, which is now extracted from the series of the modalities of becoming and named “becomance”, becoming is stationary, it is within itself. Not the actualisation of the element in the real, through the embodiments and laws in which it is objectified, is at stake, but its actualisation in its *own* real/possible. For example, not that which results as individual entities and general orders from life this time, nor only those other forms of embodiment and laws that might henceforward appear at its heart, under changed conditions, but the becoming of life qua life. There are also other forms of energy in the universe, just as there are probably other forms of life and of reason; but they too will be in becomance, that is, in the continual augmentation of the real/possible in them, as in a stationary becoming.

Ultimately, do not the Ideas, the objective spirit, the *arkhai*, the archetypes “become” in their real/possible? If we take an example closer to us than that of the primordial elements (where ultimate uncertainty might leave things beneath a question mark), for example one from the world of the objective spirit in the content of history, then we might directly illustrate what is to be understood by becomance. The subjective spirit in history may become objective spirit, just as we recalled that the genius can become an “element” of a historical world. Homer was accordingly elevated to the level of the objective spirit of the Greek world and the element of European culture. But does Homer still possess any becoming in these worlds? Of course, in the usual sense, he possesses none. And



nevertheless, it cannot be said that he is a museum piece and completely devoid of becoming; he has becomance.

Up until becomance, the higher modality was human becoming within Being. Everything was in fact becoming within Being: becoming within becoming is an unfulfilled becoming within Being (organic nature), just as blocked becoming (inorganic nature) is in its turn unfulfilled becoming within becoming. This does not mean that everything tends towards man, in whom becoming within Being arises, but only that man is situated at a more elevated ontological level than all other realities and which implies all the others.

But nor is the final type of becoming within Being, which we have named becomance, any longer one of man as such, but rather it is of the element of reason along with the rest of the elements. It is rationality with all its elements of a spiritual order, together with the becoming of the element of life, of the element of nature, energy, material. In this sense, it might be said, figuratively, that becomance is the medium of all the elements (they are all enveloped and caught up by it). But in the literal sense, it is their *internal* medium, which causes them, like blood in living creatures, to be permanently beyond them, to be an open totality in accordance with the categories of the element, a limitation that does not limit, autonomous and at the same time real, both possible and necessary. Becomance is the intrinsicality of the element (just as the element in general was the intrinsicality of things); it is the soul of these *animi*, the Being that distributes itself without being divided. It is, as such, the unique element,



and not one among others. When we spoke of secondary Being, that of the elements, we ought to have said: becomance with its dispersions. And as long as becoming occurs within an element, it now has to be said that any becoming is within becomance.

Only now, at the level of becomance, is it possible to pose the problem of *time*, beyond the temporality or temporalities already invoked. It is a stationary flux in the horizon of a stationary becoming, becomance. If the elements were secondary Being, then the unique element, becomance, is Being, which time, at this level, would seem to disclose. But it does not, in reality, disclose it, and attempts to understand Being by means of time, such as that of Heidegger, have failed, perhaps because they were not undertaken along the line of becoming. Being-becoming is much more than time: it is the intrinsic rationality of the elements in its real-possible.

Under a different name than becoming, of course, the intrinsic rationality of the world has been understood in two ways: theologically and dialectically. Theology – in all its versions, even in its philosophical variant, insofar as philosophy has proclaimed a divine principle – has upheld that everything rests beneath the conscious reason of absolute Being. Dialectics, in its turn, whether it be the Platonic with the ultimate Idea of the Good, or whether it be the Hegelian with the Spirit, have spoken of an intrinsic reason, to which human reason can elevate itself methodically in the first case, and which develops methodically of itself in the second case, in Hegel. If it had to choose, then any *philosophical* thinking would prefer the dialectical. But the question is whether dialectics



somehow expresses the course and the duration of Being, *prior* to identifying it.

It is towards this that ontology tends, to the identification of Being. It firstly identifies its spectrum in things, as model, then it sees it as a subsistent model, in the second instance Being of the elements, and finally it sees it in the unique element of becomance. But do the elements in any way enter into becomance as things enter into becoming? Or *are* they always a specific modality of becomance?

We understand this last idea to uphold that all the elements are modalities of the becoming within Being that is becomance. An intrinsic reason, that of the ontological model, causes the element to be in permanent transit towards individual embodiments that are both real and *possible*, on the one hand, and towards real-possible general orders, on the other. It is reason that causes matter, life, and the spirit, understood as elements, to be stationary (compared to the realities beneath them they are as though an unmoving movement, or a “respiration of the unmoving” as Plotinus said), as well as in transformation, as they are situated in becoming within self. Becomance is thus simultaneously the expression of a state and of a process: an expression of rationality, that is, of the “purposefulness”, of the internal code or codes; an expression of the elements’ productive capacity, with the potentialities in them; and lastly, an expression of their Being.

With the Romanian term “devenință” <*becomance*> (perhaps “Werdenheit” in German) are suggested these *four* characters: 1) becoming,



but one that is stationary, since the verbal substantive “devenire” <becoming> has passed into the effective state of the substantive, becomance; 2) rationality, purposefulness, the categorial character; 3) possibility or the real-possible, since “devenință” <becomance>, from “devenire” <becoming> is, through the suffix “ință,” unitary with “putință” <potentiality> from “putere” <potency>; 4) finally, “ființă” <Being> (which is in fact “fientia” from the verb *fieri*, to become) is suggested, through the very formation of the word becoming. In mediaeval terms, it might be said that becomance bears in it, with its four natures: a *ratio fiendi*, of becoming; a *ratio formandi*, of structuration; a *ratio producendi*, of creation; and a *ratio essendi*, of existence.

Is becomance then the last instance of Being?

Having come thus far, the present ontology can no longer speak except *analogously*, after always having attempted a phenomenological (that is, one that was descriptive in essence) and a rational way of speaking. A third instance of Being may be conceived, beyond the element of becomance which is distributed in elements, but one that is *of the same being* as becomance. If becomance is distributed in however many elements and the elements also have however many distributions, then ultimate Being makes no sense except as having a *single distribution*.

This surprising ontological idea must now be brought into play at the very end: namely the idea that ultimate Being has a single replica of itself. Within such an idea, which has not sufficiently been the object of philosophical reflection, the *extreme* condition of the meaning of Being is



comprised. At any stage and instance of it, Being must be distributed, for it is the One that differs from itself. But its privilege, at the supreme instance, would be that of having only a single distribution *which does not differ from itself*.

What is this unique distribution of the One? It is a metaphysical idea that neither Heraclitus nor Plato's *Parmenides* understood how to invoke. It is the idea that the *most elevated multiple One* is that in which the *multiple itself is in fact one*.

But then the one-One and the one-Multiple are in effect of the same Being. And just as that which would necessarily give itself a unique response is neither proven nor true except by means of a response, so too Being is neither proven nor true except through becomance.

Ontology hereby culminates, through a speculative idea which can, up to a point, do justice to the ontologies of the past, after having always criticised them. "Absolute" Being makes sense, only if it is denied as an absolute by means of embodiment in becomance; thus, if it can express all possible embodiments by means of a single embodiment; all the possible elements by means of a single element, just as it has been said that by means of a single human being all humanity can be expressed.

With such an idea, ontology naturally claims a privilege of thought and a concession. The mediaeval ontological argument demanded a privilege, that of maintaining that it could conceive of perfect Being. Hegel arrived also to claim the same privilege, not for the concept of the divine, but rather for the concept pure and simple, naturally the metaphysical and



not just logical concept. Now, however, a privilege can be claimed, which is not at all for the concept of divinity or the metaphysical concept, but for Being, which is to say for the ultimate meaning of Being: that of having a single, indivisible distribution, becomance.

Is it as abusive as in the case of Anselm or Hegel? But it should not be said, as they did, that divine existence or the rationality of the real can be *proven*. All that can be permitted is to say that this is how ultimate Being has, implicitly, always been conceived. This is why the above ontology has attempted nothing more than to bring to light what we think and what *has been* thought, when speculation about Being has been taken to its limit.

Accordingly, if becomance is the core and the truth of Being, then what is left for Being qua Being? It is the One offered to existence through becomance (or through something of its order) and regathered from existence also by becomance (or through something of its order).

39. Becoming, Becomance, Being

There are three levels of Being: firstly, the Being of things, becoming, then the Being of elements, becomance, and finally, Being as Being. If the latter has any rational meaning, its privilege is that of *not* having existence as such, but only possible embodiment. It is as if the spirit of Being, while becomance seemed to us the soul of Being and becoming its body.

With a body, a soul and a spirit of Being, just like the levels of human existence, do we not fall into ontological anthropomorphism? Naturally,



this accusation may be brought, which would then come to annul everything. But we shall dare to say the opposite, that *man is according to the image and the likeness of Being*, and this will mean much more than that the purpose of man is “warden” of Being and something much more organised than that the meaning of Being is to be sought in man, as has been said.

That Being qua Being is distributed similarly says much more than the mediaeval ontological argument, which demanded “existence” only for the supreme being. But it was also mediaeval thought that suggested something more profound about what it named the divine: it said that it is not this that is Being, but rather its love. If by love may speculatively be understood the universal principle of unification, then the idea makes sense. And if by “diffusion” of this principle, as was said then, we may understand its distribution, then we broadly find the ideas given above. But with a clarification: the principle of unification is not simple, like the act of love, but possesses the four natures of becomance, namely those of becoming within self, of intrinsic reason, of limitless potentiality for bringing-into-being and of itself being in effective being.

Such an ontological grounding might seem to fall beneath the accusation that has been brought to all ontologies, that they speak of the existent and the being of the existent, not about Being in itself. But the condemnation has turned back upon itself blocking thinking (Heidegger). It is possible to respond:

Firstly, the problem of ontology is at once the inversion of the theme: what is the Being of the existent. There has also been the theme: what is the



existence of Being. Not only the entire ontology condemned by Heidegger has sought the existence of Being, erring perhaps only when it sought an incorruptible existence for an incorruptible being. Not only the ontological argument has seen in existence the glory of abstract Being. The Presocratics themselves, primarily Parmenides, who has been invoked as exemplary, proclaimed that "Being is".

In the second place, it has to be said that "existence" has too often been conceived at the level of the Individual, as even the Eleatic sphere (or Spinoza's substance) is a total individual or an individual totality. If, on the other hand, existence is taken at the level of Determinations, which is to say the element, accordingly as *internal medium*, as Idea, objective spirit, archetype, then existence approaches the nature of Being, and at the ultimate stage, that of becomance, it is one with Being, or on the same footing as it.

In the third place, insofar as the Aristotelian theme of Being as Being may be rescued from its *aporiai*, an answer or the suggestion of an answer might be given precisely by the ontological model, which is in things but can also be conceived of in itself. In any case, Being as Being would remain a name, if it were not the *opening*, by means of the model, to becomance. Everything in the real is within element, ultimately within becomance, but becomance is within Being, which nevertheless *is* not except through it, through becomance.

It is not the loss and forgetting of the central theme of Being as Being, as has been claimed, that condemns most of the ontologies of the past, but



their access to Being: they sought Being as Being in a *direct*, nor a mediated way. And they sought it as the sublime Being that degrades everything instead of investing everything. And then, when Heidegger attempts to discover the access to Being in itself, he seeks it only in that which *questions* Being, that is, in man, not in the permanent question that is becoming. From things with their closures that open (the first form of question) to becoming, from becoming to element, from element to becomance, there might be a way to access Being in itself.

Is not Being in “itself” because it has made itself becomance? But it is just as inappropriately put to affirm that supreme Being is not supreme because it has been made man. Hegel was able to reply: it is precisely then that the concept verifies its strength, when it is confirmed through that which negates it. But in his turn, Hegel did not obtain and neither sought access to Being and identification of it – as any ontology ought – but rather he merely gave the course and the duration of the Spirit-being,

This is why, we shall say, there has always lacked a *criterion* for Being. How does one identify Being? Where is it to be found? The whole of ontology, from Parmenides to Heidegger, has proven cruel to the real and the world, denying the immediacy of Being or situating it in an elusive immediacy.

It may well be that the entire ontological construct above is null. But something has to remain from it: *the criterion of Being*. Being is manifested – openly and not cryptically – everywhere in that which is distributed without being divided. At any level, Being is expressed through indivisible



distribution: Being as Being is distributed without being divided in a single distribution, becomance; it is distributed without being divided, with becomance, in endless elements; it is distributed without being divided, as element, in endless real becomings.

Being can therefore be identified at *any* level. All that has indivisible distribution in internal media *is*. There is a *verticality* of Being that refers it downwards, from Being as Being to the humblest situations of matter or man. And here, below, greater Being can be threatened in its uniqueness. In Indian mythosophy there is a legend of two brothers who loved each other so much – who thereby obtained an indivisible distribution of the spirit in them that was so perfect – that the gods above felt threatened in their power. Brahma then decided to mould a creature more beautiful than anything men or gods had ever seen before, which he send to earth and which separated the two brothers.

The individual self, through its simple but full union in another individual self, may hold in balance the self of the universe, the heavens, Being as Being. It *is* the being here below. And ontology has vanished from human culture whenever it has turned its head from the world.

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PART THREE : APPENDIX.

“Do Invent Teachers – I Urge You!”, 1986. p. 121

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p. 138



CONSTANTIN NOICA

“Do Invent Teachers – I Urge You!”

Philosopher Constantin Noica addresses some Bucharest secondary school students in April 1986, on a suggestion by one of his good friends who was teaching there.

I am not going to let the emotions and thoughts that this place arouses in me get the better of myself! At my age, I feel I must be harsh on young people, and not just say: **you are so good at what you are doing, just keep it up!** We cannot go on like this. In consequence, do not expect me to praise anyone – for I have only come here to urge you to do more, maybe less harshly than usual, but still, do more.

People are making a habit of complaining these days: some say they have too little, others that they have too much, implying either material possessions or information, or both. Everyone complains: there is too much knowledge, alas! As if we were meant to just race on, never stop, and never understand...



I must begin by telling you plainly that there are two kinds of humans: Subjects and Objects. At your age, you have to understand that what you must strive for is to become *human subjects*. On the other hand, if you are happy with just being human objects, suit yourselves. Reality will make some use of you, I expect. I am here to show those of you who aspire to being human subjects one day how to avoid the huge danger of falling into the traps of this contemporary world, which never ceases testing you, or which – in the words of Mihail Eminescu – can make you see how to avoid the danger of becoming mere human objects.

This will be worth your while. Actually, you are now at the age when you must try. For two generations now, mere young age has lost its importance to almost everyone, if taken independently of other things. Now, why is that? Simply because youthful courage and physical strength are no longer on the cards. It will come as no news to you, I suppose, that, wherever you may look on the globe, if young people manage to assert themselves, it is not by means of their age, but by what they have in their heads. This world has somehow turned against youth as such, and it is looking more and more intently at old values, at all those who live longer than ever before, and who stand to become more and more numerous in our society.

Just try to imagine the society of the future! Thirty years education, thirty years work, and thirty years enjoying old age. Almost half the members of society will be elderly people. In that case, you must find a way to make your youth meaningful, whereas the elderly must do the



same for their old age. When you get there, you will see: one is never ready to grow old, unless one has some sort of preparation for it. Since I belong to the very first generation whose members grow old in large numbers, I have a confession to make: I am disappointed. We do not function well at all, and we do not use this gift of life to the full. Not at all!

I will give you an example of what youth used to mean of old: its bravery, its exploits... It is just an illustration, though – nothing more.



In the 1920s, aviation was just starting. A young pilot risked death fifty percent of the time: accidents were ever so common. Young pilots did not have a lot to learn – just a few skills. The plane cabin was open, protection was more than scanty. Those young people relied on their age above all, and so did the whole world. A mathematics teacher once told me he had been employed by a school for pilots, and he had once asked a candidate how many degrees there are in a circle. The candidate – an aspiring officer – replied: “It depends!” So the teacher drew a circle on the blackboard, and asked again, “How many degrees are there in this circle?”. The candidate took a step back and answered: “About 260 degrees!”. What did the teacher do? He gave him a pass, of course, what could he have done? After all, the boy was about to risk his life, like so many of his generation.





Then, let us think of Christopher Columbus, for instance. He left Europe in hopes of finding one America or another. Just that! Any space expert today knows all about outer space in great detail – things that nobody ever knew before him. He is also bound by a strange sort of umbilical cord to the Earth. We all remember that, when the first people landed on the moon, the second spaceman, who went out after Armstrong, began dancing about (gravity being seven times smaller there, if I am not mistaken). Upon which those down here on the ground, in Pasadena, warned him: “None of that!” He was protected by a strange sort of “umbilical cord” which Columbus never had. Columbus did his best, of course, but he did not even realize he had stumbled upon America – it was Amerigo Vespucci who gave it his name. Did Columbus know what he had almost discovered? He had expected to reach India... We know today what the moon is all about: we know it is enveloped in half a yard of dust, we know our outer world quite well.

You must **KNOW** things. You cannot just rely on your God-given natural abilities any more. You have a huge responsibility, and you must be aware of it. You simply cannot avoid it! Remember the old song of a conscript from Transylvania: “Sweet soldier’s life/ Were it not for the gun!” What kind of soldier would that be, without a gun at all? In the same way, how can a young man be of any consequence today unless he **knows** things? There’s no two ways about it – and I am here in order to tell you



that. It may make you unhappy, but you must get used to it! I am here to urge you: start ploughing steadily while you are young!

How should we look at young people in the West, with all their mistakes? I would call theirs an unstable, misdirected youth. You cannot afford to be the same. In Eastern Europe, all the way from Vienna and further on eastwards, young people are stronger and more able, it so happens. They symbolise a human ideal, an excellent opportunity for the future of an exhausted Europe. Europe was once the salt of the earth, and, hopefully, it may become something akin to that once again.

Being young, taken alone, is worth next to nothing on the job market these days. What are your chances, then? You can only win if you decide to work upon yourselves. Improving our minds means being ready to work. It is up to you, and to you alone, to achieve that. You must find your own way. Do not wait for a ready-made armour to be dumped in your lap: it is your job to make one of your own.

My friend, Mircea Handoca, and myself – he being the toreador, while I am a mere picador here – are planning to publish what Mircea Eliade had been writing between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. That is an eloquent example of what a young Romanian could do as far back as the 1920s! He was not exactly an exemplary student – he failed in French when he was twelve –, but by the age of eighteen he had read all the novels of Honoré de Balzac from cover to cover. Ninety-three books in all. And had already learnt Italian in order to be able to read Giovanni Papini. He looked through a microscope when he was twelve – imagine what the



microscope might have been back in the 1920s! – and he saw something nobody else did. He had the intuition that under that microscope there existed a different world from the one we usually see all of us. As from that day he looked for his real world – in Natural Science, in chemistry, in the East, going into alchemy and the magical. His adventure should stand as an example to all of us. That is indeed the case for you. That is indeed the case for all of us here. And that is indeed the case for a whole Europe, where Giovanni Papini's book *Un Uomo finito (A Man-Finished)* was such a great success. It was a success in spite of the fact that it was a mere collection of "I wish I had...", "I dream I would...", while Eliade's books, his incursions into Natural Science, chemistry, alchemy were unexpectedly high achievements.

At your age now, and at this present stage in your life, being good students in all subjects is not enough. You must first learn to behave in a **morally correct** way. You must also learn to **respect yourselves**. I tend to think that girls might be better at all that than the boys are, precisely because the girls know what self-respect is, they pride themselves in being proud, they think more of themselves, and they feel that the proper answer to any question is the adequate one. They do give the right answers because they really mean to do so. What you must do, then, is find your own place in this almost infinite world of culture, you must find your own way and the right place for your own vocations and inclinations. Indeed, if you do look deep enough into your souls and into your intelligence, you



will inevitably find out that each of you has a sense of his or her own perspective.

Well, that is your only way out! At that point, you can escape such a state, namely this condition of being *objects*. For the simple reason that **this is what you are** all the time you are simply fed knowledge, while you are being taught what we might think you must know in order to survive. All you have to do is simply pay attention.

Attention, Johann Wolfgang Goethe used to say, is a primeval instinct with all creatures. Morally, it means submission to an object, it means respect, tranquillity, and that wisdom which, as the beliefs preserved by our folklore suggest, defeats the devil. It means gentleness. A gentleness that overcomes everything! Attention paid to intellectual matters leads to the knowledge that stays valuable. It is the kind of attention which a Chinese uses when he contemplates the sun for five minutes every single morning. All important minds have made use of such type of attention when they made their discoveries, and were fully aware of what they were doing. You are now at a time in your lives when, as a poem by Johann Wolfgang Goethe puts it quite well... I will do my best to paraphrase it as follows: you look through the grass, you are sure to stumble upon the thistles. But, if you look at a thistle carefully, if you question what you see around yourself, you will notice a miracle of nature. With an inclination for Natural Science, you can begin to understand things regardless of what you were taught at school. I summarize once again: you look at the grass



and see nothing. You look at a thistle and see a miracle. And then you look at all Nature around you, and see the same miracle all over again.

Technology can stir wonder in your heads, too. I once was fascinated looking at a young man who kept staring at a motorbike for five full minutes non stop. He saw something in there: we had no idea what it was. This ability to wonder must be systematically sustained, must necessarily be transferred upon the Word itself.

Are you aware that most people speak empty words when they speak, saying nothing, and still saying it. You notice someone taking someone else's arm. The victim says: "*dă-mi drumul!* (let me go!)" . What does "*dă-mi drumul!* (let me go!)" mean? It simply means "**Do let me (Going My Way)**". Sextil Pușcariu had a story about a trip to the mountains, when he met a shepherd grazing his sheep. He had almost got lost. The old shepherd there said to him: „*ți-oi da drumul!*" (I'll give you your way!"). That was the moment when Sextil Pușcariu, the well known compiler of the *Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, finally understood the meaning of the Romanian phrase *giving the way*. At that moment he visualised the whole story behind that particular phrase: the Romanians, who had been taking refuge in woods for centuries when they were in great danger, would hold as hostages those who had attacked them. They would never harm them at all. They would just not show them the right way out! To **give the way** means, then, to **move away from the state of ignorance**, from the state of not knowing something.



Further, we say in Romanian: „**își bate joc de mine**”. What does this phrase mean? To ‘beat’ the game, in the old days, when the Romanians used to play their own game called *oină* (a kind of handball played with the tennis ball), the players used to say the phrase “to beat the game” aloud. And, by some strange connection, the phrase came to mean (in English) to make fun of, to mock somebody. And the Romanian language is full of other phrases, like the following: “I am in the ninth heaven”. And what does this “ninth heaven” mean? If I were the head of your examination board, and you told me that you were in the ninth heaven, yet could not explain what you meant, I would keep you standing there and you would fail your examination. The ninth heaven, indeed! There were seven heavens for the planets, plus the crystal dome (so Aristotle saw the sky), and the ninth dome was the heaven of fixed stars! Saying you are in the ninth heaven simply means you are using the set of concepts belonging to the language of Aristotle himself!

You must see **the miracles** around you! This is what you must do. The **miracle** of nature, **the miracle** of man, **the miracle** of love. It takes so little to see a **miracle**. It is on our free days, during those hours when we seem to be idle, that we can become aware of miracles. There are miracles hidden all around us. All we have to do is to stretch out our hands and pick them, as it was once done in heaven. All we need is attention, and the ability to detect that particular direction which can lead each of us to seeing the miracle in things and beings. People often turn their full attention to astrology, and they say: I was born under such and such a sign, such and



such a star, it governs my life, and so on. Not at all! The star is right here, so very near us that we can touch it.

A religious Polish tale says a rabbi once dreamt there was a treasure under a tree. He goes there, starts digging, till a man comes and tells him he has dreamt of a rabbi who has a treasure buried in his own house. The rabbi goes home and there stands the treasure – a treasure indeed. This is what it is all about: attention, submission to the object, and – who knows how or where – you will eventually come to realize what you will be doing with your lives in the future.



This vibration can also be superficial: good music or a football match can make you vibrate – why not? (I have seen football fans among the very old!) But... profound vibration is something that changes chaos into cosmos. You are at a time of chaos right now, and you must experience cosmic time, find your true identity, ask your own questions. You must know, for instance, that Latin syntax can really help the programming ability of one who dreams of becoming a computer specialist. An important French computer specialist recently mentioned that young people need to be taught more Latin, because Latin syntax is useful to computer science.

We can postpone the miracle of nature, but that miracle is within us. In high school, you are precisely at that point: as the Ancients say, in the beginning is the mist, then come the clouds, followed by rain, and fair



weather comes last of all. You are surrounded by mist right now; by nebulosity, at best. The best I can wish you is to find the age of true beauty, and, for the sake of this country, it is yourselves who should symbolise what is fair and fine in it!

At one point, Lucian Blaga was the one who made Romanian folklore part and parcel of his profession, which was philosophy. The substance of any culture can only be seen in the topics which are taken up. Our folklore no longer creates, but it always becomes embodied in the works of Vasile Alecsandri, Alecu Russo, Mihail Eminescu, Lucian Blaga. All of them summarized and brought to a focus the lyricism of folk poetry. We have gone through a historical process during which one creator recreated what a vast number of anonymous poets had done without being artistically fully aware of what they were doing. Lucian Blaga is one of the last ones who did that, and I just wonder if any other poet from now on will ever be able to capture the essence of the Romanian phenomenon, its Romanian meanings, symbols, and myths. He should be a poet profoundly in touch with our *mioritic* space. It must all of it, of course, be placed against a historical background.

Another phrase we make use of is “The moon and the stars”. Anthropocentrism has gradually died, of course, but here we are, immersed in a new kind of anthropocentrism: even though we have no idea whether we hold the moon and the stars in the palm of our hand... But meeting Nature and meeting Technology may help a little on the way...





Romanians have a major defect: we all have strong encyclopaedic tendencies! It is not at all enough to know one particular subject, once we know it. We are bound to move outside it, just like Dimitrie Cantemir, Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, Nicolae Iorga or Mircea Eliade. This phenomenon has considerably upset the westerners. The musician George Enescu went to America as a violinist; but then he went on to play the piano; and then he went on to conduct an orchestra; and last of all he performed his own compositions. From America, he went to Germany and did the same.

Do read *O viață de om (A Man's Life)*. Nicolae Iorga rushes through the whole university language studies in one single year, then wins a contest, and becomes a high-school Latin teacher at nineteen. Alexandru Odobescu, who was Minister of Education at the time, gives him a scholarship abroad. Iorga goes, of course. Instead of studying classical languages, he delves into mediaeval studies, and so, becomes a historian. On his way back, he spends time in a few capitals and copies Greek and Latin manuscripts concerning the Romanian Principalities. Once back, he meets Alexandru D. Xenopol, his former teacher, who asks him: "What are you doing now?" "I am planning to write a history of Romania," he retorts. To summarize the Iorga story: from a Latinist he becomes a specialist in mediaeval studies, then a historian of all Romanians, goes to France, lectures there, develops a passion for Byzantium, becomes a Byzantium expert, and ends up writing



a history of Romanian literature... At which particular point in his life, the French, the Germans and the English, well contained within their narrow specializations, become suspicious. The same had happened before with Cantemir and Hașdeu.

How could we not dabble in a multiplicity of subjects when we were always obliged to know so much more, by implication, living, as we do, on the outskirts of the larger cultures? When they were in Paris, Romanian students had a great advantage over everybody else: they could speak two or three languages, while the other young people there could hardly speak their own language adequately. It is an advantage, indeed, but, if you want to qualify as a man of culture, it is a disadvantage as well: all the great specialists from abroad are suspicious of you.

Who are the great figures of our Romanian culture in the 20th century? Constantin Brancusi, Lucian Blaga and Mircea Eliade. The others are only famous to us, to us Romanians, but the three names mentioned above made it into the culture of the world, achieving a status there.



It is an age-old problem: what are the chances of a philosophy expressed in a small language to become known world-wide? I have my doubts about its universal circulation, but we can certainly find some good **philosophising** here! English is the most widely spoken language today, for example. But English can hardly boast of any philosophy at all. It has



encouraged linguistics, the study of languages. English, as a linguistic system, does not really have words – it has syntagms, that is phrases, that is groups of words. There is no depth to it. Come to think of it, Romanian, the same as Slav languages such as – which one should I take up? – Russian, of course, and then the same with German, all of them are languages of real depth. All this comes from the fact that their words have biographies! I wish I could persuade the publisher to reprint my *Rostirea filosofică românească (Philosophy of Romanian Discourse)*; one can find there, in that particular book, some thirty or forty Romanian words that have a long story of their own, not unlike those I have already mentioned.

As an example, do you have any idea what the origin of *cumplit* (dread-ful) is? It comes from *completus*. We find in the *Genesis*: dread (*cumplit*) and darkness. So the human soul and mind see consummation, perfection as *cumplit* (full of dread). And then, when we talk about the being, we have so much more to say. Hamlet can only say **to be or not to be**, but we also have *va fi fiind, a fost să fie, n-a fost să fie, va fi să fie* (all untranslatable)... The Romanian language may not give us extensive reciprocal access to all culture, but it certainly connects us to all great philosophy!

As far as philosophy goes, we should smile and admit we know nothing at all. We have a certain **knowledge** – I can, for instance, recite Aristotle's ten and Kant's twelve categories by heart. That is as far as I can go! It is a field that requires knowledge, no doubt – so that one can make associations, see meanings (which Romanians also call *noime*, from the



Greek *noema*, which means ‘knowledge that is certain’. We have turned that particular Greek word into *noimă*, which signifies: ‘utterly uncertain’, ‘is it true?’, ‘is it not true?’, ‘does it mean anything?’, ‘what exactly could it mean?’).

We need highly accurate tools in philosophy. One can do nothing as a philosopher without Greek – for the roots of ancient philosophy; and Latin – for the roots of modern philosophy; and without mathematics. We have made some progress, of course, but we are afflicted with what I have called “strong encyclopaedic tendencies”, which unfortunately often turn into amateurism. Unless one is Dimitrie Cantemir or Mircea Eliade, who took special precautions against it, one runs the risk of being an amateur.

I almost resent young people who disregard these requirements. The more uncertain the results, the more schooling one needs. A physicist was awarded the Nobel Prize at the age of thirty, because he had hit upon something of great relevance. But in the case of a philosopher that would be unheard of, because in the Humanities one needs a lot more inspiration and a lot more research.

The golden period for a researcher in the humanities is between sixty and seventy. Studies take much longer in the humanities; at sixty one is free at last. We are free from our own expectations, and we can then set out. At that point, we do precisely what we can, what we know how to do!

In art, there is always someone interposed between creator and consumer: he is the literary historian, the specialist in the history of art, etc. I find it hard to deal with a term such as art **consumer**. We must all be



good enough to be researchers! A consumer enjoys a concert conducted by Sergiu Celibidache or eating a piece of grilled meat in exactly the same way... Which is not at all the way art should be understood!

I am dissatisfied with younger poets of today, because they no longer learn their trade. All artists must learn: a painter is bound know chemistry and geometry, a musician should study harmony and counterpoint... But poets no longer have any idea of the art of prosody: they rely on no more than an anaemic lyrical impulse.

Most artists complain that society never understands or helps them. The idea is that each artist should imagine he is alone on a deserted island; he should do nothing but practise his chosen art – with the clear aim of reaching other people, of course. But the fact is that, before reaching other people, or being listened to, or before managing to help them even, one must reach the gods of knowledge and of culture.

One does not learn from teachers, unfortunately! They are all good teachers, and I am happy to see that Romanian high-school teachers are again as good as they used to be before the war. High-school teachers are far more important than university professors, when it comes to education proper. However, do not give in to your teachers, however seductive their teaching may be. Focus on yourselves, learn from art albums, from books, from nature, from music. Everywhere you look, there is learning to be pursued. Everywhere you look, you find something worthy of your attention. Nature can be a teacher, second-hand bookshops can be a



teacher. Be true students and **invent teachers, invent your own teachers, I urge you to do so.**

Translated into English by George Sandulescu and Lidia Vianu.



The Observer Weekend Review, Sunday, May 18, 1961.



SIX POLITICAL PRISONERS: left, Constatin Noica, the philosopher, now in a Rumanian gaol: centre, the Rev. Ashton Jones, friend of the Negroes, recently in gaol in the United States; right, Agostino Neto, Angolan poet and doctor, held without trial by the Portugese. Their cases are described in the article below.





Left, Archbishop Beran of Prague, held in custody by the Czechs; centre, Toni Ambatielos, the Greek Communist and trade unionist prisoner, whose wife is English; right, Cardinal Mindszenty, Primate of Hungary, formerly a prisoner and now a political refugee trapped in the United States Embassy, Budapest.

ON BOTH SIDES of the Iron Curtain, thousands of men and women are being held in gaol without trial because their political or religious views differ from those of their Governments. Peter Benenson, a London lawyer, conceived the idea of a world campaign, APPEAL FOR AMNESTY, 1961, to urge Governments to release these people or at least give them a fair trial. The campaign opens to-day, and "The Observer" is glad to offer it a platform.



The Forgotten Prisoners

OPEN your newspaper any day of the week and you will find a report from somewhere in the world of someone being imprisoned, tortured or executed because his opinions or religion are unacceptable to his government. There are several million such people in prison – by no means all of them behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains – and their numbers are growing. The newspaper reader feels a sickening sense of impotence. Yet if these feelings of disgust all over the world could be united into common action, something effective could be done.

In 1945 the founder members of the United Nations approved the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#): –

Article 18.-

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion: this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in company with others in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.



Article 19.-

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression: this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

There is at present no sure way of finding out how many countries permit their citizens to enjoy these two fundamental freedoms. What matters is not the rights that exist on paper in the Constitution, but whether they can be exercised and enforced in practice. No government, for instance, is at greater pains to emphasize its constitutional guarantees than the Spanish, but it fails to apply them.

There is a growing tendency all over the world to disguise the real grounds upon which "non-conformists" are imprisoned. In Spain, students who circulate leaflets calling for the right to hold discussions on current affairs are charged with "military rebellion." In Hungary, Catholic priests who have tried to keep their choir schools open have been charged with "homosexuality." These cover-up charges indicate that governments are by no means insensitive to the pressure of outside opinion. And when world opinion is concentrated on one weak spot, it can sometimes succeed in making a government relent. For instance, the Hungarian poet Tibor Dery was recently released after the formation of "Tibor Dery committees" in many countries; and Professor Tierno Galvan and his literary friends were



acquitted in Spain this March, after the arrival of some distinguished foreign observers.

London office to gather facts

The important thing is to mobilise public opinion quickly, and widely, before a government is caught up in the vicious spiral caused by its own repression, and is faced with impending civil war. By then the situation will have become too desperate for the government to make concessions. The force of opinion, to be effective, should be broadly based, international, non-sectarian and all-party. Campaigns in favour of freedom brought by one country, or party, against another, often achieve nothing but an intensification of persecution.

That is why we have started **Appeal for Amnesty, 1961**. The **campaign, which opens to-day**, is the result of an initiative by a group of lawyers, writers and publishers in **London**, who share the underlying conviction expressed by Voltaire: "I detest your views, but am prepared to die for your right to express them." We have set up an office in London to collect information about the names, numbers, and conditions of what we have decided to call "**Prisoners of Conscience**;" and we define them thus:

"Any person who is physically restrained (by imprisonment or otherwise) from expressing (in any form of words or symbols) any



opinion which he honestly holds and which does not advocate or condone personal violence."

We also exclude those people who have conspired with a foreign government to overthrow their own. Our office will from time to time hold Press conferences to focus attention on Prisoners of Conscience selected impartially from different parts of the world. And it will provide factual information to any group, existing or new, in any part of the world, which decides to join in a special effort in favour of freedom of opinion or religion.

In October a Penguin Special called "Persecution 1961" will be published as part of our Amnesty campaign. In it are stories of nine men and women from different parts of the world, of varying political and religious outlook, who have been suffering imprisonment for expressing their opinions. None of them is a professional politician; all of them are professional people. The opinions which have brought them to prison are the common coinage of argument in free society.

Poet flogged in front of family



One story is of the revolting brutality with which Angola's leading poet, Agostino Neto, was treated before the present disturbances there broke out. Dr. Neto was one of the five African doctors in Angola. His efforts to improve the health services for his fellow Africans were unacceptable to the Portuguese. In June last year the Political Police marches into his house, had him flogged in front of his family and then dragged away. He has since been in the Cape Verde Isles without charge or trial.

From Rumania, we shall print the story of **Constantin Noica, the philosopher, who was sentenced to twenty-five years' imprisonment because, while "rusticated," his friends and pupils continued to visit him, to listen to his talk on philosophy and literature.** The book will also tell of the Spanish lawyer, Antonio Amat, who tried to build a coalition of democratic groups, and has been in trial since November, 1958; and of two white men persecuted by their own race for preaching that coloured races should have equal rights - Ashton Jones, the sixty-five-year-old minister, who last year was repeatedly beaten-up and three times imprisoned in Louisiana and Texas for doing what the Freedom Riders are now doing in Alabama; and Patrick Duncan, the son of a former South African Governor-General, who, after three stays in prison, has just been served with an order forbidding him from attending or addressing any meeting for five years.

'Find out who is in gaol'



CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE PRESS
EDITURA PENTRU LITERATURĂ CONTEMPORANĂ

The technique of publicising the personal stories of a number of prisoners of contrasting politics is a new one. It has been adopted to avoid the fate of previous amnesty campaigns, which so often have become more concerned with publicising the political views of the imprisoned than with humanitarian purposes.

How can we discover the state of freedom in the world to-day? The American philosopher, John Dewey, once said, "If you want to establish some conception of a society, go find out who is in gaol." This is hard advice to follow, because there are few governments which welcome inquiries about the number of Prisoners of Conscience they hold in prison. But another test of freedom one can apply is whether the Press is allowed to criticise the government. Even many democratic governments are surprisingly sensitive to Press criticism. In France, General de Gaulle has intensified newspaper seizures, a policy he inherited from the Fourth Republic. In Britain and the United States occasional attempts are made to draw the sting of Press criticism by the technique of taking editors into confidence about a "security secret," as in the Blake spy case.

Within the British Commonwealth, the Government of Ceylon has launched an attack on the Press, and is threatening to take the whole industry under public control. In Pakistan the Press is at the mercy of the Martial Law administration. In Ghana, the opposition Press operates under great disabilities. In South Africa, which leaves the Commonwealth on Wednesday, the government is planning further legislation to censor



publications. Outside the Commonwealth, Press freedom is especially in peril in Indonesia, the Arab World, and Latin American countries such as Cuba. In the Communist world, and in Spain and Portugal, Press criticism of the Government is rarely tolerated.

Churchill's dictum on democracy

Another test of freedom is whether the government permits a political opposition. The post-war years have seen the spread of "personal regimes" across Asia and Africa. Wherever an opposition party is prevented from putting up candidates, or from verifying election results, much more than its own future is at stake. Multi-party elections may be cumbersome in practice, and the risk of coalitions makes for unstable government; but no other way has yet been found to guarantee freedom to minorities or safety to non-conformists. Whatever truth there may be in the old remark that democracy does not fit well with emergent nationalism, we should also remember Winston Churchill's dictum: "Democracy is a damned bad system of government, but nobody has thought of a better."

A fourth test of freedom is, whether those accused of offences against the State receive a speedy and public trial before an impartial court: whether they are allowed to call witnesses, and whether their lawyer is able to present the defence in the way he thinks best. In recent years there has been a regrettable trend in some of those countries that take pride in



possessing an independent judiciary: by declaring a state of emergency and taking their opponents into "preventative detention," governments have side-stepped the need to make and prove criminal charges. At the other extreme there is the enthusiasm in Soviet countries to set up institutions which, though called courts, are really nothing of the sort. The so-called "comradely courts" in the U.S.S.R., which have the power to deal with "parasites," are in essence little more than departments of the Ministry of Labour, shifting "square pegs" to empty holes in Siberia. In China the transmigration of labour by an allegedly judicial process is on a gigantic scale.

The most rapid way of bringing relief to Prisoners of Conscience is publicity, especially publicity among their fellow-citizens. With the pressure of emergent nationalism and the tensions of the Cold War, there are bound to be situations where governments are led to take emergency measures to protect their existence. It is vital that public opinion should insist that these measures should not be excessive, nor prolonged after the moment of danger. If the emergency is to last a long time, then a government should be induced to allow its opponents out of prison, to seek asylum abroad.



Frontier control more efficient

Although there are no statistics, it is likely that recent years have seen a steady decrease in the number of people reaching asylum. This is not so much due to the unwillingness of other countries to offer shelter, as to the greatly increased efficiency of frontier control, which to-day makes it harder for people to get away. Attempts to reach agreement on a workable international convention on asylum at the United Nations have dragged on for many years with little result.

There is also the problem of labour restrictions on immigrants in many countries. So long as work is not available in "host" countries, the right of asylum is largely empty. Appeal for Amnesty, 1961, aims to help towards providing suitable employment for political and religious refugees. It would be good if in each "host" country a central employment office for these people could be set up with the co-operation of the employers' federations, the trade unions and the Ministry of Labour.

In Britain there are many firms willing to give out translation and correspondence work to refugees, but no machinery to link supply with demand. Those regimes that refuse to allow their nationals to seek asylum on the ground that they go abroad only to conspire, might be less reluctant if they knew that, on arrival, the refugees would not be kicking their feet in idle frustration.

The members of the Council of Europe have agreed a Convention of Human Rights, and set up a commission to secure its enforcement. Some



countries have accorded to their citizens the right to approach the commission individually. But some, including Britain, have refused to accept the jurisdiction of the commission over individual complaints, and France has refused to ratify the Convention at all. Public opinion should insist on the establishment of effective supra-national machinery not only in Europe but on similar lines in other continents.

This is an especially suitable year for an Amnesty Campaign. It is the centenary of President Lincoln's inauguration, and of the beginning of the Civil War which ended with the liberation of the American slaves; it is also the centenary of the decree that emancipated the Russian serfs. A hundred years ago Mr. Gladstone's budget swept away the oppressive duties on newsprint and so enlarged the range and freedom of the Press; 1861 marked the end of the tyranny of King "Bomba" of Naples, and the creation of a united Italy; it was also the year of the death of Lacordaire, the French Dominican opponent of Bourbon and Orleanist oppression.

The success of the 1961 Amnesty Campaign depends on how sharply and powerfully it is possible to rally public opinion. It depends, too, upon the campaign being all-embracing in its composition, international in character and politically impartial in direction. Any group is welcome to take part which is prepared to condemn persecution regardless of where it occurs (who is responsible or what are the ideas suppressed). How much can be achieved when men and women of good will unite was shown during World Refugee Year. Inevitably most of the action called for by Appeal for Amnesty, 1961, can only be taken by governments. But



experience shows that in matters such as these governments are prepared to follow only where public opinion leads. Pressure of opinion a hundred years ago brought about the emancipation of the slaves. It is now for man to insist upon the same **freedom for his mind** as he has won for his body.

PETER BENENSON



Appeal for Amnesty, 1961: THE AIMS.

1. To work impartially for the release of those **imprisoned for their opinions.**
2. To seek for them a fair and public trial.
3. To enlarge the Right of Asylum and help political refugees to find work.
4. To urge effective international machinery to guarantee **freedom of opinion.**

To these ends, an office has been set up in London to collect and publish information about Prisoners of Conscience all over the world. The first Press Conference of the campaign will be held to-morrow, where speakers will include three M.P.s, John Foster, Q.C. (Con.), F. Elwyn Jones, Q.C. (Lab.), and Jeremy Thorpe (Lib.).

All offers of help and information should be sent to: Appeal for Amnesty, 1, Mitre Court Buildings, Temple, E.C.4.

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<http://www.hrweb.org/ai/observer.html>

