

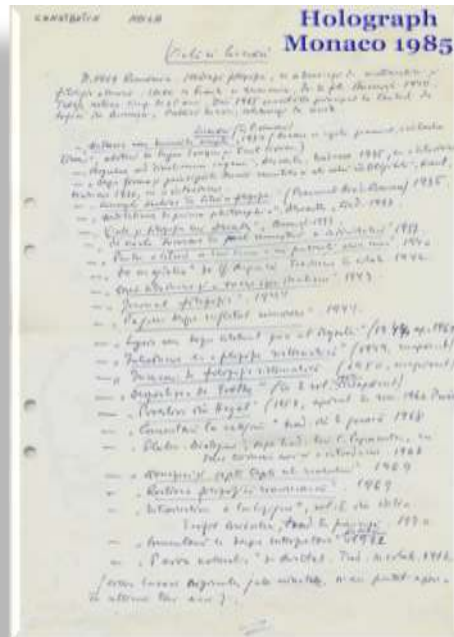
NOICA ANTHOLOGY

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

Edited by C. George Sandulescu

1. Doing Time...

Atitudinea Noica, de C. George Sandulescu
Pray for Brother Alexander, translated by Wendy Muston.
The Time of Reality and the Time of the Logos.



EDITURA PENTRU LITERATURĂ CONTEMPORANĂ
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CONSTANTIN NOICA. **A Three-Volume Anthology.**

Volume One: **Doing Time...**

- The Noica Stance and Smile, by C. George Sandulescu** p. 4
Pray for Brother Alexander. 1994 p. 38
The Time of Reality and the Time of the Logos. 1971. p. 138
Temps du réel et temps du Logos. 1971. p. 158

Volume Two: **General Philosophy. (forthcoming in 2011)**

- a. *Twenty-Seven Levels of the Real.* 1969. short extracts.
b. *Breaking up with Goethe.* 1976. short extracts.
c. *Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit.* 1978. short extracts.
d. *Narrations on Man.*(after Hegel). 1980. short extracts.
e. *Three Introductions to Becoming in-to Being.* 1984. short extracts.

Volume Three: **Philosophy of Romanian Discourse. (forthcoming)**

- a. *Theophile Corydaleu.* short extracts.
b. *Romanian Discourse.* short extracts.
c. *Eminescu.* short extracts.

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1. Doing Time...

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C. GEORGE SANDULESCU

Atitudinea NOICA

*To Julia, and Jemima, and James, and
Kevin... and to the Noica's who know
less Romanian.
Or not at all.*

Revenirea la lume.

[1]

Care a fost prima uşă la care a bătut Noica când – adus cu maşina miliţiştilor până la Piaţa Armenească – i s-a dat drumu' din puşcărie? Vă întreb eu: care a fost prima uşă? A fost la uşa mea!

În parte din întâmplare. Dar nu tocmai. Eu eram pe vremea aceea un prăpădit de asistent la universitate. La engleză!

Deschid uşa. Îngheţ! Îl recunosc pe Noica. De ani de zile înfundase închisoarea... Îl văd. Şi mi-e frică. Dacă era o capcană întinsă mie, ce fac?



Dar Noica nu mă recunoaște. Natural: nu mă mai văzuse de aproape douăzeci de ani. Nu e de mirare – mai întâi domiciliu forțat la Câmpulung, iar apoi lungi ani de închisoare...

Noica întreabă: “Îl caut pe Titan Vlădescu!” Răsuflu ușurat. Îi răspund oarecum liniștit: “Unchiu’ Titan a fost mutat cu un etaj mai jos, la etaju’ ntâi!” Aș fi vrut să adaog ‘nene Dinule!’, căci avea un profil de neuitat. Dar nu o fac. Din lașitate oare?

Vrusesem să-i spun: ‘a fost mutat cu forța’. Dar n-am îndrăznit. Unchiu’ Titan locuise în apartamentul 5 la etajul II. Acum era în apartamentul 3 la etajul I. Exact dedesubt. Noi ar fi trebuit să fi locuit în apartamentul 6 la etajul II, în partea opusă, de la bun început. Dar niciodată nu a fost așa în timpul vieții tatălui meu. Mama și cu mine abia dacă reușisem să intrăm acolo, când plecase cineva în Israel. Abia intrați, vedem că o familie de la Ambasada Sovietică e băgată în restul apartamentului. Așa că vă închipuiți că eram în bună companie când bătuse Noica la ușă.

Auzindu-mi răspunsul, Noica zâmbeste trist, dar tot nu mă recunoaște. Nu face decât să-mi strângă mâna și pornește încet pe scări în jos.

Era cu puțin înainte de prânz, mi se pare. Mama era în bucătărie: alerg la ea și-i strig în fugă – “E nenea Dinu aici!” – și dau goană pe scări la etajul de dedesubt pe scara din dos. Dar soneria de la intrarea unchiului Titan sunase deja. Și Titan era la ușa din față cu mult înainte ca eu să fi putut să-i spun că era Nenea Dinu cel care suna... și că venea la el.

*





Eram trei în familie: dar Dinu era numai unul singur. Eu eram doar Den. Cel de-al treilea era Dan, de pe Pictor Luchian. Avocatul. Fost avocat.

Avocatul Dan Noica, cel pomenit în romanul *Cișmigiu & Co.* de Grigore Băjenaru, cel care pusese paltonul în capul unui profesor, ca să-i tragă o bătaie, locuia pe strada Pictor Luchian la jumătatea drumului între Blocul Vlădescu din străzile Popa Soare și Pictor Romano și Blocul Noica de la Armenească.

Eram toți “foști”. Eu mă puteam chiar mândri că eram unul dintre “foști” de pe la treisprezece sau paisprezece ani...

*





Peste câteva minute, mă strigă unchiu' Titan; eu eram aproape chiar acolo. Mă ia înăuntru, prin bucătărie firește, și mă prezintă lui Noica: "băiatu'Elenii! A crescut mare. Nu l-ai văzut demult—e acum la universtate, și vorbește engleză mai bine decât Wendy." Aproape că n'aveam nume. Aveam doar un nume explicativ. Din fragedă copilărie. Lucru care mă turbura peste măsură. Așa mă prezenta și bunica mea Alexandrina—chiar în același apartament—invitatelor ei la ceai: tanti Sevasti, tanti Matilda, tanti Clemența, tanti Tudosica... Erau multe în Neamul Noica. Umpleau odaia. Vreau să zic, salonul. Iar ele mă întrebau și ele: 'Da' pe mine cum mă cheamă?' Și eu nu știam niciodată cum le cheamă. Că erau multe. Și arătau cam la fel. Așa că răspundeam simplu: 'Noica!' Iar ele râdeau, pline de aprobare... Și tot mă întorceam în cămăruța mea de la parter aproape plângând: supărat pe mine însumi că nu țineam minte cum le cheamă exact pe fiecare. Dar Comuniștii au avut grijă de asta, și curând a trebuit să uit cu totul că o familie Noica ar fi existat vreodată, dacă vroiam să mai rămân pe la școală. Mare familie de "foști". Deveniți criminali?





*

Noica venise la noi de-a dreptul, că nu avea unde pune capu' – în toată România cât de mare era ea. La ieșirea din închisoare. Știa el ce face: unchiu' Titan, întreprinzător ca'ntotdeauna, l-a instalat cât se poate mai confortabil în camera servitoarei. (Un viitor biograf va măsoara poate dimensiunile acelei camere; în care am locuit și eu o vreme în timpul divorțului meu.) La Paris "les chambres de bonne" se află toate situate la mansardă. La București, ele erau însă plasate lângă bucătărie. Cu intrare separată.

Și a stat nenea Dinu la noi – adică la Titan Vlădescu, adică în Blocul Vlădescu (totul naționalizat firește), luni de zile... Ba chiar ani. Nu-mi mai aduc bine aminte. Și se plăcea mult acolo, în cămăruța lui de servanță. (Eu cunoscusem multe servitoare care se perindaseră pe acolo, în vremea bunicii mele, în tot timpul războiului.)



*

Serile – după nouă – ne întâlneam la Titan și puneam țara la cale. Titan cunoștea toate știrile externe pe dinafară din *Scânteia* noastră cea de toate zilele (ale cărei localuri formează astăzi birourile lui Liiceanu). Noica, la rândul lui, vedea aspectele filosofico-abstracte ale problemelor. Iar eu ascultam cu sfințenie posturile de radio engleze, urmând tradiția creată de tatăl meu, care nu ascultase decât Radio Londra în engleză (că doar făcuse școala la un Colegiu American).

*



Numele de botez aveau un loc important în Neamul Noica. Seara de seară, ne întâlneam astfel **cei trei Constantin** – numiți la fel din aceeași voință familială: Constantin Vlădescu gazda, Constantin Noica binevenitul oaspete, și Constantin Săndulescu nepotul de la etajul de sus (numele de George, dat mie de tatăl meu, nu am început, din motive ascunse, să-l folosesc decât o dată ajuns în Occident).

Uitându-mă la ei discutând cu aprindere evenimentele zilei, versurile pe care le tot morfoleam de mic copil, fără să le găsesc vreun sens, îmi reveneau des în minte –

**Împăratu' Constantin,
Boier vechi și domn creștin...**



De ce oare? până mi-am dat seama: cam așa arăta Noica, și nici Titan nu era prea departe; o imagine despre Brâncoveanu, aplicată aerului relativ aristocratic pe care îl degajau unii dintre Noiculești. Și privindu-l pe Dinu, îmi revenea înaintea ochilor imaginea tatălui său Grigore discutând frontul de Răsărit cu tatăl meu. *So very much alike, and yet so different – the two Noica's – father & son!*

Foarte des se adăuga nouă un al patrulea, o victimă a Primului Război Mondial, 'Fratele Iacov', cum îi spunea Titan, care rămăsese patologic lipsit de inițiativă personală de pe urma prizonieratului la Nemți.

Cum Bunica nu dăduse decât nume biblice celor doisprezece copii ai ei – șase băieți și șase fete – el era Iacov Vlădescu, vecin de cameră de bonă cu Noica, pe același palier. Marea lui calitate era că tăcea tot timpul. Dar și era tot timpul ocupat. Era bun meșteșugar, și săritor; un suflet mare, care l-a ajutat mult pe Noica în viața de zi cu zi, destul de grea în anii aceia. Mai ales că Noica avea întotdeauna nevoie de mulți secretari în jurul lui, și știa bine cum să-i recruteze și pentru ce anume corvezi; cum nu avea telefon, trimetea mesaje. Apoi trimetea, de pildă, multe din cărțile sau articolele sale, o dată publicate, cu dedicație scrisă de mâna lui, la multe adrese profesionale, cum era obiceiul pe vremuri.

În acest mediu familial a venit Noica, atunci când l-au lăsat liber. L-am îmbrățișat cu toții cu mult entuziasm: îi sorbeam cuvintele de parcă rostea Predica de pe Muntele Athos. Și ... Aramis, adăugam eu, cam malițios, în mintea mea.

Într-o seară ne aduce vestea că va lucra la *Centrul de Logică*, pe atunci condus de Academicianul Atanase Joja. Și unde se afla acest *Centru de Logică*? La doi pași de noi, pe strada Negustori, dincolo de strada Paleologu. Simbolic vorbind, această casă ca oricare alta de pe strada Negustori, se afla la jumătatea distanței dintre Blocul Vlădescu și locuința în care și-a petrecut copilăria **Mircea Eliade**, foarte aproape de Bulevardul Domniței.

O slujbă acolo a fost o rațiune în plus pentru Noica să continue să locuiască la noi. După aceea s-a mutat într-un apartament, care i s-a dat la celălalt capăt al Bucureștiului, nu departe de Spitalul Central.



*



O **altă coincidență** mai mult decât simbolică: **unde**, exact, se află Blocul Vlădescu, la care a venit Noica când i s-a dat drumu'? **Nimeni poate nu ar putea face legătura afară de mine**: locul favorit de joc al copilăriei mele era un teren viran care se afla în fața casei noastre chiar la jumătatea străzii Pictor Romano. Un teren care era bine îngădit, și în care nimeni nu intra afară de mine. Mulți copaci, ierburi înalte, bălării, gănganii de tot felul. Ideal pentru mine—copil solitar, singuratic, dar îndeajuns de curajos, care se juca întotdeauna de unul singur. Mi s-a spus că maidanul aparține unor călugări. A rămas teren viran chiar și în anii când a locuit Noica la noi. Terminasem Universitatea și tot nu aflasem ce fusese acolo. Ei bine, **coincidența coincidențelor** (filosofie în care credea atât de mult James Joyce): acolo fusese *Ospiciul Șuțu*, unde și-a dat sufletul Eminescu. (O placă comemorativă se află undeva pe strada Plantelor, mai precis la numărul nouă, chiar alături de locuința fiicei scriitorului Ioan Slavici. Numai că pe placă ospiciul nu se mai cheamă 'Șuțu'. Ce păcat!)





* Noica a ieşit la lumină după lungul surghiun arbitrar-totalitar chiar **pe locul unde a murit Eminescu**: la familia sa Noica-Vlădescu.

* Eminescu, la rândul său, a venit, **prin Caietele sale**, chiar **pe locul unde a murit Noica**. La Păltiniş... Deci la Sibiu.





* Mai vrei încă o coincidență? Cartierul **Mântuleasa** era legat de **copilăria și tinerețea** lui Mircea **Eliade**. Citiți cu atenție romanul *Pe Strada Mântuleasa*, scris prin 1956 (personaj principal fiind Ana Pauker), care se petrece chiar acolo. Citiți și primul volum al *Memoriilor* sale intitulat *Les Promesses de l'équinoxe 1907-1937*, unde Eliade scrie că locuia pe strada Melodiei...

* **Sibiul** este, la fel, de legat de **copilăria și tinerețea** lui Emil Cioran (care descrie atât de pregnant cum își petrecea insomniile umblând în sus și'n jos pe toate străzile orașului, nopți întregi). Chiar și prin fața bibliotecii unde zace azi sărmanul nostru Eminescu...în caiet manuscris + Ediție Princeps + Electronic Disc. În versiune neexpurgată.

* Mă minunez eu singur de miracolul joycean—coincidența—care îți îngăduie să descoperi singur-singurel atâtea lucruri.

* **Trei prieteni** la cataramă au fost ei vreme de mai bine de o jumătate de veac—**Noica, Eliade, Cioran**. De prin anii douăzeci până prin anii optzeci... **Trei Crai de Curtea Veche**. Doi munteni și un ardelean... un cadru aproape mioritic... care duce și la căsăpirea lor vremelnică... atunci și acum. T.S. Eliot, într-un poem despre *The Magi*, îi va defini pe cei trei într-un fel pe care-l putem numi chiar profetic. *Crai de Răsărit* ar



putea spune francezii, mai cunoscători în ale Bibliei. Doi din ei poate mai franțuziți, dar al treilea rămas românaș sadea până la sfârșitul sfârșitului.

Cei Trei Crai de la Răsărit pot fi reuniți—firește—prin multe fire vizibile. Prietenia lor strânsă de-a lungul anilor, de pildă. Dar și pe baza coincidențelor obiective de mai sus, prin multe **fire cu totul invizibile cu ochiul liber al criticului convențional**.

* Noica e acum pe internet, mulțumită Universității București.

* Pe când și **Caietele Eminescu pe internet?** Că doar probleme de copyright nu știu să mai existe...



Vizita lui NOICA la Monaco. [2]

'A shady place?' Never!

Monaco si Monte Carlo a fost penultima etapă în cursul ultimei vizite pe care Dinu Noica a facut-o în străinătate în toamna anului 1985.

A sosit cu trenul de la Paris; l-am întâmpinat cu mașina la gară. A stat aproape o săptămână la mine acasă. Apoi, într-o frumoasă duminică dimineață de septembrie am pornit împreună, tot cu mașina, spre *Tourette-sur-Loup, dans l'arrière pays niçois*, unde eram invitați la masă de Marianne Parlier și de soțul ei—celebrul avocat parizian Parlier—în căsuța pe care o aveau ei, *résidence secondaire*, chiar în centrul orașelului. O întâlnisem pe Marianne Parlier de mai multe ori, caci mama mea Elena Săndulescu o cunoștea foarte bine: doar fuseseră, se pare, la școală o vreme împreună.

La Monte Carlo, după cum bine știe Simina Noica de la Paris, (care mă vizitase deja împreună cu fosta mea studentă Anca Ghica, chiar în timpul vieții mamei mele) eu locuiesc chiar la malul Mării Mediterane. În fiecare dimineață, Dinu Noica se instala pe balcon și, își lua cu tot tabietul micul dejun, purtând inevitabilele ghetre. Iar apoi, împreună, puneam țara la cale. Ce vom face în ziua care începea, și în zilele următoare. Dar de fapt, ne pierdeam în discuții, țintuiți pe scaune o bună bucată de timp.





Discutam toate subiectele imaginabile, căci trebuie sa spun că rar am întâlnit pe cineva mai dispus sa discute **absolut orice subiect...**, dar lucrul care mă impresiona cel mai mult la el era **curiozitatea** demnă de un învățăcel de geniu: nu era deloc îngâmfat sau înfumurat, îl interesa absolut tot, și era dispus să discute despre câte-n lună și în soare. Lucru foarte de seamă: nu zicea niciodată că nu se pricepe. Sau că nu a citit. Sau că nu-și mai aduce aminte. Cum fac mult prea mulți în ziua de azi. Deduc că nu îl lăsa profilul său moral de filosof cu renume.

Dar, în cursul lungilor discuții, apărea dintr'odată filosoful, ridicându-se de dindărătul acestei atitudini generale: cu forța unui neașteptat șuvoi de munte – apăsarea verdictul Noica. Îmi pare rău și acum că nu am înregistrat pe bandă de magnetofon conversațiile noastre, căci aveam mai multe aparate prin casă.

Dar nu m-a lasat inima sa o fac: bucuria revederii era mult prea mare, nu numai ca membri ai aceleiași familii, dar și ca intelectuali înclinați puternic spre filosofia limbii, a limbajului, și a lingvisticii, și în general spre soarta lumii întregi, atât în



prezent, cât și în viitor. Aveam multe de discutat, uneori, e adevărat, în contradictoriu... E straniu că nu-mi mai amintesc deloc punctele de dezacord... Modul său de a argumenta avea întotdeauna o putere extraordinară, tocmai prin vădita sa sinceritate.



Am discutat însă împreună un lucru important, care trebuie menționat aici și anume, **ideea unei Antologii Noica în limba engleză**. (Ideea unei antologii în limba română fusese inițial lansată de Simina Noica la Paris.) Argumentul meu însă pentru o Antologie în limba engleză fost faptul că lucrările publicate într-o limbă mică într-o țară mică au foarte puține șanse de succes pe o scară mai largă, oricare ar fi valoarea lor intrinsecă. Noica a fost întru totul de acord cu mine, și m-a întrebat ce am putea face. Cum eu tocmai în acel moment istoric porneam *The Princess Grace Library Publication Programme* (pe care l-am susținut vreo 10-15 ani), i-am propus lui Noica ceva asemănător. Vizitând apoi localurile instituției *Princess Grace Library*, i-am explicat mai pe îndelete ce aveam de gând acolo. Dar în ce-l privește pe el, am văzut atunci necesitatea unei **Liste de Lucrări**. I-am spus că în vederea unei Antologii, ar fi nevoie de o listă cât mai completă... Iar Noica, tânăr entusiast ca întotdeauna, s-a așezat la masa de



pe balcon, și mi-a furnizat această listă... din memorie ... și imediat. Pe nepusă masă și... din memorie. (O reproducem pe coperta acestor volume, ca având un caracter de simbol inițial, și document de bază a ceea încercăm să facem azi aici.) A venit deci astăzi vremea să scoatem acest proiect utopic din raft, și cu sprijinul Universității din București să vedem ce putem face. Subliniez aici că Simina Noica a creat ea însăși acest volum manuscris în română încă din timpul vieții lui Noica, în 1986. Și mi l-a trimes, plocon, mie – sute de pagini. (A zăcut deci în rafturile mele până acum, când Universitatea din București își exprimă interesul...)

*



Dar subiectul cel mai frecvent de discutie era întocmirea, pas cu pas, a programului de vizite, la Monaco bineînțeles, în cursul relativ scurtei sale șederi aici. Am făcut mai multe tururi, mai ales cu mașina, spre a-i arăta locurile... Casinoul cel Vechi, Casinoul American, Teatrul, Biblioteca Princess Grace, pe care o fondasem împreună cu scriitorul englez Anthony Burgess la moartea Prințesei, și unde eram Director, dar și persoanele și personalitățile care s-au întâmplat să fie disponibile atunci. Aș fi vrut mult să găsesc un localnic care să cunoască bine limba locului și care să-i



vorbească lui Noica pe limba monegască... dar am constatat atunci că nu cunoșteam pe absolut niciunul. Nimeni nu vorbea curent limba monegască – singura limbă latină cu două infinitive distincte, tocmai ca și limba română... Ba da! Cunoșteam unul – un casier de la Banca mea. Mergem deci acolo cu mari speranțe: dar casierul meu nu era în ziua aceea de serviciu.

Așa că l-am dus să-i viziteze pe nemți. Pe Doamna Christel Renkl, mare proprietară de fabrici în Germania, care locuia la etajul 18 al clădirii deumită *The Sun Tower*. *Elle avait une vue imprenable de la Méditerranée...*



Sâmbătă la prânz, am dat eu o masă pe balcon la care l-am invitat pe Paul Dimitriu, scriitor și gazetar, care știam sigur că fusese implicat destul de mult în procesul atât de răsunător pe care îl avusese Noica. Când a intrat pe ușă, Dimitriu s-a plecat până în pământ – de parcă l-ar fi salutat pe Împăratul Hailé Selassié în persoană! Dar Dinu nu s-a bucurat prea mult la vederea lui. Abia după ce am citit cartea de documente intitulată *Prigoana* am înțeles mult mai bine de ce.

Acest prânz îl gătisem și pregătisem eu însumi – friptură de berbec la cuptor, însoțită de tot ce trebuie înainte și după... Toată lumea a fost mulțumită, și discuțiile au fost spontane și intense. Dar nici aici nu-mi aduc aminte mare lucru din ce s-a discutat... în parte și pentru că, fiind gazdă, tot alergam în sus și-n jos, să-i servesc cum nu se



poate mai bine pe mosafirii mei. (Dimitriu însă a scris după aceea un articol despre această întâlnire, care a fost descoperit și republicat ulterior de Nicolae Noica în foarte folositoarea sa carte intitulată *Neamul Noica*, la paginile 159-161)

Prigoana: Documente ale procesului C. Noica, C. Pillat, etc. Colecția FID Fapte, Idei, Documente. Editura Vremea, București 1996. 558 pp.

Paul Dimitriu. *Exerciții de memorie*. București 2002.



Întâlnirea de la Marianne Parlier.

[3]

Cei Trei Crai de la Răsărit erau răspândiți în lumea întreagă – în trei Continente diferite. Unul din ei era în Continentul European – la Paris. Altul era pe Continentul American – la Chicago. Și ultimul, cel mai bogat pe vremuri, dar și cel mai hărțuit de viață – la București, în Continentul Comunist.

Dar la începutul lui septembrie 1985, la exact un an după moartea mamei mele, și la exact doi ani după moartea Prințesei Grace de Monaco, pentru care lucrasem cu devotament în ultimii ani ai vieții sale, Doamna Marianne Parlier reușește să-i strângă la un loc pe toți trei în locuința ei pariziană, nu departe de *Palais de l'Élysée*. Numele de Marianne Parlier este bine cunoscut tuturor celor care au urmărit Procesul Noica, întrucât se vorbește mult despre ea acolo.

Au participat la întâlnire: Domnul și Doamna Parlier, împreună cu fiul lor, Madame Jacqueline de Romilly, *membre de l'Académie Française*, cât și fiica lui Noica – Alex, domiciliată în Cornwall. În plus, Simina Noica, colaboratoare apropiată a Doamnei Jacqueline de Romilly în domeniul studiilor clasice, era și ea acolo. Eu eram deasemenea prezent în calitate de invitat personal al lui Constantin Noica.

Doamna Parlier, care fusese la școală pe vremuri împreună cu mama mea, era peste tot, ocupându-se de toate; în ochii mei de nechemat la Paris, o asociază într-un fel vag și nedeslușit cu actrița de origine română de pe vremuri – *Elvire Popesco*.

Singurul care ar fi trebuit să fie prezent, dar nu era, era *Ionesco*... care de undeva, din apropiere, trebuie că se gândea fără doar și poate la noi.

Era însă, într-un fel straniu, o oarecare tensiune în aer. Voi încerca să explic cum și ce. Sau poate că prezența lui Eliade, Cioran și Noica, la un loc, era mult prea mult pentru nervii mei, deja întinși la maximum.



Și unde mai pui că lucrurile încep prost. Cum este obiceiul meu de-o viață, sosesc devreme. Îl găsesc deja pe Mircea Eliade, supărat și pus pe ceartă la intrare. Firește, împreună cu doamna. Dar aveam de urcat trei etaje, iar ascensorul nu funcționa. Era supărat de fapt pentru că nu i se spusese la telefon că ascensorul era stricat, că n-ar fi venit. Încerc să-l liniștesc și să-l conving să urce pe scări. Se vedea de departe că nu se simțea bine: avea un braț în ghips, afecțiune cronică. Văzându-l atât de iritabil, dau fuga sus pe scări, trei etaje, să anunț că Eliade a venit și că vrea să se întoarcă acasă din pricina liftului defect. Ajung sus, sun la ușă, și Noica deschide ușa chiar el. Îi spun în grabă ce s-a întâmplat, și că Mircea Eliade refuză să urce scara. Noica anunță înăuntru ce s-a întâmplat, și apoi se pregătește să coboare scările. Dar Eliade, între timp, se hotărâse să urce pe scări, și tocmai se apropia de etajul trei urcând încet... Nu-l văzusem niciodată atât de slăbit, și atât de ursuz.

Noica îl vede și îl așteaptă pe pragul ușii de la intrarea apartamentului. Doi prieteni atât de buni se întâlnesc după atâta vreme... Dar Noica ține neapărat să schimbe atmosfera, și îi spune cu jovialitatea lui proverbială, și cu un mare zâmbet pe buze: "Auzi ce zice nepotu-meu – că nu mai ești în stare să urci niște scări!"

Eu o cam bag pe mâneacă, și mă simt vinovat. N-am vrut să spun eu asta. Prietenie, prietenie, dar expresia lui Noica e cam prea tare... cred eu.

Preocupat de suferința sa, Eliade nu răspunde mare lucru, și intră. Încerc să-i țin companie mai toată seara, ca să cârlesc, chipurile, o greșeală pe care nici n-o făcusem. Rămân singur cu Eliade într-un colț: nu discutăm decât politică. Situația în Europa în septembrie 1985 este mai mult decât urâtă. Mai ales acum *à la rentrée politique*... Eliade e ursuz, suferind, puțin comunicativ. Dar când aduc vorba de pericolul rusesc, dintrodată prinde viață și devine combativ: "Rușii nu vor îndrăzni niciodată să intre-n România," îmi spune el cu vehemență. Și pe bună dreptate. Era dovada clară și limpede că intuia situația politică din toată Europa cu multă precizie: văzuse deja că, mult mai târziu – în 1989 – situația României nu-i va interesa nici pe ruși, nici pe americani cât de puțin. 'Să se descurce cum pot!' se pare că spuneau fiecare încă de prin 1985. Și românii s-au descurcat cum au putut. Singura țară din Răsăritul comunist unde trecerea s-a făcut cu



ceva vărsare de sânge. Cam prea multă vărsare de sânge... comparativ vorbind.

Dar în casa doamnei Parlier plutea deja un aer de îngrijorare, chiar de dramă. Aveam momente când simțeam că Noica însuși intuia că e poate ultima sa vizită în Occident. Cum? Dovada? A fost singura dată când nu a trecut în Anglia: fiica sa Alex – ‘Dina’, cum îi ziceam din copilărie – a venit special la Paris spre a-l întâlni.

Săptămâni mai târziu, soția sa, Wendy Muston, bună traducătoare, îmi telefonează din Anglia spre a mă întreba pe mine: “Ce-a vrut Dinu să spună când mi-a declarat atât de convins că ‘Anglia nu-l interesează întrucât ‘este o țară fără filosofi’?”. Mă simt obligat să-i răspund la obiect, și să-i spun “Mai toți filosofii englezi *worth the notice* sunt materialişti până’n măduva oaselor!” Wendy acceptă argumentul meu, nu prea convinsă.

*





Singura persoană în foarte bună dispoziție, și volubilă tot timpul era, paradoxal, Emil Cioran. Radia de sănătate, mult mai mult decât ceilalți. Era plin de dinamism și optimism în conversație. Răsuna de parcă *tout était pour le mieux dans le meilleurs des mondes possibles*.

Cum eu îl cunoșteam cel mai puțin bine dintre toți trei, rămăsesem întrucâtva surprins la disonanța pe care, foarte voit, o crea.

Erau în aer tensiuni negative. Dar erau în aer și tensiuni pozitive. Eu, dezorientat, încercam să înțeleg. Dar trebuie să spun că nu pricepeam prea mare lucru...

Eliade, din ce în ce mai ursuz, stă cât stă, și declară dintr-o dată că nu va rămâne la masa de seara pentru care fusese special invitat. Eu încerc să-l conving—cu argumente românești—dar, din nou, fără mare succes.

Când toată lumea se scoală să se îndrepte spre sufragerie, Mircea Eliade spune un larevedere, voit rapid, tuturor, și după oarecare tergiversări, se îndreaptă spre ieșire și dispare, împreună cu doamna (fiica dirijorului român, stabilit în America, Ionel Perlea).

Mircea Eliade va muri la șase luni după aceea, de Sf. Gheorghe 1986 la Chicago.

Constantin Noica va muri și el la ceva mai bine de doi ani după aceea, de Sf.



Niculae 1987.

Numai Emil Cioran va continua să trăiască. Va fi martor la prăbușirea rapidă a Comunismului de peste tot, în afară de China și Cuba. Și va vizita chiar România cu mare pompă.

*



Nu noi suntem stăpânii limbii,
ci limba e stăpâna noastră.

Eminescu

Dar la masă, în seara cu pricina, discuția e susținută pe subiecte mai mult sau mai puțin anodine. Se cam simte absența voită a lui Mircea Eliade. Până când, nu prea știu cum, eu aduc vorba despre limba engleză!

Este momentul când Cioran intră în acțiune. Ne ține aproape o micro-prelegere improvizată despre marile limbi europene; nu știam că Cioran cunoaște engleza atât de bine în toate subtilitățile ei, mai ales la meta-nivel. Astfel, se apucă să discute, captând atenția tuturor, asemănarea dinamic-diachronică a limbii engleze și a limbii române.

Noica ascultă.

Cioran vorbește nu cu morga teoreticianului steril, ci cu entuziasmul



meșteșugarului întreprinzător – mândru de uneltele sale. Pe care le studiază și le îngrijește cu deosebită meticulozitate. Nu pe degeaba e considerat el **cel mai mare stilist** al limbii franceze. De către francezi înșiși.

Rezună simplu și rapid prelegeri care ar putea dura un an de zile. Limbile franceză și italiană se trag dintr-o singură sursă, pe care o cunoaștem cu toți cum nu se poate de bine. Dar româna și engleza au în comun următorul lucru: se trag în mod echilibrat din **două surse distincte**: engleza are o temelie germanică pe care s-a construit latin în mai toate domeniile. Româna are un fundament latin cu multiple eșafodaje slave... toată biserica, toată agricultura, alfabetul până aproape de Eminescu... Deci, ambele sunt 'bi', în termeni mai pornografici.

Mă uimește nu numai simplitatea expunerii, ci și exactitatea și conciziunea ei. Câtă dreptate are! Și cu ce entuziasm își susține teza!

Avântul lui reprezintă viața însăși: nici vorbă de moarte aici... iar pesimism ioc. Cioran rămâne plin de admirație față de bogăția de sinonime în română și engleză! *The famous synonymous doublets*, care abundă mai ales în traducerea făcută de Ralph Robinson *Utopiei* lui Thomas More. Aud din nou meșteșugarul vorbind. (Dar îmi răsună în urechi și Noica, care îmi șoptise cu câteva zile înainte, cam răutăcios – "Cioran? I-ai citit o carte...le-ai citit pe toate!")

Descoperisem eu oare **secretul sănătății lui Cioran**? Ori de câte ori vorbește despre limbă devine alt om: devine un incorigibil optimist. Noica ascultă, oarecum absent. Iar eu bolborosesc inutil că, tehnic vorbind, româna este o limbă mică, prea mică, iar engleza este cu totul atotputernică pe lumea asta. Afirmatie care nu pare să-i placă nici lui Cioran și nici lui Noica. Am spus, e drept, o platitudine cu totul adevărată, dar de o absurditate demnă de umorul lui *Ionesco* și al cântărețelor sale.

Alexandra Noica-Wilson. *Treziți-vă, suntem liberi*. Humanitas 2007. **paginile 55, 56 și 57.**



Post Scriptum despre Nobel. [4]

În 1975, mă aflu la Paris pentru a participa și a ține o comunicare la Simposiul Internațional James Joyce, care avea loc la Sorbonne.

Cu acest prilej vizitez mai mulți români, cât și pe profesorul Alain Guillerrou de la Sorbona – profesor de română, care tocmai tradusese unul din romanele lui Mircea Eliade în limba franceză; dacă țin bine minte, romanul era *Pădurea interzisă*.

Cu acest prilej, iau legătura și cu Sanda Stolojan, nepoata romancierului Duiliu Zamfirescu, care se hotărăște să dea o recepție cu prilejul vizitei mele la Paris. La această recepție, eu, venind de la Stockholm și fiind bun prieten cu Bibliotecarul Academiei Suedeze, cer, în calitate mea de cetățean suedez de origine română, comunității române de la Paris să îl propună pe Mircea Eliade pentru Premiul Nobel de Literatură. Încerc să le explic ce procedură exactă ar trebui să urmeze.

Seara decurge pașnic. La sfârșitul recepției mi se comunică însă, relativ oficial și dogmatic de către Monica Lovinescu, că **ar fi mult mai bine** dacă eu însumi l-aș propune (în loc de Eliade!) pe Constantin Noica, din partea oricărei universități mi-ar place. Răspund sec că Noica nu a scris literatură, ci filosofie. Iar un Premiu Nobel pentru Filosofie nu există.

Așa s-a încheiat discuția. Eu am reținut 'reținerea' lor față de Mircea Eliade, reținere pe care eu nu o împărtășeam. Cred că mulți alți români nu aveau nici ei o asemenea reținere.



Nici Noica și nici Eliade nu au fost niciodată propuși pentru Premiul Nobel. (Ă propoz: știți cumva de ce nu a luat James Joyce niciodată Premiul Nobel? E simplu: pentru că **nimeni nu s-a gândit să-l propună**. Academia Nobel nu are dreptul să propună singură!)

Să mulțumim deci doamnei Herta Müller, cât și Germaniei întregite, pentru absolut **primul Premiu Nobel** pentru Literatură pe care **l-a obținut România** *par pays interposé*.

Eliade ar fi fost poate singurul care l-ar fi meritat, cronologic vorbind, înaintea ei. (În 1956, Eliade însuși, după spusele sale mie, îl propusese pe poetul Lucian Blaga... și unde mai pui că i-am aflat și de ce Blaga fusese dat atât de brusc la o parte.)



APPENDIX about Genealogy. [5]

Sunt într-un fel cum nu se poate mai uimit de propria mea desoperire: în **descendența filosofului Constantin Noica** am cunoscut personal și cum nu se poate mai bine **cinci generații**, astfel:

1. **PRIMA GENERATIE:** I-am cunoscut bine pe părinții filosofului—pe tatăl său **Grigore** și pe mama sa **Clemența**. În tot timpul războiului, Grigore Noica (1880 - 1946) avea discuții politice aprinse cu tatăl meu, situându-se pe o poziție relativ opusă, tatăl meu ținând întodeauna cu englezii și americanii. Iar Tanti Clemența (1886-1964), născută Cassassovici, locuia după moartea soțului ei, nu departe de Statuia Rosetti, pe strada Vasile Lascăr; o vizitam din când în când, copil fiind, la cererea uneia sau alteia din mătușile mele Vlădescu, cu care locuiam împreună în blocul Vlădescu, din strada Pictor Romano, naționalizat printre primele clădiri din București.





2. **A DOUA GENERATIE**: Am cunoscut-o foarte bine pe soția sa **Wendy Muston (1907-1996)** (traducătoarea în engleză a cărții *Pray for Brother Alexander*), scrisă de Noica chiar în închisoare. O întâlneam adeseori la Bush House, sediul londonez al postului B.B.C., pe la cinci după amiază, când termina orele de lucru ca traducătoare la Secția Română. Era foarte mândră de colegii ei: astfel, mi l-a prezentat pe marele lingvist al postului de radio B.B.C., și anume pe omul care cunoștea 60 – *I repeat*, șazeci de limbi străine: este omul care a scris cartea *Compendium of the World's Languages*, publicată de Routledge în 1995, care are 670 pagini. Omul se cheama George L. CAMPBELL. *He had been Supervisor of the B.B.C. World Service for no end of years during the Second World War. He was the only man whose job and knowledge I ever envied in my life. The others I could hopefully match... Not him. And I must add that Wendy was equally proud of his acquaintance. (Campbell was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records during the 1980s as one of the world's greatest living linguists; he could speak and write fluently in at least 44 languages, and had a working knowledge of about 20 others.)*

Wendy era foarte religioasă, și foarte singură. După pensionarea de la B.B.C., locuia *in a village called Tolleshunt D'Arcy*, foarte aproape de singura mănăstire ortodoxă din Anglia. De ce? La această mănăstire se afla fiul ei Răzvan, pe cale de a deveni Fratele Rafail. Între 1977 și 1980, pe vremea când țineam câteva cursuri la Universitatea din Essex, care se afla la Colchester, mă întâlneam adesea cu Wendy: sau venea și ea la



Colchester, și atunci luam masa de prânz pe undeva prin oraș împreună; sau o vizitam eu la Tolleshunt D'Arcy. Mi-aduc aminte că uneori dormeam la ea un week-end întreg cu scopul de a merge la biserică duminica dimineață. Luam trenul îndărăt spre Londra vreo două stații, iar fiul ei ne întâmpina la gară cu mașina mănăstirii pe care o conducea singur. Asistam la slujbă, luam masa cu călugării, iar după aceea aveam o conversație cu starețul.



În cursul întâlnirilor noastre Wendy îmi vorbea des despre cartea pe care vroia să o facă, și anume *Pray for Brother Alexander*. Avea toate scrisorile care compuneau cartea, dar îi lipsea una sau două. Și se tot văita pe această temă. Eu încercam să o consolez, dar nu prea știam nici eu bine cum. Nu îmi mai amintesc deloc unde și când a fost publicată versiunea românească. Dar știu că o preocupa o versiune engleză, la care chiar se pare că lucra pe atunci. Nu cunosc soție care să-și fi apărat soțul cu mai mult curaj, forță și inventivitate. Prin poziția ei la Secția Română de la B.B.C. a avut prilejul să cunoască multe personalități britanice însemnate, și intervențiile ei în sprijinul lui Dinu au fost nenumărate, și deosebit de eficace. În conversațiile ei de zi cu zi cu mine, ea nici nu vorbea despre altceva. Cartea pe care o publicăm aici, intitulată *Pray for Brother Alexander* are, în consecință, o istorie deosebit de dramatică și de sugestivă care a acoperit mai bine de un sfert de secol. Ba mai mult: scrisorile publicate azi aici datează de o jumătate de veac, formând parte integrantă dintr-o stranie istorie a intelectualului român.





3. **A TREIA GENERATIE:** Noica a avut cu Wendy doi copii—un băiat și o fată. I-am cunoscut bine pe amândoi: **Răzvan** (later become fratele Rafail) n. 1942 și **Dina** (sau Alex; cu numele complet Alexandra Noica-Wilson) n. 1944. Fratele Rafail este acum călugăr foarte vestit în munții din România, iar sora sa Alex / Dina locuiește în Cornwall, nu departe de Torquay, împreună cu soțul ei, și doi dintre cei patru copii ai săi. Cele doua fete ale sale se află una la Bath și cealaltă la Bristol. Alexandra Noica-Wilson a publicat recent o carte de memorii la editura Humanitas.

4. **A PATRA GENERATIE:** Din copiii fetei lui Noica—Anita, Julia, Brian și Angela—o cunosc cât se poate de bine pe **Julia**, pe care am întâlnit-o destul de des, fie în Anglia, mai ales la Londra, (unde locuia chiar lângă Olympia, în prima ei căsătorie), fie prin vizitele pe care mi le-a făcut ea la Monaco, ultima din ele fiind chiar acum câteva săptămâni, în septembrie 2010, împreună cu întreaga familie.



5. **A CINCEA GENERATIE:** Iar fata ei **Jemima** –Mimi, cum îi spun eu mai pe românește –e născută de Sf. Constantin și Elena –la 21 mai, anul 2000 –ziua numelui, atât a mea, cât și a filosofului... Mimi are astăzi un frate, James Gibbs, născut în 2007, deci mult mai mic decât ea, din a doua căsătorie a Juliei cu Kevin Gibbs, avocat englez. Toată familia este stabilită la Bristol.

Dacă ne gândim că Grigore Noica s-a născut la **1880**, a cincea generație –Jemina –s-a născut în anul 2000, iar James chiar în **2007**, cele cinci generații pe care le-am cunoscut personal acoperă exact **127 de ani...** o raritate poate în existența unui singur om ca mine.... când te gândești că totul în această discuție se concentrează firește în jurul unei singure figuri centrale – **filosoful Noica**. O personalitate atât de complexă încât vom avea întotdeauna nevoie să știm din ce în ce mai multe lucruri despre el.



Dar ne-am cam depărtat de la subiectul inițial care era ATITUDINEA NOICA. Iat-o pe scurt:

Zâmbetul, de care vorbea Mitropolitul Antonie al Transilvaniei, la înmormântarea lui Noica.



Dragostea nemărginită **pentru idei:**

BUCURIA DE A GÂNDI.

Dinamismul spiritual excepțional.

O combativitate amabilă și cordială în orice discuție, presărată pe ici pe colo cu o ironie caldă și înțeleghătoare.

Dar mai presus de orice, o pasionată curiozitate de adolescent în absolut toate domeniile, și toată viața. Cu el puteai discuta politică sau matematică, artă sau lingvistică... aproape în același timp. Și nu da niciodată vreun semn de oboseală sau plictiseală sau uitare.

În consecință, **definiția filosofiei**, dată de filosoful Noica – chiar în ultima propoziție a tezei sale de doctorat din 1940 – este **“considerarea vieții spiritului din perspectiva morții sale.”**

Căci era obsedat de o **posibilă moarte a spiritului.**

Împotriva căreia lupta din toate puterile...

Să-l ajutăm și noi!

Prin **Atitudinea Noica** înțeleg deci în ultimă instanță un **uomo universalis** al Civilizației Românești... Să nu uităm că el însuși îl numea pe Eminescu **“omul deplin** al culturii românești.”

Această atracție spre universalitate – interpretată cu totul greșit de către Comuniști



drept **cosmopolitism capitalist** — a fost pricina de seamă pentru care a trebuit să fie și el 'tras pe roată', suferind una și alta, precum atât de mulți dintre predecesorii săi.



Nicolae Șt. Noica, *Neamul Noica*, Editura Cadmos, București 2009. 186 pagini.
Alexandra Noica-Wilson. *Treziți-vă, Suntem liberi*. Amintiri. Editura Humanitas, București 2007. 164 pagini.

ends



A Biography written by Noica's Wife Wendy, as Published in the Book *Pray for Brother Alexander*.

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.

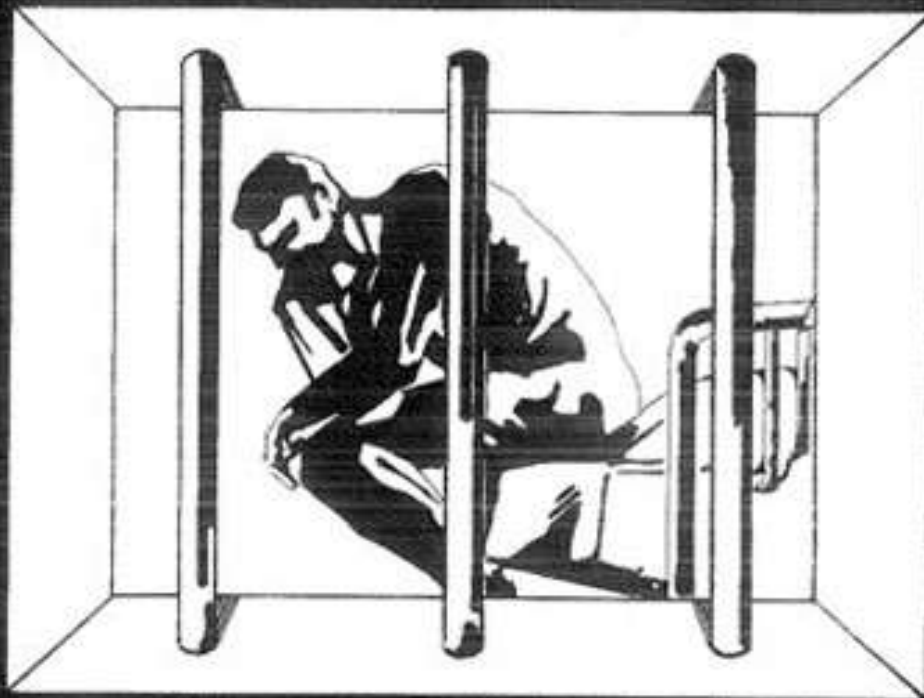
He died on December 4th 1987 at Sibiu, but it was only after the fall of the communist regime in Romania that his philosophical ideas, his books and articles were published in Romania, causing a tremendous impact on the Romanian people, most of whom had sadly been unaware of the existence of such a brilliant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



*“This is a book of a man who never
hated his enemies...”*

***PRAY FOR
BROTHER ALEXANDER***

by Constantin Noica



TRANSLATED BY KATHERINE MUSTON



FOREWORD OF THE TRANSLATOR.

The following chapters came to me from Romania in Noica's own hand writing, one by one, by post. They came at intervals of about a month or so beginning from the end of 1972. Everything that came through the Iron Curtain, surface or airmail, was censored. This was quite obvious from the clumsy way in which the envelopes were re-sealed after having been opened. The first three or four chapters arrived normally like any other letter - taking about two weeks on the way, or longer. I always confirmed the receipt of the "letter" by a short card. Then followed a rather long interval after which I got a card from Noica asking whether I had received his "letter" of such and such a date. I wrote back that I had not and we both assumed that it had been retained by the Romanian Censure. So he would send the same chapter all over again and ... it arrived. This happened about three times... only chapter 13 never arrived!

We shall probably never know who the censors were, those who retained and those who let pass those chapters...

I do remember that, while still in Romania, I was giving English lessons to a young girl in Bucharest, a few months before our departure for England; she told me that she was going to get a job in the Department of Censure and was told to learn English... among others.

Katherine Muston



***PRAY FOR
BROTHER ALEXANDER***

by

Constantin Noica



Foreword

Towards the end of the Second World War a convent in one of the countries of Eastern Europe* was occupied by the victorious Soviet troops. The nuns had sought refuge somewhere else. On their return they found a note on the altar, which read: "The Commander of the troops which occupied this convent and left it unharmed, requests you to pray for him." Since that day the name Alexander is remembered at every service.

Pray for brother Alexander. You, too, may pray for him, dear reader, for the name does not concern only the commander of the victorious troops. By the way, what became of you in the meantime, brother Alexander? Did you spend the rest of your days in seclusion, or did you turn informer? Did you simply go to work, or write books and smuggle them out of your country? It concerns all other brothers Alexander, they themselves uncertain conquerors. Pray for brother Alexander in China, but do not forget brother Alexander in America. Pray also for the powerful everywhere, for those who have knowledge, physicists, mathematicians and super-technologists, who are uncertain of what they know and do. Pray for those who have and own, together with their economists. Pray for those who wander triumphantly through life without culture, and for those, who wander within the realm of Culture: for European Man who has triumphed over material needs: for Modern Man who has seemingly triumphed over Nature and over the goodness of God. Pray for brother Alexander...



CHAPTER ONE

When a conqueror asks you to pray for him, it means he is offering you his victory. "Is there nothing you can do with this victory of mine?" he seems to be saying. It is true, not everyone can triumph over his own victory and feel, as deeply as brother Alexander, that it is of no use to him. But, at his own accustomed level, modern man offers into the arena all kinds of victories, for which he had no use, so that today's world looks like one in which victories are suspended, as if for sale. At every step in the modern world one finds a victory without a master.

Some, however, who believe in their achievement, will say, "Take, eat, this is my Victory, which overflows for you and for your happiness." Others, more doubtful about what they have done, will say, "Here is my victory, take it and see what you can do with it." Others will be indignant and say, "Can you not see what I have done?" But the scientists, politicians and technologists, like the good mercenaries they are, have won the battle and have received payment and their glory. The rest, with or without their permission, is for disposal.

But, is this not a human miracle and a blessing? For in this way the conditions for a deeper solidarity between human beings today have been created as a solidarity between unequals. What a spiritual disaster it would have been, had the victory remained in the hands of the conqueror. If the physicists, biologists, sociologists and politicians had known exactly, and to the very end, how to use their achievements, or, if the super-technologists had become good administrators, and how disastrous, if brother Alexander had been aware of entering the convent as a conqueror! The world would have been divided into human subjects and objects, or, rather, into a privileged humanity of conquerors and a subhumanity. The human miracle is that a victory can be shared.

And victory can be shared even in the political sphere, in which the winner believes that, once he has obtained power, he can still retain his conquest. Anyone who has kept an open mind and above all, has remained uninvolved under a communist regime, will have realised that the results of such a regime are strange. The revolution is, eventually, in favour of the rich, not the poor.



because the rich have been deprived of their wealth, which means little, whereas the poor are deprived of their idealised objective of becoming rich. A man deprived of an ideal - which, at this level gives a meaning to life - is, in a certain way, annihilated. On the other hand, he who once had possessions and through them became alienated, could find himself rehabilitated, or even re-invested as a human being. Some members of the upper classes, whose life of ease had prevented them from obtaining their full potential, discovered that once dispossessed of wealth and privileges, their genuine needs and desires became apparent. Today, they no longer seek for multiple "freedoms", but only that one particular freedom which enables them to fulfil their inner need.

After all, one should not be too surprised at this : if anyone was alienated by possession, it was just the possessor, whilst he, who lived below the level of possession belonged to a subhumanity. Revolution has only raised the latter to the condition of human being. Is this not the point from where he will now begin to risk his human condition? The victory of communism, in a considerable part of the world is not, on the whole, for him. Who has any use for it? Who will take pity on it? The real surprise would be to find one day - as in that chapter of Hegel's Phenomenology, in which the generosity of those who fight for the oppressed, is confronted with the solidarity of the latter with their former oppressors - that others, than the apparent beneficiaries, were those who defended the imperilled revolutions!

If communism, which is concentrated on one sole objective, has every chance of attaining something different, how much truer can this be of capitalism, which can hardly be said to have any objective at all. There really is something else beyond the two worlds that are opposed to each other today. They are now no longer of interest, for there is another more subtle thing, the third human condition facing the two existing ones. The child, from a certain moment in life, becomes a third person: what the parents want from him and what they have invested in him does not matter. It is of no consequence at all what the tree wants after it has shed its seed. From a certain moment onwards, it matters no longer what the states or governments want, in the face of the human person whom they have directly or indirectly favoured: this person has by now entered another kind of evolution under another kind of law. It is no longer important what happens to us at a given moment: very serious things may happen to us, but this no longer really matters.



CHAPTER TWO

"It is of no importance," I told him.

He was twenty two. We were both locked in a cell for two, which had a shower in one corner with a lavatory underneath. In the morning, when he washed, I could see how well built he was with finely developed muscles. Sometimes, when the warder was not peeping through the spy-hole, my young cell-mate would jump up and touch the ceiling. He used to be a member of the National volley-ball team. He was playing in East Berlin, when a girl asked him whether he would like to see what the other side of Berlin was like. So he went, but did not like it much, because the authorities there pestered him with too many questions. At first, when he returned to the Eastern sector, he was well received. Then as he approached his native country..... Now we are both held for interrogation.

X X X

"It is of no importance," I told him.

"It may not be important to you," he burst out, "you're over fifty! But for me! Can't you see? This business has got us into prison, and you can still say it's not important!"

"It's very serious, but it is not important."

"Look here, sir, you're a bore! So, according to you...."

The bolt on the door moved.

"Take this and come along," the warder said to me, walking in.

He handed me the opaque metal goggles which we were obliged to wear every time we left the cell. He then took an arm and sometimes, when he saw me stumble, he would tease, saying: "Careful! Mind the water!" I, then, hesitated to take a further step, and he would laugh. But, on the other hand, what a gentle feeling it is to be guided thus through the unknown. It is like an initiation rite, or like a dream.



I returned after almost two hours. The warder took the goggles off me, closed the door with a bang, and fastened the bolt. I stood, dazed for an instant, in the middle of the cell. I could feel that my cheeks were a bit swollen, and the youth must have noticed this too, for he said:

“They’ve beaten you, haven’t they?”

“Yes,” I admitted after a slight hesitation. “But,.....”

“I know: don’t tell me: it is of no importance.” He completed my sentence.

“But, why did they beat you?”

“Well, I was just going to say....for no reason whatsoever.”

“How do you mean, for no reason? Is that what they do..?”

My young man was alarmed. The idea of being struck without being able to hit back must have offended this sportsman’s pride. Or, maybe, he would retaliate.....I felt I had to explain to him the nonsensicality of everything that happened in our case.

“I was beaten, because I refused to take a cigarette.”

“You’re making fun of me, sir.”

“I assure you, this was the reason. The fellow who was doing the questioning, began by asking me who the persons were to whom I had lent a certain book that I had received from abroad. I replied that the book contained absolutely nothing harmful to the regime.”

“You swine!” he said, “You’ll soon see that this book does matter! Now you had better start telling me who you lent it to.” “I’m not obliged to answer,” I said, seeing that this could be a reason for an indictment.

Here the youth interrupted me.

“This was the moment when he struck you?”



"No. The man was craftier than that: he took out of his pocket a list with the names of five or six of my friends who had actually had the book (the informer had already done a good job). Suddenly the idea crossed my mind that I could save my friends by confusing the interrogators with a multitude of names. 'Oh,' I said, 'you're thinking of those people? There are scores of other people to whom I could have lent the book, or to whom I have actually lent it....' My idea was, you see, that they could not possibly arrest eighty or a hundred people for having seen or read a perfectly harmless book. So I simply found myself saying: 'You have taken my diary, which contains addresses and telephone numbers. Can I have it back please? It will help to refresh my memory.'

The diary was handed back to me and I read out every single name that it contained. From time to time the cross-examiner stopped writing and repeated aloud with a certain sort of satisfaction the Christian name of one person or another. Sometimes he asked me what the Christian name was. I watched him writing down carefully and steadily one name after another for about three quarters of an hour. How tough they are, I thought to myself, and what a lot they can take! When he had finished, he offered me a cigarette.

In that instant I realised what a perfect idiot I had been, perhaps even a criminal, in giving him all those names from which he could pick out whom he wished. I refused the cigarette. 'Take it,' said he. 'No,' said I. 'Take the cigarette!' he shouted. 'I won't take it!' I insisted. 'Take it, or I'll knock your head off!' he screamed, quite enraged.

"I was afraid, naturally, but a kind of 'no' emerged, nevertheless, from my lips. The next second he struck me a heavy blow on my neck with the side of his hand - I did not know about these 'special' blows - then he struck me across the face several times, which shook me considerably. I felt as though my left eye would spring from its socket. I had two simultaneous thoughts. One was: so there really is truth in the saying in my country 'He gave him such a blow his eye popped out'. The other was of a totally different kind: he is striking me, I said to myself, in order to try my powers of resistance. He probably wants to make sure he can get anything out of me, and that I am unable to conceal anything from him. The cigarette is as good an excuse as any: or, perhaps, he had no other way of trying me at this stage, so he is using



this method. It is all a question of technique or versatility on his part or on mine. What if I were suddenly to give in? This would convince him of his complete domination over me, and so would give me a chance to withhold certain things another time.....

"Take the cigarette," he shouted again after having struck me. And I took it.

"Oooohh...!" moaned my cell-mate.

"You see," said I, trying to explain or justify myself, "sometimes it is a better strategy to show that one is weak..."

"I would never have done that!" he exclaimed, reproachfully. "After he had beaten me? Never!"

He looked at me. I must have looked embarrassed, because of my inability to explain the subtleties of my game, of which I myself, for that matter, was not quite sure. Suddenly his indignation subsided and his tone changed, giving the situation a different aspect. He did not want to offend me, not too much anyway, considering the situation in which I found myself.

"Do you know why you took the cigarette?" he asked.

"Why?"

"Because you felt like having a smoke," he said.

My young sportsman was not at all stupid, I must say. He was right in a way. The fact of having my face slapped brought me back to my senses; nothing mattered any more at that moment but that a man needed a cigarette.



CHAPTER THREE

I awoke next morning before the prison bell rang and could see Alex sleeping peacefully, lying on his back with his hands over the blanket - as we had to - under the lamp, which was left burning all night.

My young room-mate's name is Alex: he also could be a brother Alexander, a conqueror, for whom we must pray. But, are not all young people like this in a way? In four days he had learned how to sleep. Poor young man....I was seized more and more by a feeling of responsibility for him. I wished I could do something for him - anything.

Suddenly I realised how ridiculous this pedagogic obsession of mine was. Instead of doing him good, I was more liable to annoy him and generate a feeling of opposition and reluctance in him, as so often happens with people who are too close, and with those who wish to make us happy at any cost. After all, maybe, "they" also wished to make us happy, striving for the improvement of our human condition, to deliver us from alienation, to give good living standards to all - or, at least, a good life without the feeling of being privileged. But what opposition they arouse! Nothing of what they have to offer has any taste : we are so ungrateful for the trouble taken to make us happy that I sometimes wonder whether we are not being a little unjust. The trouble is they have come too close to the people : they have installed themselves in the food larder, in the sleeping-quarters, in the chest-of-drawers and the desks and, as far as possible, in the very consciences of the people ("say this, say that, make your self-criticism"), so that they annoy us simply by making their voice heard through their newspapers or their broadcasters.

Moreover, they are far too conspicuous. They have no discretion whatsoever. Just imagine someone taking upon himself - or believing himself to be doing so - the task of the general process of food digestion, and talking thus: "Now the food enters the mouth. The teeth should do their duty and crush it. The salivary glands should attack it from all sides. Behold, in the oesophagus new and well-prepared juices are waiting to speed up the decomposition, while the stomach must be ready, not only with its acids, but also with its fermenting agents and, first of all, with its pepsin. Oh, but where is the trypsin? The trypsin must not tarry! I now announce that, at this very



moment, the alimentary bolus is passing safely through the duodenum, where the pancreas and the liver are discharging their subtle juices in order to complete the process. After a while, the bowels with their complex organisation, most economically condensed in a confined space, will start absorbing the water, the salts, the carbohydrates, the fats, the proteins, nay, even the vitamins, in order to nourish the all-nutritious blood. The plan has been fulfilled!"

I thought I had better not do this sort of thing to Alex. Life is a kind of digestive process : it were better to let him alone to digest freely everything that is happening. Each man has his own stomach. How could I know what was good for him? Maybe he himself did not know. What I wanted was not actually to make him happy, but to make him happier, to help him to live through this adventure more easily. And I do not think that in saying this I mean that platitude: "le mieux est l'ennemi du bien" - but rather "le mieux est l'ignorance du bien".

Eventually all politicians, of one kind or another, treat us in the same manner : they wish to give us a better life, and they believe that this means "doing us good". For the most part, the misery of modern political life is a question of grammar: certain human beings mistake the comparative degree for the positive. The Americans do not give even a thought to the comparative, they go straight for the superlative: the very best. The politicians come and say : "Would it not be better if every one of you had a flat of his own?" "Yes," we reply in chorus, "it would be better." "Would it not be better, if you all had longer holidays?" "Yes, it would be much better." "You see," they go on, "we want all this for your own good: so you must vote for us, and fight on our side. And, if you yourselves are not aware of your own interests, we must take it upon ourselves to satisfy them, even if this means coming up against your lack of understanding, your inertia, sometimes even your hostility."

I had already upset Alex. I had realised the morning before from the tone of his voice, when, just as I was doing my two morning exercises, he said :

"For the last three days, since we have been here, I've watched you doing the same two movements. Don't you know any others? I can show you."



In my turn I was a bit irritated, and I did not ask him to show me any other exercise. But I am just as childish as he.

“What did the chap look like, the one who gave you what-for about the cigarette?” he asked, sitting up in bed.

“To tell the truth, I never took a good look at him,” I answered. We should not try to remember and record everything. I have made a point of not remembering their faces, so as not to recognise them in the street later, when I am free. They do not count, really. They are not themselves.

Alex gave me a look of compassion.

“Maybe your eyesight got dimmed, when the chap slapped your face.”

“My dear young man, quite frankly I’m not interested in what he looks like. I repeat: these men are not themselves : there is something else, or someone else, behind them.”

He shook his head in face of the platitude he thought I was uttering.

“You mean the Russians...?”

I waited for him to have his morning wash, then we sat down on our beds to wait for the morning ‘ersatz’ coffee to be brought to us. I started explaining my meaning.

“It’s not the Russians ultimately. I believe there’s something else at stake here : something that turns them all into objects.”

“Ah, the system!”

“Oh, if that were all...it’s our Time, Time with a capital T, that’s what is making them do what they are doing.”

“What about you? Is it our Time with a capital T that has thrown you into this place?”



"Of course: as well as those who are here to guard us. Besides, all this has been described before, almost exactly. Goethe did so in the second part of Faust. If I were to tell you the story, you would see...."

"Oh, no! Culture! Everything can be explained through it, even when one knows nothing. If you knew all about our Time, after having read Faust Part Two, why are you here?"

"This sort of thing cannot be avoided, for one cannot step out of one's Time. You see, they also are victims, just as we are."

"Why? Aren't they well off?"

"I wouldn't say they were so very well off. Just think of these warders: they are obliged to look at us through the spy-hole every five minutes to see whether we are trying to plot something or to commit suicide. If one man has five cells under his supervision, it means that he is looking through the spy-hole every minute. Is this what you might call a job for a man? Wretchedly they go from door to door like stray dogs."

"I can see you really pity them. Perhaps you feel pity also for the interrogators....."

He was seething, I could feel it, so I tried not to be too categorical and provocative in my judgments, and said:

"My dear chap, in whatever situation you see a man, it is wise to think of the situation that might follow."

"Should I, then, be sorry for them, just because they risk being had up for trial some fine day?"

"Nothing of the sort. I pity them (if I may so express myself in this situation of ours), when I see that they are not placed in a situation fit for men, that is, of human beings, who do a job and learn something from life. How much they could learn from this gallery of human specimens parading before them! But, how can they learn anything? They are here for the sole purpose of



attaining a pre-established result, which is, to make other people see eye to eye with themselves. They do not even want to learn new words or manners of speaking. You will see that they do not allow you to write your own "statement": they write it down themselves in their own words and with their own cut-and-dried expressions, and all you have to do is sign it, if you can't afford to resist and refuse to do so. I have often thought it would be interesting to interrogate the interrogator, to question him about the types of human beings he has met. But, no : instead he has been instructed precisely to annihilate the different human types, even man himself, as a moral being. Can't they see that between human beings, if one of them tries to destroy another, he himself is annihilated? What will they do with themselves in life, when all this is over?"

He listened to all I had to say, but, when I looked up at him, I saw that he was choking with indignation. In the meantime "coffee" arrived. After drinking it, Alex calmed down a bit: but some devil, it seemed, made him set more traps for me.

"And what about the men at the top? Are they hard done by too?"

I took a deep breath. What else could I do but tell him what was truly on my mind, putting it as mildly as possible.

"There was," I replied, "a French writer named Motherlant, who dared to write in a book that was published under the German occupation of France: "Pitié pour les forts!" To say nothing of the fact that, after dreaming, fighting, and after having crushed all adversity, they - the victors - have to come down to plain administration. This is the misery of all political frenzy. But, what curse is this, that makes those who are fuming with rancour against idealism, practice the worst form of idealism : one, which, through its ideal, distorts all reality instead of trying to mould it, to develop it with an idea drawn from reality itself? Someone told me once that one of the saddest things is to attend one of their parties: they are so afraid of saying the wrong word, and so are their wives. They can no longer even enjoy themselves. They are just not interesting."



“But, this is not the point!” Alex burst out. “I’m sure you don’t believe a word you’re saying. They’ve got us in their clutches, can’t you see? They’ve got us in their claws! It’s just as if you were saying of the lion that’s got you in his claws and is about to devour you, that he is uninteresting, because his mane is scanty and his eyes are too yellow!”

I watched him, as he stood up angrily, and now I really felt as if I was in a lion’s cage. A breath of animality emanated from his person. I deserved to be crushed by him, now that I had roused him thus. I wished something would happen. Anything. And the miracle happened. The door opened wide, and the warder brought in a bucket of dirty water and two large pieces of sacking.

“Wash the floor,” he ordered.

I sprang forward and caught hold of one of the rags, and started scrubbing the cement floor feverishly. Alex calmed down at once. The mere thought, that he had something to do, brought him down to earth. He even recovered enough energy to be sarcastic.

“I suppose you find this in Part Two of Faust, as well, do you?”



CHAPTER FOUR

I did not say anything. I went on scrubbing the floor and kept thinking: whoever actually wrote this, or something similar? Maybe it was Goethe, because it is profoundly human: toil and drudgery.....

Still...this did not really seem to be drudgery. It was just another kind of work, which had something good in it, something regenerative. In the senseless position in which they had put us - and themselves, for that matter - because of too much power, any sort of useful work was a blessing. Alex also felt this fully, as I could judge from the way in which he kept pushing his part of floor-scrubbing ever further over my half, until he decided to pull the bucket of water to him, and not let me do any more at all. Maybe he was trying to spare me. He did not realise that I too got pleasure out of this work.

"I was afraid you mightn't've cleaned properly," he said, by way of explanation. "To you everything seems unimportant, but to me even the cleanliness of the cell is important."

"This, rather than the great historic events," I answered.

He sat down on the bed. He felt pleased with having done a good job of work, but an instant later he remembered my remark, and was cross again.

"How can you utter such cheap paradoxes?"

I was afraid to say even the slightest thing now. Besides, I did not think he would find any meaning in what I was tempted to say to him. He was too young to know about the emptiness of many of the so-called "historic" events. I remembered some of the events of the more recent past, which, to the contemporaries and to the press, had seemed of an overwhelming importance: "the historic meeting in the Bermudas". Who remembered it now? A meeting had taken place there between Churchill and who-knows-what American President, and who-knows-which French President-of-the-Council-of-Ministers had not been able to attend, because of a cold. How very historic indeed the meeting would have been, if the latter had not had a cold... Putting things in order, and keeping one's environment clean, has a positive



significance for oneself, as well as for society, whereas some of the great events could be described as mere stammered utterances of History.

In fact, if it has been said of Nature, that she "stutters", how much more can this be said of History, which was made by that imperfect creature, Man? Perhaps our present time is just such a stuttering of History, an organised one: this was what I would have liked to tell him. It is terrible, or idiotic, as you like. It could be expressed by the English saying: "the dog is barking up the wrong tree".

Indeed, one has often the impression everywhere that men in public life are barking up the wrong tree, even if we ourselves do not know for sure in which tree the cat is. (The worst of it, here, is that they want one to bark as they do, up their tree: "you bark too, or you'll get bitten.")

Alex had no way of knowing that two generations before him had been shaken by two world wars, generated by something which today seems incredible - at least, on the Continent - the Franco-German conflict. It was as if the right hand and left hand had been fighting one against the other. In Europe people were divided, not only in public life, but also in private life, by the question : whose side are you on, the French or the Germans? I am not saying that these wars caused by Teutonic blindness, or the revolution that took place between them, can be deleted from history. How could they be, seeing the number of consequences that followed? But anyone can see today that the Europeans were barking up the wrong tree. Three great European nations went to war, in order that two other, still greater ones outside Europe, America and Russia, should emerge uppermost even more rapidly than they could have wished: and even behind the latter - the Russians - and their antagonism, which - come to think of it - was unnatural and forced, there was something else: there was the fact that Europe together with America and Russia were destined to awaken Asia out of sleep and Africa out of her animality. This peninsula of Asia through her civilisation - the first civilisation in history to be founded on exclusively rational values, and thus perfectly transmissible to any human mind - was preparing to awaken the whole Earth to life. In any case, it had been on the point of doing so through colonialism, but in a more abusive manner and too slowly. Events were precipitated, and now everything seems to be happening too fast, unfortunately. But, what is



most important is precisely this awakening to life of the whole earth - or something of the same order (the demographic explosion, the direct or indirect pressure of the Third World) - not the yelps of the first half of the Twentieth century. "The stupid Nineteenth century", it has often been said. One should rather say : "the stupid first half of the Twentieth century". Luckily, the Twentieth century can boast of a certain amount of culture that has been going on in its first half, at least in the sphere of art. Otherwise, historically, it would have been a perfect piece of stupidity.

"Tell me something," Alex said. "Tell me a story: a film, for instance."

He could not bear the long silence, but I was sure he would be still more impatient of my idle twaddle about history. I had to do what he asked. The trouble was, I was never too keen on films, or, at least, not those with a "plot". The absurdity of these films 'with a subject' is that with a few pictures they try to capture the audience's free imagination. To my mind they ought, on the contrary, to try to free it, somehow: perhaps by showing the same scene two or three times over, from different angles...? But, there I go again, trying to be clever, when I am not able even to relate the plot of a film.

"You see," I said to him, "I'm afraid I would not be able to recount the sequence of a film, as you would like, in detail, especially an adventure film."

"How's that? You say you can tell me the whole content of many a book, and you can't recount the subject of a film? All right then, tell me something else.....a fairy-tale."

"Yes," said I, "mm-yes, certainly....."

I racked my brain, trying to remember a fairy-tale.

"Don't tell me you don't know a fairy-tale!"

"No...well, yes, of course : who doesn't know a fairy-tale?"

I felt more stupid than during the inquest, and tried desperately to make one up. I began:



“Once upon a time.....once upon a time, there was a village that had only one fountain with very little water in it.” (That’s an idea, I thought, some sort of idea at any rate).

“The women,” I went on, “had to come at the crack of dawn to get the water that collected during the night. One fine morning...(now, now I had to invent something, now, now...), one morning...er...ah...er...when they came to fill their buckets, the women found a...er...a highwayman with a broadsword, standing near the fountain. The highwayman said to them, ‘No one is to take any more water from here, until I allow it.’ (I breathed a sigh of relief: I had found a subject now, which could develop into a possible conflict) ‘The women began to weep, saying their children were waiting at home, one woman even said her child was sick, but the highwayman was relentless. The news spread around the village, and the old men came to implore the brigand, and to offer anything that they were able to give, provided he would go away. But the man liked to show his power: and, as it happens to all men of power in this world, he was beginning to think he was wise and clever too. He drew a bucketful of water, more with the object of tantalising them, and started giving them advice: ‘Look at this: is this what you call drinking water? You ought to dig a well, a deep one, down there in the valley, then you’d find better water and more of it. I’ll show you how to do it.’ As he was saying these things, he looked around him, and was very pleased to see the people, standing there, all meekly listening to him. ‘You are right,’ said one of the old men, ‘and we thank you kindly, but now, please, do let the people draw water from here.’ At that moment a black bird flew down, dipped its beak into the bucket twice, and flew away again. ‘You see’, he went on, ‘not even the birds like this water of yours. Besides, I’m afraid you are not properly organised, and that some people take more water than others. I am sure the wealthy peasants in your village come and get it in barrels. Things should be done properly, and I’ll show you how.’ And so the day went by with well-chosen words and phrases, like those you find in books, until dusk, when the highwayman at last showed himself more merciful, and allowed some of the poorest women to draw water, and let almost all the others go thirsty.

The following morning all the villagers were beautifully lined up around the fountain, the men on one side, the women on the other, meekly awaiting the highwayman’s decisions. ‘Good, that’s how I like it,’ he said. ‘Now we



can do things properly.' He allowed most of the peasants to take water - not quite everyone - but, they all thanked him and praised him, so as not to make an enemy of him for the following days. And so the bandit continued for several days, making a show of his power and his fair-mindedness, until he found that he wasn't getting much more out of the whole business than mere shallow power over people. Then he told them: 'If you go on doing as I have taught you, and, if you give me something for the good I have done you, I'll go away and leave you. But, I warn you that I can return at any time.' The peasants hastened to give him even more than he asked, swore submission even in his absence, and marched with him to the wood.

The highwayman plunged into the wood, very pleased with himself: he walked on and on, until, laden as he was with goods, he began to feel hot and thirsty. He went to a spring of which he knew, but it was no longer there. He walked to the brook in the middle of the forest, but...it was dry. He was seized with an inexplicable fear, a sort of alarming suspicion that Nature and the Forest were punishing him for having assumed too much power over men. He sat down in the dry bed of the stream, quite exhausted. While he squatted there, he was approached by a young boy whom the villagers had sent after him to make sure he had really gone. 'I'm thirsty,' said the highwayman, 'bring me a pail of water.' The boy ran back to the village with the news. 'We'll give him no water,' said some. 'Oh, do let's give him water,' said the woman with the sick child. And the boy went back into the wood with water for the highwayman: but, just as he was walking down the bank towards the man, he tripped and fell, the wooden bucket broke, and the parched earth swallowed up all the water in a twinkling. The child was very frightened, thinking the man was going to kill him : but the man understood that it wasn't the child's fault that the water was spilt, and did not hurt him. As he was sitting there....."

I stopped, quite happy to have got that far, at least.

"Ah, he was sitting there....," said Alex, picking up the yarn.

"Yes." said I, "we can continue the story together."

Alex was attracted by the story, for a moment.



“Well, as he was sitting there, the blackbird that had been drinking from the bucket re-appeared and let fall two drops of water on the man’s lips. Then the highwayman.....”

He stopped, just as I had done a little earlier.

“What actually do you mean with this story?”

“What I meant? Nothing. I was just trying to.....”

“I see! So, it isn’t a real story? I mean, a story that has been told before by others?” he asked in a voice suddenly turned harsh.

“I...don’t know...it just crossed my mind. Perhaps I was making it all up myself.....”

He glared at me fiercely. A vein seemed to throb at his temple.

“I know what you meant. You meant the same thing : the same thing you keep lecturing me on: that he who cuts off the sources of life of another, implicitly destroys his own: that, when someone takes the water of life from another, he throws away his own: that we must not hate these people, who are tormenting us, we must pity them. We - must - pity - them! Don’t you find it tedious, repeating yourself like this?”

“I swear to you, Alex,” I replied, “that I wasn’t thinking of anything in particular, when I began.....”

But, at that moment, I really was overcome with shame. How was it that I never realised the kind of tale I was inventing? How had it happened that my words had become so linked together as to turn into a homily? What this youth needed was to dream, to breathe freely, just to be entertained.

“You are a...a...you’re nothing but a....pedagogue. PEDAGOGUE!”, he yelled once again, and turned his head away from me. He uttered the word like an insult, as one might exclaim: “demagogue, mystagogue!”



The warder showed his face at the spy-hole: "Where d'you think you are, bellowing away like that? You'll stand one hour with your faces to the back wall!"

I looked at Alex. He never even winked. He did not speak to me for two days.



CHAPTER FIVE

We stood for a whole hour with our faces to the wall at the far end of the cell without exchanging a word. Relations between human beings are no longer natural under these regimes: no one has any adequacy to anyone else. It is amazing how they manage to dislocate everything around them, even the souls of men. One would expect to see changes taking place only in public life, and to be able to take refuge in private life: at one point one is even delighted at the prospect of having no more public responsibilities, and of returning to the bliss of one's own personal life. But, even here, everything is vitiated. You don't get on with your wife any longer (you don't bring home enough money and you don't represent anything in society): you don't get on with your child (your truths are no longer the same as the schools'): with your friends it's even worse: if you complain, you risk becoming inopportune or even dangerous, and, if you don't complain, you may offend them.

There's something that doesn't click. In the relations between human beings, as well as between man and things, there is something like a sort of complex mechanism, which, once properly adjusted, should go 'click' and start functioning. In this world of ours this last minute adjustment seems to have disappeared. All things are moving, working - I don't know how and in what manner - but without having gone 'click'.

It is the same in Faust, at least in Goethe's version. Faust, the hero, does not click with anything. This is what he tells the Devil when he declares that nothing can make him exclaim, at any moment: "tarry a while, thou art so fair!": he means that nothing will make him 'click'. He is the "Unbehauste", as he describes himself, the wanderer, the homeless, with no abode, no roots, unattached, having no adequacy to anyone or anything. Besides, after having madly wanted everything all at once, he no longer wishes for anything, and lets himself be dragged along hither and thither by the Devil. In that scene with the drinkers in Auerbach's tavern, in which Mephistopheles is having horrible fun at the expense of others, Faust says only one thing: "Let us be gone, I beg of thee!" (This, according to Goethe's exponents, is supposed to be the first of the Faustian deeds). In the love story with Gretchen, all its poetry is poisoned by the falseness of the situation, the wryness of it. Gretchen, it is true, really gives her whole heart to "the learned man of the four faculties", whose youth has been artificially restored by the Devil and the witches, and,



of course, she dreams of going on to the final 'click', which to her means the church-wedding : but, her feminine intuition tells her that Faust is not in order with her, because he is not in order with himself : he does not have the true faith : he does not 'click' with God. She, who is his victim in all things, will one day have to pity him.

What a typical "brother Alexander" Faust is: he is a conqueror whom one must pity, although he is a very real, complete victor. For he has triumphed over ignorance, over human weakness and impotence, having eventually defeated every kind of religious feeling or illusionism and, finally, even quite fearlessly allied himself with the Devil. He is in the situation of being able to do absolutely anything, thanks to the means and allies at his service, but, he does not know what to do. One must pray not only for his soul, as Gretchen does in the end, but even for his deeds, for his risk of doing the wrong thing - like modern man does. How could anyone say - and it has been said - that Faust is a good representation of modern man because of his aspirations or his creativity and that our world is "Faustian" because it wants something and knows what it wants?! On the contrary, ours is "Faustian", because it does not know what it wants, just like Goethe's hero, because it has prepared for itself the means and victories and now has no use for them.

But, when one does not know what to make of the means at one's disposal, they begin to work on their own. Therefore in our world, as in Faust's, the possible takes precedence over the real. This is what I wished to explain to Alex in my belief that I would help him to understand what was happening to him, namely, that we are living in a world, in which the possible - the technically possible and the politically possible - always takes precedence over any reality. But Alex was bewildered in the presence of his time, as Gretchen was in the presence of Faust.

This girl - just like my young man now - is the embodiment of the world of reality, whereas Faust represents the world of possibilities. Not only is his youth a "possible", not a real one but even this creature with whom he has fallen in love, is to him a possible Helen (the Devil had prepared him for this feeling when, in the witches' kitchen, he was making beautiful women appear in the mirror). A distorted thing made its way into the world, supplanting reality and came into being discordantly. It is all a question of sound, in the



end. There was something that did not sound right to Gretchen, just as my improvised story did not sound right to Alex. He felt it was a possible tale, not a "real" one.

The Devil had come between us as he came between Faust and Gretchen. After all, what is the meaning of "devil" if not an unlimited, but bare, possibility? The world of possibilities, as such, is something good and human, just as the Technology of the modern world is good and human, in principle. Thanks to modern technology our world has shifted from brutal, indifferent realities to the gentle refinement of possibilities, and we no longer live among realities, but rather among admirable possibilities, materialised. A motor car is a materialised possibility, and is a good thing. But when science and technology try - as they already have done - to create a kind of insect, representing the idea of the "chimera" of antiquity, then, of course, it is just a matter of an empty possibility, and it is no longer a good thing.

When we move from the possible straight into the real, without the existence of a deeper necessity, when, for instance, we create states unsuitable to the human soul or we try to "engineer" souls unsuitable for men, it means that the Devil has a hand in it. The whole second part of Faust is - self-admittedly at times - a work of the Devil, and repeats itself all along the five acts. But the strange thing is that this time of ours is not always, or perhaps not at all, the work of the Devil!

I would have told Alex that "Faust II" is, act after act, the achievement of the barest possible, the possible devoid of all usefulness. Also, in the first part of Faust the barest possible is the prevailing factor, from the very first appearance of the Devil: but the bareness of it is not yet visible, because in this part there still are real people. In the second part though, there are hardly any real humans at all. However much one might seek, one only finds ghosts. There is not one real person in the first act, and even less in act two, in which one encounters the homunculus. It is only in the third act that a real figure timidly appears: it is Lynceus, the warder of the Faustian tower, who is dumb with admiration when Helen appears in the stronghold, and who later comes along, bringing his poor man's gifts. Then, no more human beings in the whole of the fourth act - the one of the devilish war - and it is only in act five that we find two real human beings, old Philemon and Baucis, who oppose



the collectivisation of agriculture. In the rest of the play there are but ghosts, ghosts.....

In such a spectral world the barest possible is at home, naturally. Again, I would have liked to relate to Alex how in act one Goethe lets loose the barest possibility into the real world of some state or other, under the form of money without coverage, i.e. paper-money, the issue of banknotes which, Mephistopheles suggests, is based on some possible treasure buried in the earth: then, how, in act two the little man turns up in the test tube - again, as a bare possibility, unsolicited by any need - or, how one can make a technical-scientific revolution, and what fantastic-scientific consequences it can have (the reversal of time). After all these typically Mephistophelian feats we come, in act three, to the barest possible in the sphere of culture: Faust's marriage to Helen the beautiful, the marriage of the spirit of modern times to that of ancient Greece: a film, as it were, produced in anticipation under the self-confessed direction of Mephistopheles. Act Four - that war, which is waged with satanic means - needs no commentary, and the last act brings to the fore the possible in politics - the unleashing of reason, that plans and orders, under whose hysteria we also find ourselves now, Alex and I.

But what really deserves to be told, in the face of our time, is that one can no longer exclaim as one does about the happenings in Goethe's play: this is the work of the Devil! Today, this can no longer be said, not even with reference to Goethe's work, because the Twentieth Century has made it all come true, thus making it man's responsibility.

However, with us things could be different. With us, the issue of banknotes is not just a game of financial magic: science is not the projection of some peculiar genius, or a form of exasperation as with Faust: it is a slow, often anonymous, accumulation over centuries: the myth of Helen's beauty has been democratised, her image (or that of her sisters) has been endlessly multiplied on our screens and has left us free of another kind of encounter with the spirit of Greece: war has become so diabolical that the god Ares ought to be expelled from the heavens and from earth too, if man has any judgment left : and the political delirium which enters our world - as it does in Faust, act five - to colonise a new humanity on the new soil, or soil which has been renewed to suffocation, continually comes up against not only oldsters, like Philemon and Baucis, but also a strange lot of protesting youth.



Are we moderns crooked, deformed, or aren't we? Goethe anticipated us with a certain amount of revulsion. But the whole question is whether we are in the order of things or not, even those of us who find ourselves thrown into prison. Is there a lack of usefulness (is there uselessness?) in all this, something perfectly arbitrary and in fact, without any importance whatsoever, in all that perpetrated over our heads? Could it be the surplus of possibles overflowing into reality? Could it be an "organised stutter", something fabricated and revocable, the way that these single parties keep reconsidering their orientation, like in a game of chess in which the players keep taking back their moves? Or, could it be the good and human possibility, which endeavours to make its way into the world literally and by all means, through anything or anyone? When Napoleon said to Goethe that from his time forth, "le destin, c'est la politique" and that the destiny of the ancients is finished, he was certainly not thinking of himself and his own politics. So, what politics was he actually referring to? The politics of those wretched election agents, in one part of the world? Or of those poor Central Committees, in the other part?

As I sat there in prison with this youth, torn away from life's reality, or, if I may say so, detached from a frieze of its temple, as we sat there together, both innocent, but with a possible guilt, I had a very strong feeling of the precedence of possibility over reality, and I understood equally well why we were there, and why they would have to let us out. They needed reality, they needed our testimony. Without the assent of Philemon and Baucis, Faust's work is "impure". The great reformer is annoyed, because of a few trees, those real lime-trees on a bit of land which the old people refuse to leave. The bell of their little church exasperates him. But when Mephistopheles comes and tells him that he has razed everything from the face of the earth, Faust recoils in horror. (Their horror, the oppressors').

And now, the old hags come round Faust: Want, Guilt, Care and Need. Only one of them, Care, is made by Goethe to pause for a moment and talk to Faust and tell him on behalf of all the others that he had been blind throughout his life.

And will the Grey Sisters not come and gather round today's men also? Do 'they' not need us too? I feel like saying to them: "See that you don't



come under the Grey Sisters' inquest!" In order to escape they need our compassion and our testimony. They need Alex's youth and his joy.



CHAPTER SIX

The next two days I did not do my two morning exercises so as not to irritate Alex. On the third day he was called for questioning. What could they charge him with? He had gone from East Berlin where he and his team had played, over to West Berlin: there he was disgusted at being plagued with questions, and returned of his own free will to East Berlin. I supposed they might keep him there for a time, then set him free and allow him to finish his studies in architecture (he was in his second year), or else give him a job as a volley-ball coach, as they had done with so many others.

He was white with rage when he returned to the cell. He had forgotten all his anger against me, and said, straight off, "They are going to try me for high treason."

"High treason?!" I exclaimed.

"That's what they said. Eight to fifteen years sentence."

It was painful to think that what Alex just said was true, and that the fact fitted in with my own views: to them he too was a possible traitor.

"I don't care about anything any more," he said, "if I ever get out of here, I shall not finish my studies: I'll go and live out in the country somewhere. In a village where, maybe, I'll find a nice young girl who owns two cows. D'you realise what that means? To lead the simple life in the midst of nature....."

He sank into that terrifying silence of the young, when they are hurt. An hour later he looked at me with a kind smile. He seemed to have grown up all at once.

"Don't you want me to tell you a story?" I suggested, to help him to change his thoughts. "I'll tell you a love story."

"But, is it a true story?"



“Yes, it’s from Plato’s ‘Banquet’,” I replied, rather imprudently.

He frowned for a second, then relaxed.

“After all, if it’s a good story.....”

At that moment the warder’s face appeared at the spy-hole.

“Pack your things in two minutes,” he ordered me.

He shut the spy-hole, and while I started getting my few belongings together, Alex began to fret.

“I’m sorry, I am so very sorry. What would you need? What could I give you? I want to give you something.”

He had only two shirts and three pairs of socks, one of which he intended to mend on the first day when we were to begin a “program” and needle and cotton would be given to us. He fretted helplessly.

“I want to give you a souvenir,” he said with emotion.

“Give me that third movement for my morning exercises,” I suggested.

He looked pleased at being asked for something.

“All right, look: just do this: put your arms akimbo and raise your knees one after the other, rhythmically, hitting your chest every time.”

He very nimbly showed me how to do it.

“I shall do this movement, Alex, and think of you.”

“Stop talking!” said the warder, as he walked in and at the same time pulled me to him and threw the metal goggles over my head, leaving me with my hand outstretched, seeking in vain for Alex’s.



I was led along innumerable passages, which could perfectly well have been the same ones over and over again, as is the custom in order to confuse the prisoner, so that he cannot know where he is being taken. Maybe I was in the next cell, or in a totally different place. But, even if I was next door to Alex, I was in another galaxy. When the door slammed behind me, I heard an ever increasing knocking on three walls of the cell. Poor souls, I thought, they are anxious for news. I was glad I did not know the Morse code, or I could not have resisted the temptation to answer.

After one or two days of desperate endeavours to get in touch, my neighbours stopped knocking. I, too, calmed down. Suddenly an odd thought occurred to me : what an interesting problem arises, when you do not know the Morse, or any other code! The man next door to you is like a rational being in another planetary system. How can you communicate with him? This is probably, at this very moment, one of the greatest problems of humanity: how to communicate with other rational beings in the cosmos. We have no common code and everything has to be invented, the language, as well as the concepts. What an absorbing thought! One had to be thrown into a place like this before one begins to understand that the real problems of thought are not to be found in books. Why do people never think of these pure situations, when they are free? How stupidly they get entangled in derivative situations. The present situation could be ideal...

The only presupposition is that the man in the neighbouring cell is a rational being like myself. The rest can be invented. No, here we have another difficulty: I must first convince my neighbour that I do not know any kind of code, and that I am asking him to behave as if he did not know any either, so that we are obliged to invent one. It will be difficult, but I must try. If I succeed, everything will then be like the encounter of man with his fellow-creature in the cosmos.

I started by wondering which wall to knock against. I decided on the wall on my right, because that was where the most persistent knocks came from. During my diagonal walk of six paces across the cell I stopped each time and knocked. After the second knock, my neighbour answered. I knocked again, irregularly on purpose. He answered again with regular signals. I knocked with my fist. He answered with the same signals as before. Why



could he not understand that I did not know any code and that I was asking him not to use one? I stopped for a longer period near the wall and knocked in all sorts of ways: rhythmically, unrhythmically, in rapid succession, slowly.

“What are you doing?”

I turned round and found myself standing before two wardens, who had silently unfastened the bolt and walked in stealthily.

“What are you doing there? You’re sending signals in Morse!”

“I’m not.”

“What d’you mean, you’re not? We’ve just seen you doing it!”

“I give you my word of honour that I don’t know the Morse code.”

“Listen to this ‘bourgeois’ giving his ‘word of honour’. Aren’t you ashamed of yourself, lying like that, when we’ve caught you at it?!”

The urgency of the moment lent words to my thoughts. I said :

“Please, take me to the commandant. I have something to report.”

The men looked at each other. Maybe they were thinking that I had learnt something from a neighbour and was going to denounce him. They were obliged to go and ask that I should be punished for my offence anyway, so they caught hold of my arms, one of them put the metal goggles over my eyes, and took me to the commandant.

“We found this scoundrel sending messages in Morse, but he says he has something to report.”

“Leave him here.”

“Sir,” I began. “I was knocking on the wall, I don’t deny it, but not to communicate with my neighbour, as I don’t know Morse, but because I am trying to find a code for inter-communication with the cosmos.....”



“Wha-a-a-at?”

I tried to justify myself as calmly as possible, and explain everything, as persuasively as possible. I explained that, apart from the technical problem, which had already been solved by mankind, there remained the extra-terrestrial communication, and this demanded imagination and lengthy meditation: I added that I had got hold of an idea, which led me to believe that I was able to contribute to the drawing up of a code. I would give everything into the hands of the authorities, without demanding anything in exchange, not even an improvement in my prison conditions. All I wanted was paper and pencil.

“You poor fool,” said the commandant, after having listened with a vague smile, “d’you really think one of your sort can solve this problem? We...we’ve got scientists, academicians...”

“I’m not denying there exist men more competent than myself,” I went on, “but, you see, they haven’t got time to think of such things, or perhaps, the idea never occurred to them. You see, this is something special, an idea that comes like a flash, a crazy idea....”

I got all worked up, I could feel my eyes growing larger and protruding, as though I had a vision, as one in a trance. I did not care what the commandant thought, I had something to say, I-had-something-to-say....the commandant rang for the warder.

“Take him back.”

I could not refrain from a pathetic gesture of disappointment. When I reached the door, the commandant said:

“Wait: give him these sheets of paper and get him a pencil. If he’s been lying, I’ll show him!”

I went back to the cell, exultant. The warder counted the sheets of paper: there were twenty two. The pencil would come later. I started to think feverishly, but confidently. Now, assuming that we already have the technical means of communication: radio waves or any other message-bearing waves.



It is true that because of the wave-speed the transmission would last for years, or scores of years. But, what does it matter? For, as Pascal said, the whole of humanity is as one single man. Well, what is this one man going to transmit in order to make himself understood by a being of about the same rational standard?

To begin with, I had an odd thought: any regular signal, or any one group of regular signals, might, at the other end, be mistaken for a noise produced by the processes of dead matter. After all, we too receive various cosmic wave transmissions nowadays, but it is precisely their regularity that leaves us in doubt about their nature, making us ascribe them to certain material processes taking place out there. If any man wishes to prove that he is a rational creature, he must show that he is not acting under some mechanical force. Consequently, the first affirmation that man is rational is the freedom of not acting rationally: in other words, the first manifestation of logic would mean a departure from the strict logic of mechanisms, i.e. phantasy: and so, in a way, a lack of logic. The dialogue between two rational consciousnesses would then begin by each one indicating that he is a rational being, that is, that he can send arbitrary signals. One must make a show of spontaneity, prove that one is a rational subject, not an object of the laws of nature.

This could be a beginning. Perhaps the only beginning. And now we want to demonstrate that here on this planet reason exists: and we can reveal this by evincing its capacity to deny itself. Thus, we begin by presenting a rational chaos, the pure and simple chaos, from which all things start. (This was precisely what I was failing to do with my cell-neighbour: I could not bring him to start also from chaos.) It is the only way in which one can surprise one's interlocutor, and make him take an interest in talking to one. One proves to him that here is a rational being, because, if he wishes, he can transmit nothing. Just as one wipes the blackboard clean, or erases a tape, in order to make a new recording, one must begin with a non-transmission, a zero transmission, so as to be able, subsequently, to transmit something intelligible. Because the other being, faced with a clearly asserted chaos, an absolute zero communication, will be seized with curiosity and astonishment: and astonishment is the beginning of knowledge and of contact with things and with other people.



The warder opened the spy-hole and threw a well-sharpened pencil onto my bed. I pounced upon it eagerly, for it was years since I had handled one. What an admirable zero a pencil is: a positive zero, like the white sheet, on which I intended to begin my cosmic dialogue. Anything can come out of holding a pencil, communication, non-communication.....

On the first sheet I wrote the title in large capitals: COSMIC DAYS. I was thinking that the signal sent by earthmen together with the answer that would come many years later could represent one unit : one day of talks. Hence, cosmic days. May their appearance among men be blessed!

When I got up next morning, I felt as if I was in a cosmic day. I went about doing my chores like a sleep-walker, then I started jotting down my findings. The first cosmic day was a success: I had made contact with the extra-terrestrial being and achieved the possibility of communication precisely because I had communicated nothing. Consequently I had gained two things: first, we had recognised each other as rational beings capable of communicating: secondly, we had agreed that we had not yet communicated anything.

All this had been obtained by a manifestation of spontaneity of two rational beings. Now the next move is to depart from spontaneity or to control it, again like rational creatures. I have announced the fact that I am rational, because I said "la ola la" or "boom boom boom", but now I must transmit something. And, as the first day was one of free signals, on the second day there must follow orderly, linked signals. Now the real thing begins!

I paused. This was the first moment, when, after the enthusiasm that had seized me, I began to doubt. I had been convinced that it had been sufficient to put the problem properly - according to the principle that a problem well put was half solved - and I would obtain some result. What, if I did not obtain anything? I shuddered for an instant, not from fear of the commandant, but rather from shame of my own self. But let me not give up directly. Let me see. I have now the attention of the other chap in the cosmos. Good. Now let me tell him something: it will be something undetermined, but this time a regular signal, repeating itself ceaselessly. (If he answers with the same repeated signal, it shows he is not stupid.) Besides, I can even make a better start, not with one signal but with a group of repeated signals. This will help



me to isolate the group later, and, because my neighbour in space knows it by now, to make it my call-sign, meaning: "This is I, the man from Terra, I am beginning my transmission". So I have prepared a first concept : the beginning. We shall be able, not only to begin every transmission with that group of signals, but we can use it to say "beginning", when we like. Also we can end each transmission in the same sort of way, and afterwards we can detach the word "end".

But can one really construct a language with two words? I could introduce something more. I could, perhaps, make a sort of negation: by reversing an organised succession of signals, either one of mine or one of his. It is not quite a free negation, but all the same a manner of denying or cancelling something. I can declare "it is not so", hence I am communicating something. I can - what? I could introduce notions of quantity like "much" or "little", or of intensity "quick" and "slow", and even the idea of unity (for instance, a regular group inserted between two jammings), of plurality, or perhaps some mathematical operations. I would still have to find an abstract way of expression without indicating every time that this is a unit or here is a relation. But assuming that I were to find a language for mathematical notions, what would I be communicating? A certain mathematician once said: "Mathematics is the only science that does not know what it is talking about." But we ought to be communicating something: that on Terra there are trees, that in the cosmos there is hydrogen, or that everything is reduced to electro-magnetic compounds. How can I achieve this?

I needed only a few days to be fully convinced that I could achieve my cosmic days. I had no excuse whatsoever: like having no possibility of experimenting with my cell-neighbour, having no books or that after all everything depends on the replay I would get from my contact with the cosmos. There was no room here for "wait a minute, I'll..." I am a good-for-nothing. I have nothing to say to mankind, so I do not deserve to be free. Yes, that's it, I do not deserve my freedom. I felt that had I known how to solve the problem, the prison gates would have opened: even if there had been no question of my pledge, of the service to mankind, etc., etc., the prison gates would still have opened. When someone has something essential to say, the walls do not hold out.



It is true that at Auschwitz or perhaps in the Soviet prisons there may have been some men who had very essential things to say, and the walls did not fall apart, or else they fell over them. But now these walls would have fallen. Perhaps this can be said differently: it is not always true that the man who knows or can do something essential had necessarily to see the light of day: but he who does not know or cannot do anything essential deserves to remain in the dark. It served me right. Let them sentence me for some ridiculous reason - just as they wish - for instance, because I declared once that socialism is for the rich, not for the poor. They are right. They judge badly, but they sentence well.

I had filled almost half the sheets of paper, and now I should have asked them to sharpen the pencil again. I did not. I remembered how a young boy, who was dear to me, once told me how he passed an exam in maths. He tried all manner of ways to solve the problem, filled four pages of his copybook and ended up by writing: "I don't know how to solve this problem." The teacher gave him a pass mark, because he had been honest. That was how I had to proceed now.

The next morning I pressed the button to ask to go and report. After the third ring the door opened and the warder came in with the orderly officer.

"Pack your things."

"I want to go and report to the commandant."

"Shut up and pack."

"But...what about these papers," I insisted, "they are very important!"

The officer took the papers I was showing him, glanced at them for a second, then exclaimed:

"Oh, that thing!" and tore them up. He added: "Carry out the order!"

I choked with indignation. What if those sheets of paper had contained some really precious writing? And why had they given me this chance of



expressing my thoughts? Suddenly I understood: they had feared for my sanity, seeing me so exultant. That was all...



CHAPTER SEVEN

In the jeep with curtains drawn, into which I was pushed, in order to be taken to a destination unknown to me, I started thinking again of the sadness of "I can't find the answer to this problem", which always confronts us, when faced with life's problems. We cannot find an answer to our problems: that is a fact - they solve themselves eventually - and still less can we solve the equation of our own life. How limited and uninteresting each one of us is after all. Intellectually one finds one's limitations in double quick time : speaking from the standpoint of philosophy, it is sufficient for a man to hear how others judge him, in order to find out his limitations, and from a moral standpoint, after two days in prison one knows everything about oneself.

It seems incomprehensible to me why so much importance has been given to that inscription on the temple in Delphi : "Know Thyself". Know myself? Who, me, Thersites, that worthless individual in the Iliad? Or who, me, Smerdiakov that worthless chap in 'The Brothers Karamazov'? Anyone, at any human level, must feel how very uninteresting he is as an object of research. It is interesting to know about Nature: it is interesting to forget about oneself and endeavour to know the Good God or "the Great All", like the Indians do : it is interesting to know human beings, their manners and customs and a little bit of everything. But to know oneself? Taken as such, this piece of advice is one of those very absurd famous maxims of the world - there are a few more - of which it is hard to believe that they are uttered by Greeks. If, for modern man, with his interest in the subject and the human person, this is quite absurd and only has a significance in Socrates' sense : "study thyself that thou mayest see thou knowest absolutely nothing."

It is quite pathetic to see what pains certain scholars take to dig up new meanings and justifications for this aphorism. The majority say that by "know thyself" man is encouraged to recognise his shortcomings in front of the Gods, and this is, practically, what the second advice in Delphi is saying: "Nothing too much". Others, less sophisticated, say it is a warning to the man-in-the-street that he had better recognise his subordination to others: "Shoemaker, keep to thy last". But, there are also those over-sophisticated people who claim, neither more nor less, than that, according to some of the ancients, because man suffers several reincarnations, he should know them all through



memory, then he would know who he really is. This is the point that has been reached as a last resort. But, granting that someone were able to know his past lives, would this really be so sensational? To know that I was a cobbler, afterwards a not too brave soldier, then an insignificant little wine merchant? I'd rather study the various types of salamander, as a friend of mine is doing,

It was a somewhat crazy Englishman, if I remember rightly, who had something sensible to say in this respect. He started with the remark that there were several inscriptions on the facade of the temple at Delphi: among others there was the mysterious letter "E", which must have had a deeper meaning, perhaps a religious one, and there was also the following one "Give surety, and trouble is at hand", which could in no case have a religious meaning. In time, only these three inscriptions were remembered: "Know thyself", "Nothing too much" and "Give surety, and trouble is at hand"; but the oddest thing is that all scholars, old and modern, speak with equal gravity of the first two inscriptions and nothing at all about the third one. But this is precisely the one that gives the clue! It tells us who the principal patrons of the oracle were, namely the tradesmen, the merchants, the businessmen of Greece.

Of course, from time to time, at moments of great historical importance, the State itself would consult the oracle, or perhaps some potentates from Asia Minor, Africa, Sicily... But the regular incomes - during those fifteen centuries of the oracle's existence - could have come only from the inexhaustible daily needs of ordinary men seeking advice or the disentanglement of some of their problems. The inscription, though, would not be only for these men. "Know thyself", which is of no use to a State or to a colonising expedition, is full of meaning for a shipowner or a merchant, who wants to know how far he can launch out in business, "Nothing too much" meaning "do not embark on too vast a venture"; and, above all, be careful not to give guarantees to others, or you risk getting into trouble. This is the size to which one of the famous maxims of mankind is reduced, if one thinks not of its possible meaning, but of its object, which is oneself....

The jeep had stopped for some time now, and the driver had got out. The officer who sat next to him, and who was probably taking me to my new destination, also made to get off.



"Don't let me catch you trying to get out of here," he told me. "Here, have a cigarette!"

"I'd rather you let me have that newspaper you were reading," said I, taking a chance.

"You've got a hope!"

Are they not ridiculous? They were afraid to let me know what went on in the world. But we did not need newspapers to tell us that, politically, things were being relaxed in the world at that moment, and that, if the regime here was well-off, things would be looking brighter for us prisoners too. I was sure that at that hour a few warm-hearted people all over the world were interceding for our freedom. I could imagine them invoking the UN Charter and the Human Rights Declaration (even if some of us claimed - how sincerely I am not quite sure - that they had no right to be free...) In our time credit is being given to the individual. Every human being represents a human chance and a deeper human reaction is expected to come from us, the victims of our Time.

In reality though, we are not the most interesting human examples of the day: we are not the ones who give that "knowledge of man up to his limits", by which the human being has always been defined. We are just the last wave - let us hope it really is the last of one of the evils of this century. Something more interesting is happening now to the human race: as far as even we, there in the cells, would learn, in the developed countries of Europe and America a first wave of humanity was being confronted with prosperity on a scale hitherto unknown. Throughout history there have been encounters with high material standards of certain groups, castes or cliques, but those high standards contained something corrupt and corruptive, the more so as there was no question of any high values of civilisation, it was just a matter of self-indulgence and hedonism. Now, for the first time, well-being - at least in one part of the world and for one historic moment - is being taken for granted. This could be a healthy sign in man: what will he be giving us next? In any case, it could be a decisive test for European Man, who has always so firmly believed in material values.



If the full satisfaction of material needs does not in itself bring happiness, then half of the ideal of communism is debased with one stroke : but the capitalist ideal is completely debased. The fact that capitalism has won the race is of secondary importance. Something is happening, which is beyond both at present: the materialistic ideal of European Man is being put to the test, and with it European Man himself.

European man has waived aside everything. "Leave me alone, you gods, philosophical doctrines, Church and traditions. I know best what is good for me." Since the eighteenth century to this day the individual has acquired more rights than he ever had before in history. The totalitarianisms that have survived, are ashamed of the liberties they once dared to take with the individual, not only by oppressing him but for having tried to transform him, as they had. All revolutions, and especially all the material changes that took place in the last two hundred years, have not served just a few privileged classes, but the individual in general. Brother I has won the battle : and even when he is being threatened by the emergence of a WE - some type of collectivism, even going as far as Teilhard de Chardin's strange idea of a final association of consciences in one superior mind - it is still Brother I who is the beneficiary. The individual has succeeded in being - and still is - the one for whom all things are done - barring the Asians, who are devoid of individuality. For, as Goethe says, what is the good of all this waste of suns and planets (historical) revolutions and technological-scientific revolutions, (we would say), if at the end of it all a human being is not happy?

And, judging by the news that reached us even there in our confinement, we knew that man was, ultimately, not happy. Pray for the prosperous modern man. He, in his consumer society, has something of the characteristics of a courtesan: "I don't like this champagne; do something to amuse me..." I am not sure whether we, who were deprived of even the most elementary pleasures, would eventually have a healthier attitude, when coming face to face with Joy. But we, out there, were aware of something, which the Western peoples in their affluent society do not realise: this is the first encounter of humanity with widespread welfare, and perhaps there will not be a second one too soon! In principle, there ought to follow an "era of leisure": in fact, though, it is not at all sure that the idyllic moment prevalent today in Europe and the United States is going to continue for long.



The individual is in for a terrible test - I mean, the individual as understood and respected by Europeans, not the Indians or the Chinese - the universe of the individual ego is at stake, the little imbecile, contained in each of us. This limited individual - for whom the advice in Delphi to know oneself hardly had the shadow of a meaning - this individual has won the game. The little imbecile is at the wheel of his car, and goes off from the boredom of a few days' work to the boredom of a weekend. Pray for him!

And we, who are thirsting for all the good things of the earth, from our daily cigarette to the freedom of taking a stroll without a warder, we call out to that humanity living in so idyllic an hour: "Be careful what you do, for you are the ones who, with your joy or your disgust, are answerable for European Man, and indeed for Man himself."

While the jeep now finally came to a stop, and I was ordered to get out, I addressed myself once more in thought to humanity with an uneasy: "Be careful!", and stepped onto the running-board.

"Be careful, you idiot!" shouted the warder, seeing me tripping and falling over. "We don't want any broken necks here!"

I picked up as quickly as I could, the things which had dropped out of my suitcase when it opened during my fall and, with a kick in my backside, I was ordered to:

"Go and stand against that wall, and wait until I come for you!"

I went to the wall rather shamefacedly, because of all that was happening to me, which was for the greatest part my own fault. The oracle was right: know thyself!



CHAPTER EIGHT

In this place no goggles had been given us, so that I could see very clearly the vault, in whose depths so many lives were sure to be wasting away. This time I was to be together with many more men in the cell. But, would I meet someone who would be as dear to me as Alex had been? I had taken with me - as it were, like in an envelope - the third movement for my morning exercises, which he had shown me. I would start doing it one day in memory of him. And who could tell? We might meet again...

I saw immediately that Alex was not in the lofty vault, into which I was brought. Twenty-five or thirty heads popped up from the wooden three-tiered bunks - it was late at night - in order to gaze at the newcomer. I heard a voice calling to me: "Come up here: I know you." And then to the others: "Now we shall have another one here, who can give us lectures."

I climbed up to the third bunk, where this 'friend' of mine was: he was a doctor, who had heard me lecturing on one occasion or another. When I started undressing I realised that it was cold: the one and only, but very large window that was at ground level, was wide open, although it was very cold outside.

"Don't you close the window at night?" I asked, shyly.

We discussed the matter all the evening, whether to close it or not. Then, a swallow flew in. "Look there it is." (I saw it, indeed, perching on the hot shade of the lamp above the door, as if seeking for a place to build a nest): after that, nothing more was said.

I, too, stopped feeling cold. I placed my clothes at my feet and started to talk in whispers to the doctor. He was not yet forty and had never had a chance to practice, because it had been discovered that in the past, when he was a student, he had vaguely participated in a "counter-revolutionary" movement. After years and years in this place he had become embittered. Communism? They were only interested in what happened in Russia (and nothing happened there). The modern world? A biological failure. The fact that the younger generation were so much taller was something morbid: the trend towards free love a sign of the degeneration of the species: the



deterioration of the nervous system was rapidly reaching the point of incurability.....

The following day I watched the daily routine in the cell. Every newcomer was allowed one day to adapt himself : after that the “lessons” began. One could learn with alacrity anything: the rudiments of anatomy, physics, history, theology, above all, foreign languages. What struck me was the need for accuracy of those in our situation. Men, who could not form a proper sentence in English, knew perfectly not only the eleven nouns that differ in the plural, but almost the entire table of irregular verbs in the English language. That everyone knew precisely what the Seven Wonders of the World were, was not at all surprising. The men learnt diligently, by heart, the complete list of names of the Roman Emperors and the years of their reigns, the names and places of the principal families of the Renaissance, as well as the succession of the Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church. One of them caused quite a sensation in the cell, when he offered a complete list of the dynasties of China!

This need for accuracy seemed to me so significant - not only for these men, but perhaps also for the mentality of modern man - that, when lecture time came, and I was asked, as a newcomer, to say something, I could not refrain from speaking about “Accuracy and Truth in the Contemporary World”, a theme that had haunted me for a long time. (It’s lucky Alex can’t hear me, I thought).

“What is happening to us, here in prison, is also happening to the contemporary world. Everything around us has crumbled: we know nothing of our families: we have no profession, no activity, neither have we an identity any longer, except the rudimentary one of our undermined physical person and our ultimate moral character, as long as it can last. Some of us are not even sure that what they have done was right, whether they have supported the right cause and whether they are here as innocent victims, or, nevertheless, bear some guilt. In this chaos into which we have been thrown, we need to be sure of something, anything.

Like a man who clings to a post so as not to lose his balance, we too are searching for pillars of support, for reassurances, or for substitutes, such as the precise knowledge of things. We want to know something that exists and



does not change: something that does not depend upon the whims of men and of rulers, something as sturdy as that famous Grammar, of which even poor old Stalin, towards the end of his life, had to admit that it was invulnerable. The names of the Roman Emperors are carved in stone. We, on the other hand, and our lives, are - at least, for the present - merely names traced in sand.

“But, this is how mankind feels today. It, too, is in prison. It has no more heavens, no more relatives in the heavens: it has no more nature around it, nor any nature divinities: mankind is incarcerated in a cosmic prison, trying to escape from Terra, or at least, to communicate with a neighbour in the Cosmos: but there is no neighbour to be found. Mankind has given up myths long ago, to say nothing of superstitions and prejudices: it has put an end to “Truth”, whether religious or philosophical, or uncontrolled dogmas of tradition, in favour of a multitude of trifling, local truths, with the result that it feels lost in chaos. This is when precision seems to be of paramount importance.”

“It has not always been so. Up to a certain moment in the past, cultures were based only on the search for Truth, not for precision. This kind of culture always brought man into a state of intoxication, or religious frenzy. Not only mythological or religious cultures were of this type, even secular disciplines followed this pattern. Pythagorism was a form of sacred frenzy: the pre-Socratic thinkers were in a sort of trance when they declared that everything is water, or, that everything is air or fire: Plato urges one to enthuse over Ideas, which one rediscovers because one has met them “in another existence”. Everything was under the spell of Truth - until the appearance of Aristotle: he was the first sober, down-to-earth philosopher of European culture, whose thoughts were orientated towards exactitude. (There are other cultures today that are still in a state of religious intoxication.)”

“Like us today, Aristotle was no longer intoxicated with “truths”, and I think he would feel quite at home in our world. He would be delighted to find that people are, at last, eager for accuracy, as he wished them to be. More than one third of his work is a selection of zoological or botanical data, like the following: ‘the insects with a longer span of life possess, in the depression below their diaphragm, a thin membrane, which the cricket rubs in order to cool itself, and this results in chirping sound.’ The same Aristotle drew up a



list of innumerable laws of the various Greek cities: that is not all, he compiled - the acme of the spirit of precision! - a table of all the winners of the Olympic Games. You realise what this meant: Olympic Games had been held for several hundreds of years before, and he wanted neither more nor less than to draw up a record of the thousands and thousands of names of all those winners!"

"No wonder that all this precision - beginning, of course, with the table of the Ten Categories, the table of syllogistic rules, the table of virtues - made such an impression on the centuries that followed. On the other hand, it is not surprising that Christianity endeavoured to revive the religious intoxication, and went as far as to take upon itself the Aristotelian accuracies, and turn them all into one TRUTH. We all know what happened in the Middle Ages. Later on, Man became wide-awake, in fact illuminism sobered him up so radically, that he could not bear to drink any longer at the fountain of the elixir of Truth. Then the real methods of exactitude, the exact sciences - which the ancients lacked - began to play their part, namely, the experimental sciences and mathematics. This was the end of religious intoxication."

"But, the spirit of accuracy was still not satisfied. Mathematics is the most precise and exact thing we have in the world: it is as eternal as the pyramids, of which it is said that they will endure to the end of Terra. Now, just imagine someone were to take up the problem of consolidating the pyramids. Well, with just a little exaggeration, this is what happened to our culture: the thinkers took up the problem of making accuracy more accurate, making more sure, what was already intrinsically sure, in other words, consolidating the mathematics. This is what the science called "the logic of mathematics", has tried to do. It is true that it got somewhat entangled in a few paradoxes, but the spirit of exactitude had not given in, and cannot give in."

"Besides, the spirit of accuracy is active everywhere, not only in the exact sciences. History, for instance, can no longer be written without accuracy. People today simply have to know exactly what happened, and how it happened, in the past. Ernest Renan - a French historian of the last century - wanted to see exactly when and how Jesus Christ had lived: so, he went to the Holy Land, and proceeded with scientific methods to reconstruct the Event. Do you know what happened to him? He found the traces of Jesus of Nazareth, but lost the footsteps of Jesus Christ."



“If this sort of thing happens in culture, things cannot be very different in life and in every day history. We no longer have any use for Utopias, modern man says to himself, although still hoping to find them (like the paradoxes of the logician). We have no use for utopian socialism, what we need is scientific socialism. And so we find ourselves enmeshed in a culture of the exact.”

“But I must no longer talk to you about this version of the spirit of accuracy. We, who live under a communist regime, all know what planification means: how controlled the life of each of us is: how everything takes places exactly according to plan, even the elections and the meetings, and how precisely our children’s destinies are planned by the “engineers of souls”.... To what end? Nobody seems to be quite sure about that, as that would appertain to Truth or myth. For the present, there is a need for accuracy in everyday history, neither can we do without it in any of the sciences. Nor do the latter know whereto they are leading us. One of the great contemporary physicists said: ‘We know now that we do not know where science is leading us to’.”

“But the scientists have to go on and on, nevertheless. One cannot do without accuracy, but empty accuracy by itself is blind. We have seen some communists weeping: ‘after all the terror and sacrifices imposed upon one generation, and now upon a second one, the result is a bitter one,’ they said. We know that Ernest Renan also wept - in his own way - at the end of his life: in his autobiography he confesses that ‘ces petites sciences conjecturales’, that is, the sciences of history, have led him nowhere. Specialists know that Frege, the logician, also wept when, having come to the end of his endeavours, a younger logician, called Bertrand Russell, showed him that his whole structure was proved wrong by one paradox. Modern man has proved himself quite extraordinary with his spirit of accuracy, but, in a way, one ought still to pray for him.”

“Indeed, instead of admiring and, simultaneously, bemoaning the fact that modern man has put exactitude in the place of Truth, we could, perhaps, adopt the English solution: the English know what they are doing: they have left precision to machines - which they themselves have invented - and to the sciences: but, with regard to everyday life and to politics, they kept to the “wait and see” attitude. London, the English themselves declare, was designed by a drunken architect... But, then, not everybody has the ability to behave in



a disciplined manner in the midst of disorder. That is why values in England have survived, whereas those of other countries have been laid waste."

"One cannot live without real values, or without a sense of Truth, but, modern man is not prepared to wear vine leaves in his hair. Or, in a way, if you like - he is intoxicated with rationalism. Let us pray for him."

".....and for the Communists?" a voice asked.

Suddenly I was disconcerted. They do not want to forget either. I had thought that Alex was not in this cell, but now, all at once, I saw him there, reproduced twenty-five or thirty times over.....



CHAPTER NINE

The next day I was given the job of pouring the water for washing, because my cell-mates did not think I was strong enough to carry buckets or to do any similar tasks. The first thing that astonished me, was the different way in which every man washed, whether it was his hands, or his face, and after only a few days I could tell, just by watching their hands, who it was that was washing, and even his personality.

When the work was done, some of the men began to question me about the things I had said the day before.

“What is truth, if not accuracy?”

“How can you say it is all the same, whether you are free or imprisoned?”

(I had not said anything of the sort!). Only the doctor, whose bunk I shared, seemed to be pleased with what I had said.

“It is bad for everybody, so it is all right: it’s all in the order of things.”

There was another chap who, as well as the doctor, agreed with me. He was an intelligent looking young peasant, who declared that he had not understood very well what I had said, but felt that I was right.

The reason why I got away without further explanations was that it was the day we were searched. We were all ordered out of the ward and into the passage, and lined up, facing the wall, while our bunks and clothes were being searched. This scene of men, lined up facing a wall, reminded me of a passage in a book, though I could not at that moment remember what particular book it was. About a quarter of an hour after we had returned to the ward, I remembered, and smiled.

“What are you laughing at? Hey you, over there!” The question was asked by a warder, who had remained behind to watch, while we were making our beds and tidying up our belongings.



"I'm not laughing. I was only smiling," said I, stupidly.

"You laughed!"

"I smiled."

"You laughed!" he thundered, thereby winning the argument.

I realised how absurd I had been to try to oppose him in that situation.

He resumed: "Why did you laugh?"

I thought I had better not involve any of my pals in this ridiculous situation, and decided to tell the truth: "This scene reminded me of something I read in a book."

"What book?"

"'Le Zero et L'Infini' by Arthur Koestler."

"Whooooo?"

I repeated the name of the author, which, of course, did not mean anything to him.

"What was in that book?"

I gulped, feeling that I could neither retreat nor invent anything.

"There is a scene like this one, in which some prisoners were ordered to stand in a corridor with their faces to the wall."

"And what's so funny about that?"

"Nothing. Just that in the book the scene ended in a different way."

"How?"



This imbecile was beginning to get on my nerves with his insistence, so I thought I'd tell him the truth, and have done with it.

"In the book a pistol was pointed at the prisoners' heads."

Everyone froze. For a moment even the warder seemed paralysed. Suddenly he screamed: "Provoker!", and rushed at me, grabbing my jacket, until he ripped it off my back. Then he gripped me by the scruff of my neck, and shouted: "Solitary confinement for you!"

The solitary confinement consists of being put in a dark cell, containing a sort of stone shelf, and there is also a hole in the floor, in place of a lavatory. When one is in solitary confinement, one goes a whole day without any food at all, just a bowl of warm water at midday: the next day one gets half a ration. As I was only in my shirt, I started moving my arms and legs to warm myself. A quarter of an hour later, another man, also in his shirt, was thrown into the cell.

"Now you can both laugh together," said the warder, and locked the door.

I looked at my fellow sufferer, who, indeed, was smiling.

"This sort of things has to happen sometimes," said he in a friendly tone.

"What are you being punished for?" I asked in a whisper.

"They found a mother-of-pearl button in my pocket."

"Well...?"

"Well, don't you know? If you have a mother-of-pearl button, you can rub it against a bit of string, and produce a spark and light a cigarette end, or relight the fire, if it has gone out."

He certainly had more experience than I had, and showed me that we could sit back to back on the stone bench, and feel a little warmer. Without asking any questions, he started telling me about himself :



“I have been here four years, and have another three to serve, for reasons of mirth. I had an accountant’s job, and we used to have political meetings at work, which, of course, bored us to distraction. We could not even laugh at the speaker’s jokes - for, as you probably know, the speaker had been advised to brighten up their discourses - which they read out to us - with the occasional witticisms. So, I suggested to a few of my colleagues, that they should utter three guffaws: “Haw-haw-haw” after every joke. Our laughs became infectious, and were adopted by everyone at the meeting. This went on for some time, until, after three or four meetings, the party official in charge realised what was going on. He started an investigation, and ended up by finding me out as the culprit, because I was known by all as a practical joker. I knew I was going to be arrested, so I ran away from home: I didn’t seek shelter with any of my friends so as not to get anyone into trouble, so I travelled by train all over the country for about two years. I had got into the habit of travelling without a ticket, and felt quite at home on the train. Finally I got fed up, and gave myself up. I was convicted as an instigator and enemy of the socialist order.”

“In fact, I don’t just enjoy laughing: I am really interested in the problem of laughter. I had already, long ago, begun to study this. It’s an odd thing in man, laughter...”

“Reading and thinking about it, I discovered something people don’t always realise: that human beings laugh mostly at other human beings. Laughter is something social: but, at the same time it is extremely personal, and it’s from this point of view that the problem interests me, in order to find out about people. The way every person laughs. I had begun to make a list: there is Homeric laughter, hearty laughs, outbursts of laughter, laughing through clenched teeth, ironical, sardonic, acid, bitter or forced laughter: to laugh into one’s beard, to chuckle: hysterical, stupid, intelligent, crystal clear, stifled laughter, in one’s sleeve and so many other ways of laughing, which could deserve to be classified.”

“Of course,” he went on, “it would also be interesting to see why people laugh, and at what they laugh. In this same context one can also characterise the periods of history. In the Middle Ages, men laughed at other things than those, at which we, or the Ancients, laugh. When I began to study this problem,



I came across the case of a wise man of Antiquity, Parmeniskos by name, who, one fine day found he could no longer laugh. So he went to the gods to ask them to give him back the gift of laughter, but failed to obtain his wish : on his way back from those high places, he saw a very clumsy, wooden statue of the great mother of Apollo, and burst into laughter. To say nothing of the goddess Demeter, who, after her daughter, Persephone, was abducted and carried off to Hades, wandered about thinking she would never be able to laugh again, until one day she saw Baubo, her host's wife, picking up her skirts. There must be something in these legends, as well as in the problem, why the yellow races laugh less than the white people. I never had the chance to get very far with my research, besides, the problem of why mankind laughs in different periods of history belongs to the History of Culture and of Human Nature and these are beyond me."

"I am really only interested in the manner in which people laugh: the way they laugh, not in general, but each one in particular. As I have a gift for impersonating, I used to make people laugh by mimicking the laughter of various human types, like the movie-star, the stupid man, the boss, or else that of my colleagues, or the leading personalities of the day. Then I would go on to imitate the laughter of heroes of literature - and now I am hoping to re-read Dickens or Balzac, when I am free, and find out how their heroes laughed. And so I came to thinking about how the heroes of History laughed. I wondered how Napoleon or Wellington laughed, or Henry the Eighth, or Filippo Neri, the saint, about whom it is said that he was merry. I easily imagined the laughter of Saint Francis of Assisi, because it surely must have been the natural laughter of the pure in heart. But, when I came to Jesus, and wondered how He must have laughed, I stopped."

We were silent for a while. This change from levity to gravity was interesting. This fellow, to whose back mine was glued, seemed to have an independent mind. In any case, he must have been completely detached.

"How could you endure travelling by train for such a long time?" I asked him.

"At first it was wonderful. Just try to imagine: no roots anywhere, no ties, no home, no job, not even a destination to your journey: what Freedom! I had



the feeling that all the other people were plants compared with me. I had saved a bit of money, so that, with my coat over one arm and my suitcase in my other hand, I travelled at random. Naturally I chose the trains that were cheap and went far. I was like a spirit, floating freely among the other travellers, who were encumbered by matter, cares and their destinations. That was when I realised the foolishness of the man who travels, the stupidity of being like a stone that had been thrown into a flowing stream. 'Is this train for....? Am I not travelling in the wrong direction....? Where shall I put my suitcase...? etc.' He doesn't know anything, doesn't understand anything, and his only human reaction is fear. After a while, the stone slows down a little, and flows with the stream, but he is still a stone. I talked to people, and sometimes found out interesting things about them: I learnt what was happening in the world, but, inwardly, I was challenging them all the time with my freedom. They had to, and wanted to, get somewhere. They were heavy: they were loaded: how they panicked when the train was late, which to me was a blessing! I seemed to have my own individual flying apparatus: and, incidentally, I do believe that man will travel happily only when he had his own individual apparatus, like the birds, not in boxes along railway lines, road or air corridors previously mapped out, as we do now..."

"I must confess, though, that I did participate in the life of these wingless creatures, so lacking in independence. When serious delays occurred, I used to make comments, to gather information, and voice my protest with even greater indignation than the others. Delays were to my advantage, but somehow, I still felt a compulsion to arrive precisely....nowhere. At the end of the line I alighted, tried to find a room near the station, rested, and then set off again. My money was dwindling: after about a year I began travelling 'for free' as they say."

"How can one travel 'for free'?"

"There are two methods: one is an arrangement with the ticket collector, the other is on the black market. If you choose the black market, it can only be done on short distances. So, I preferred the 'arrangement'. I went on the platform, before the train was due to leave, and carefully studied the ticket collector's face. Judging from the way he looked, I travelled second class, because it's more crowded: but, I would come across the odd collector, who,



for a small tip, would let me sleep in a first class compartment, and, after taking the tickets from those who were getting off, he would drop one into my pocket. Another official would take my identity card from me, and, in case of an inspection, would tell the inspector he was going to report me to the authorities. It was all right when the trains were overcrowded, but that didn't happen regularly: when there were lots of students it was more reassuring: the official used to tell us when the special inspector would be around. When there was only one inspector it was easy: the difficulty arose when the control was done with two inspectors, one at each end of the train, so you get caught in the middle. You can hear the click of the punching-machines, and you run from one to the other: in the emergency you climb onto the roof of the carriage and climb down further back. Once I found myself near a group of Russian tourists, I pretended to be one of the group, and talked to them in Russian, as well as I could. They understood soon enough what I wanted, and saved me. They even told me that this kind of 'sport' was practised also in the Soviet Union, and that these clandestine travellers were called 'hares'."

"It's quite true, you know, and the unpleasant thing is that you really feel like a hare. You've got to be on the look-out all the time, and cannot enter into a long conversation with anyone: you cannot read a book, or even allow yourself to become engrossed in your thoughts. Apart from the dream-like situation of this way of travel, my life had really become like that of a hare. What did I gain from this kind of freedom? My sole reward was Escape. I could go on running, for ever escaping, anywhere, that was all. After two years I began to long for armchairs, carpets and people, real people, not these ghostlike creatures I met on the train. I was yearning for trees that were motionless, for the sight of grass. I gave myself up."

"I don't think you've found too many carpets here in prison," I said.

"No," he answered - (I could feel he was smiling). "But I have kept with me a magic carpet, a taste for flight. Even in this place, among all these overburdened men, I feel a lighter sort of being. I try to make people talk, I help them to dream. Haven't you yourself felt how much and how well one can dream.....in here?"



Three days later we were separated.

“Look for me when you come out,” he said, before leaving me. “My name is Ernest. Just ask for Ernest at the Town Hall, personnel department: everyone knows me there.”

“How d’you know you’re going to get back to your old job?”

“I’m pretty sure of that. They need people like me. I’m a cheerful sort of bloke, I’m jolly, I make people laugh. Their world is so sad...”



CHAPTER TEN

When I was allowed to return among my friends, I was given a most affectionate welcome. They had been sorry for me, because of my naive behaviour during the incident about the Arthur Koestler book, and now they seemed to trust me even more than before. Suddenly I remembered the swallow, and asked the doctor what had happened to it.

"It changed its mind," he said, "about building its nest here: it never returned."

A great pity, I thought to myself, for, had it made its nest here, it would have meant that this was not such a bad place after all.

The doctor began telling how, because "lecturers" had become scarce in the room, he had been obliged to hold a lecture, how he had spoken about the demographic explosion, and had finally managed to antagonise everyone.

"How was that?" I asked.

"I spoke candidly," he said, "without any humanitarian prejudices: I told them there would probably be two demographic explosions, not just one, and that, although the first would be quite acceptable to mankind, the second one would be totally unbearable from all standpoints."

"And which is the second one?" I asked.

"I'll tell you presently. We have all heard something or other about the first demographic explosion, and even in this place every better informed newcomer tells us about the anxieties of the West. Even if birth-control were to be applied henceforth, the population increase would still become overwhelming by the end of the century. Now, my reasoning is this: if this sudden outburst of population is a menace to mankind, we must first of all find its cause. This everyone knows: it is the decrease in the infant death-rate. So what would be more logical than to deny all medical assistance to newborn babies for a period of two, or three, or even five years? And, of course, in this case natural selection would also play its part."



"But this is criminal," I said.

"That is what our friends said too."

"Besides, let me remind you of what a contemporary scientist has said, namely, that all progress has been made against natural selection."

"Well," the doctor resumed, "I came back to this point later, and accepted the view that, after all, this would be the problem of a few thousand, million young people, who would use their brains and energy to find a solution. But, what should be done about the second demographic explosion, that of the old people?"

"How d'you mean?"

"I mean that, until now, the population has grown, as you might say, from the outside, that is, through the appearance of new human beings. Now it will start growing also from the inside, because of the non-disappearance of the old human beings. One can be almost sure that life is going to become gradually longer, and that man will live to the age of 120 or 140. But, this lengthening of life to twice the average age will mean twice the number of people on the globe. Unfortunately, it is old age that will be lengthened, at least for the time being. This reminded me (as I was telling our friends) of the story of the man in Antiquity called Tithanos, Priam's brother, who had obtained from a goddess the gift of eternal life, but had forgotten to ask for youth as well, and so had remained an old man for Eternity. So, let me put the question: if three thousand million young people can be supported by mankind, would the maintenance of three thousand million old people be equally bearable?"

"You see, medical science, with all its retinue of auxiliary or secondary sciences, is triumphant today. It has avenged itself on the irony, to which it was subjected in the past - as is still the case with meteorology today - by such men as Moliere, for instance, or by those who could not forget that the surgeon's ancestor was the barber. Today, as I said, medicine is triumphant: but has she not triumphed too well, tending to prolong life beyond its natural limits? Well, then something must be done. By consensus, in the interest of mankind, the science of medicine could, and should, postpone putting into



practice its methods for the extension of life. Not all scientific progress is revealed to the public immediately: they say, for instance, that there already exists an individual flying apparatus, but the army is keeping it secret: then, there is artificial rain, and so many other inventions.....on the other hand, doctors and physicists don't keep anything secret. If they can prolong life, they will do it. That is why something has to be done to prevent them from doing so, for the present at least.

"When I said that, somebody asked : "You mean we should 'put the old people on top of a tree, and then shake the tree'?"

"That rather upset me," the doctor continued, "so I said: 'No, we just have to persuade them to climb up the tree of their own accord.' However, the problem will only arise in twenty or thirty years, when we too shall be old. I say this: we must understand that we shall be super-numerary, and that we shall be polluting the spiritual life, politics, culture, public taste, history itself. Until a solution is found for extending active life, they will have to use their 'wisdom' and take certain measures themselves. For the time being, perhaps, it wouldn't be a bad idea to seek some sort of noble justification, or some ethical or religious motives, for the right to commit suicide after a certain age. But the problem can be looked at from another angle: for centuries young men have been encouraged to be 'prepared to give their lives' for one thing or another, mostly for their country, or even for some more doubtful or controversial purpose or ideal. Wars have always meant the massacre of the young. Could the old not be asked to do their bit of 'heroism' for a change? In the meantime, one could do what I have heard that some old people do in Japan today, that is, to take part in sporting events: but, it would have to be done in mass numbers, and it would be compulsory. This could hasten a coronary thrombosis."

"At this point all those present asked me to stop," the doctor confessed. "That theologian who is sitting there, talking to that rather agitated looking chap, said to me: 'It is not necessary for us to become brutes, just because we are in prison.' Of course, in a way he was right, I admit, but, honestly, don't you think there comes a time, when things have to be called by their right names?"

I looked at him endeavouring to see what lay behind that mask of cruelty.



“Do you know what I would do with you, when you get out of here, and will have to get a job? I would send you to a geriatric nursing home. I am sure you would be devoted to the old people.”

“Perhaps.” the doctor smiled, “because of a scientific interest in the problem of old age.”

“What is ‘geriatric’?” asked Matthew, the young peasant, who had listened to my talk about accuracy, and had just overheard my conversation with the doctor.

He seemed to wish to learn as much as he could. I explained, as plainly as possible, the meaning of the word, and started talking to him, only too pleased to relax a little after the conversation with the doctor. Prison life had not embittered Matthew: on the contrary, he told me that, although he was now imprisoned for the second time, he had come back to “University”! Nowhere else had he learned so much as here, about books, films, sciences and languages. Now he was learning four or five languages at the same time - badly, of course, but learning nevertheless.

“Why don’t you learn one or two languages well?”

“I don’t think I could, because I’m not well educated enough. But I would like to be able to contact anyone, just like those sailors, who have travelled a lot. I like people and am fascinated by their variety. One day, maybe, I shall also get out into the wide world. But, if you come to think of it, you can also travel while staying at home, if you know what I mean. I, for one, have experienced to the full the joys of trade, and that is why I am in this place for the second time. I simply cannot work in a factory or in an office: I’ll do anything for the sake of working in freedom. When I was 14, I left home to go to the nearest town: on its outskirts I met a group of youngsters in a field who were just forming themselves into two teams, and were going to play football for money. Well, to cut a long story short, I found myself in the house of the father of one of my fellow footballers, who was a shoemaker and had a little shop.”

“At first I was a bit alarmed when I learned that one shoe was made out of 24 parts, which had 24 different names. But later it became routine, and I just



got fed up, sitting in the workshop all day long. So I tried something more special. I went off on my own with just a few tools and materials in search of customers, like those chaps, who go about buying old clothes. So I followed one of these men for one whole day to see how he worked. He shouted 'Any old clothes, any old clothes' about a thousand times, but no one seemed to have any clothes to sell, as no one called him in. I thought he probably walked too fast, or, maybe he was just pretending, and in reality had something else up his sleeve. Well, I started in a different manner: I walked slowly along the road, stopping occasionally to talk to a child, or to some woman, who was standing at her gate, and then I would ask if there were any shoes or boots that needed mending: I had some good results. One should invent one's customers, one should create their needs for them, that is the art of business. Sometimes I was invited inside for a meal and anyway, I talked to all sorts of people, while I was repairing their footwear. Everything went beautifully, until one fine day I happened to run into a shoemaker's family, and asked whether they had anything to repair... I found myself at the police station, after which I was indicted for illegal practice and vagrancy. When I was set free, after having served a short sentence, I was sent to a factory."

"While I was working in this factory," said Matthew, continuing his story, "I think I began to understand why people today are not good people, and I mean everyone everywhere. I would not have remained there long, but working in the factory gave me the right to attend evening classes and so I could learn something. But, on the whole, I was not sorry to have worked in a factory. What I learned there, first of all, was that you cannot work happily in a factory, any factory. This is a serious thing for the world today, I thought to myself: it is like a curse which works upon the factory. Joy is, how shall I say?, a little "crooked", but in a factory everything goes on in straight lines. I don't mean only the footwear factories, where no one ever makes one whole shoe or boot, but just one or a few of the 24 component parts: but, as I said, life is bad in every factory. Man puts the machine in motion, and then, later, it's the machine that moves the man. Well, I said to myself, if the machine is so clever, why shouldn't it do all the work by itself?"

"This is exactly what is happening at present," I interrupted. "There already exist fully automated industries."



“So I’ve heard,” he said, “and I do believe that this is when all the advantages and disadvantages of the machine will come to light. But, for the present, I have seen only its bad side. To begin with, mind you, it makes you work without joy (my master shoemaker used to whistle, or hum a tune whilst he was knocking his nails in: in a factory nobody sings then you see, the machine breathes in a different manner: a man stops working on and off, for a while, heaves a sigh, exchanges a word or two....but there is something else, a sort of pollution - as they say nowadays - a pollution not only of the air or the environment (that’s their business, not mine), but a pollution of the soul of man. Nowhere else have I seen, for instance, more envy and jealousy than in the factory. They do so much work, earn so much: everything is measured. “And why should other people be allowed to make money in free professions?” the factory workers ask. They started with the tradesmen, then went on about doctors, until they had a go at waiters and hairdressers. Why should these men get tips? They, the factory workers, are the underdogs, and so they will remain, as long as there will be factories in the world.”

“Don’t worry,” the doctor chimed in, “the number of workers is diminishing continually, as well as the ploughmen. Someone who came into our room here for a short term, told us that in the United States, for several years already, more than 50 per cent of the working population is not in the manufacture of goods, but in ‘public services’ like schools, hospitals, banks and shops. But let me tell you that there too the people are dissatisfied.”

“I suppose the factory-spirit must have entered into them,” Matthew rejoined.

At that point I thought to myself: how could the Communists lock up young men as pure in heart as this one? How is it that they have not Nendeavoured to make followers out of just such men as these. Matthew told me that at the trial, the public prosecutor called him a ‘class traitor’.

“What will you do, when you get out of here?” I asked him.

“I shall go on being a ‘traitor’, if they don’t leave me alone. Nobody bothers them, so why do they have to keep on bullying everyone?”



I got up to stretch my legs a little. Whilst walking between the rows of bunks, I overheard snatches of conversation between the theologian and a chap in the next bunk who had seemed to me rather restless. After having been several years in a cell all by myself, or, on and off, with just one other inmate, I could not help being attracted by the variety of human specimens: Ernest, the doctor, Matthew, to say nothing of Alex. I walked to and fro several times between the beds, until the theologian noticed that, every time I passed them, I lingered and listened to what they were saying.

"Listen," he said to me when I stopped again, "come and meet an unusual sort of person. This is Engineer Goldstein," said he, by way of introduction. "He is discussing theology with me, because he wants to become a Christian. Maybe you can help me to understand him, I can't make him out very well."

Goldstein held out his hand to me: for one instant he avoided my eyes, as if out of shyness but a second later he enfolded me in a warm gaze.

"How can he understand what I want?" he said, "when I myself don't know too well how to put it? I would like to become a Christian because of my love for my people."

The theologian gave me the sort of look that implies 'you see what I mean....?'

I sat down beside them, and listened to their talk.

How strange are these encounters in prison: one finds oneself not in front of a person, but in front of a whole life. It is just that something has been turned upside down in time, and upside down with regard to life itself, as in the vision of Ezekiel, that prophet in the Old Testament, in which the bones become re-animated. When you come into such a room as this, what you find at first is one skeleton sitting next to another skeleton. Skeleton No 1 says something: so it acquires a voice. Then skeleton No 2 turns its cranium towards No 1: it has acquired a look. Skeleton No 1 invents a hand, and No 2 another hand. One skeleton brings into the world a mother, another one brings forth a brother: sometimes it happens that two skeletons quarrel, so they acquire fists, muscles, and they have revived fighting. In this place life seems to



renew itself bit by bit. You shake one skeleton and, suddenly there pops out of it like a jack-in-the-box, a job, a love, two children, a pistol forgotten in an attic, a capital punishment sentence, that has been commuted into hard labour for life...you give a jerk to another skeleton and there emerge, as by magic, large cities of the world, dream visions, a counter-revolution, a faithful dog, a challenge, etc., etc. Flesh and blood grow onto the bones gradually, and, as in a jigsaw-puzzle, there appear noses, mouths, movements, attitudes. Sometimes there are not sufficient pieces, and the skeletons remain incomplete, lacking a nose or a gesture, or else an ideal in life: at other times there can be too many pieces, so that, after you have built up a complete, real life, you have to add to it one or two, or even three, other potential lives with all their dreams and the fullness of their non-fulfilment. Then, one fine day, one of these skeletons, one of these shadows, picks up in its hand the history of the entire world, and throws it overboard.

Goldstein cannot detach himself from the fascination of being Jewish, and feels responsible for the destiny of his people. It is the only people that has transformed the most catastrophic defeats into victories, but also - Goldstein says - the only one that could turn victory into a defeat. It seems incredible to him that this people which has given Universality to the world, should now be so obviously retiring into its own particularism. It has given the world everything that is good, and has kept for itself only the bitterness. He cannot "comprehend" his people, and this fascinates him. Every nation has a stable place, a history, its own creations, its joys and its fatigue. His people has nothing of all these things: it has given to everybody, but has, as its own one and only creation, a book: the Old Testament. This was wrested from its original owners by other peoples who, inspired by it, created wonders of art, history and wisdom - which the Jews themselves were unable to do. No sooner had they built a temple than it was destroyed. They have never known real, complete joy, but they have never tired of wishing, of hoping, of fighting - for what?

"To this half of the world, which has been the decisive one for 2,000 years, they have given two great religions: Christianity and, indirectly but surely, Islam. Let us lay aside Islam, which seems to have borrowed only the fanatical side of the Jewish religion. But what a splendid gift it made to History, when it gave it the Christian religion, in which it refused to recognise itself at its very beginning, when it had the best chance to set its seal upon it - instead



of letting it be done by Greek-influenced Jews, like Paul, or even by the Greeks themselves - nor did the Jews accept Christianity later, when the Christian religion was accepted by Rome, and when the Jewish people, as a 'chosen people', could have had all the priorities they wished for. It seems incredible that they did not want to be the first people in the world. Or did they want to be the only people? The only saved ones?"

"Then something else followed. After they had given mankind religious Universality, for almost 2,000 years they prepared a secular Universality. What does this kind of Universality mean? It means living in Diaspora but being at home everywhere : it means commerce, instead of agriculture: using the currency instead of the goods : it means calculating, making up accounts, instead of judgments of moral values : being rational, not emotional: it means Mathematics, an abstract mind, a wish for mankind to be open-minded through reason and freemasonry, instead of being immured in religious fanaticism: it means translating everything into every possible language, interpreting anything and everything, bringing nations together and creating Internationals: it means considering the era of machinery as a stage in the education of mankind, not as a destruction, or a sublimation of Nature: it means eliminating Nature at all levels and on all planes, economic, political, religious, artistic or philosophic: it means declaring 'Deus, sine humanitas', instead of 'Deus, sine natura', like the heretic Jew, Spinoza!"

"All these things happened within 2,000 years. In 1945, after the immense sufferings endured under the brutal outbreak of a savage nature against the rational human being, my people had once more gained priority, thus lending the world a secular Universality of the purest type: solidarity between rational human beings. The Marxist International type of brotherhood already existed: they could, at that moment, have appropriated it, revitalised and illumined it. But, there existed also the super-historical rational being, more acceptable to, and less irritating for the rest of the world. I don't mean that the President of UNO ought always to be a Jew: but its Secretary should always be one. This is necessary, if the Jew is to be a link in the world, and if he alone is able to interpret this kind of new Testament."

"What have my people done instead?" asked Goldstein in conclusion. "They have founded a national State, have revived a local religion, a local



language: and they want to re-invent a local type of Nature: moreover, after having obtained a type of man, free from all animality, with a brain that is most akin to the electronic brain, we see them now endeavouring to reintegrate the Judaic type as regards animality, vigour, strength and fighting spirit. Almost like under Hitler, who encouraged the young to practice boxing, in order to make them more reactive and more aggressive.”

“I don’t really know whether the Jewish people are not preparing for a third type of Universality, which they will offer mankind in another 2,000 years: but I, myself am returning to the first one, which they gave to mankind, and I am asking to become a Christian, so that I can pray for the soul of my people.....”



CHAPTER ELEVEN

One day we were given 125 grammes of bread instead of 100 grammes. All the morning "lessons" that we used to have before being called out to the "solarium" (a small courtyard surrounded by high walls), were suspended in order to comment on the event together. These extra 25 grammes did not mean we were going to be free: they did not even complete the calories we needed, but they were extra! These extra 25 grammes, offered at the same time with other supplements - infinitesimal too - were appreciated to the full, and made us feel that we were being really well fed.

There is something magical in the way the good comes to you under these regimes: it comes slowly, in small doses, but irresistibly, when it does come, alas, only up to a certain point. Every day brings an improvement: a gentler push from the warder, a few beans in the soup, a newspaper left behind, as if inadvertently, the odd remark... "d'you think I like this?" from the warder and so on. Towards the end of my stay there, one cross-examiner did the unbelievable: he shook my hand! All these things accumulated, heaping delight upon delight : instalments of bliss. Of course, the evil under these regimes comes likewise, in small doses, and that is infernal. Not only does each day bring new deprivations and interdictions, but one feels for months ahead that one is going to be arrested. You see the rock rolling slowly towards you and, hypnotised, you stare at it. All prisoners say, they would prefer the evil to come all at once, from the very first, not gradually, and perhaps they are right. But they also would like good to come in one lump, and in their impatience, they disregard the excellent chain reaction of the good. Such a restrained release is a fine way of learning to take note of the little, unimportant things of life: it is a real initiation to life. What is one's life worth if one has no contact with its infinitesimal?

That day, we were not, as usual, taken for an airing in the tiny "solarium", but in a larger courtyard with a little grass. GRASS ! It was a fine day and to our surprise, we were asked to take off our shirts and tunics. We had never been allowed to do this outside before. Our sun-starved bodies now offended the light. While we were staring in wonder at each other, several officers and a lady appeared. She was a doctor, and proceeded to take our blood pressure. One of us heard what this was all about: they were going to ask us whether we wished to go to work. It was clear that we would not be forced to do so, and



this gave us hope for a better future : most of us wished to go to work, only Matthew refused, saying: "I prefer to remain at the 'University'. That sort of work drives you stupid, There I would be cleverer than my pals, and I don't like that."

When my turn came, I was told that my blood-pressure was 90.6 and the doctor shook her head. I heard her say to one of the officers: "They ought all to be left to recover for another month or two."

And these sorrowful, wretched creatures that we were wanted to combat, not a revolution - for this was simply a phantom, it never existed - but a regime that had been brought to power with the help of the largest army in the world, at the time. And they would do it again! But, like Don Quixote - who, in front of the painting representing Saint George or Saint Martin, felt that these saints had known what they wished to conquer whereas he did not - we were no longer quite sure of our aim. One thing we were quite sure of: we did not like this. It is probable that everyone, communists included, would be ready to fight to overthrow the regime, only because it mars the beauty of life and of the world. But, the trouble is, the other regimes are following suit. Some people here are blaming the Western world for not having created its own type of Communism in its own conditions. But its main fault is more serious : it has no model to offer, except a few great temptations. The whole world is under the spell of ugliness. Dulcinea, whom the exasperated Sancho shows to Don Quixote under the appearance of a peasant girl whom he met on the road accompanied by two others, really exists, but she is ugly because she is bewitched. It is at this point, when fighting has lost its meaning, when the Free World has exposed its own evil, that a counter-revolution in the name of Freedom would be great: one would be fighting to free the whole world from the spell of evil.

"I would like to talk to you on the subject of Don Quixote" said I, after our meal in the ward, when I was asked to speak.

"Look here," the theologian interrupted, "we've had enough of books and films."

"But this book is about us all," I insisted.



"We're sick and tired of ourselves too and of our Quixotisms!"

The theologian was the only one among us, who had really been active against the regime. He was more confident, and everything he said had more authority.

"We would like to know what we ought to do. We want practical solutions. We know very well that Don Quixote uttered profound thoughts - I remember the advice he gives to Sancho, when he is elected governor - but if he himself had had to govern during those three days, he would have been far worse than Sancho. This is the problem: what we do, not what we say. How can a proper State be created?"

How wonderfully fast the human being recovers his zest for life! Scarcely had we been given a supplementary 25 grammes of bread than the vanquished warriors were already thinking of their responsibilities, when they would emerge as conquerors. A State? A proper State? I asked myself.

I turned to the theologian. "I know of only one greater stupidity than the ideal State: the ideal Army. If the State and the Army are ideal, we're finished! There probably exist, to this day, Germans who must think that it really was a marvellous thing that their army should have resisted the whole world, twice. So what? If an army is so perfect that it drives people crazy, it is a curse. If a State works too well as a State, it is a misfortune for the individual. Still, all the Utopias wish to achieve just that: a perfect State. Mankind has been lucky that no one has yet attempted to create Plato's State: the totalitarian states of our era are nothing in comparison. Whenever I hear anyone complaining that they cannot obtain a passport to go abroad, I tell them that in Plato's State a citizen was not allowed beyond the walls before the age of 50, and even then he would have to be on a special mission. Luckily the day will come when the State, as such, will disappear, at least that is what the Communists say will happen. Sadly no one knows when..."

"That is precisely the reason," replied the theologian, "why we ought in the meantime to create States that are bearable. There is something incomprehensible about our states: we have all seen men going joyfully to war but we don't see anyone going happily to the income-tax office. I wonder why? After all, in both cases, the same thing is at stake: the State."



The theologian's remark interested me. I endeavoured to give an explanation. "In war one becomes a super-citizen whereas at the tax-office one is just an ordinary citizen. The State ought to create super-citizens also in times of peace. Or, let me put it this way: the State is obliged to restrict the individual but it should release the person."

"These are just more words," said the theologian. "It's as Nietzsche said, that the State ought to be a breeding-ground for geniuses. All right, but how is it to be done? Let us talk about something concrete, not just in a general way, what ought to be."

I felt I was cornered. An idea had actually occurred to me earlier, but I had not dared impart it to anyone, so naive did it seem. My Utopia, though, had one merit: it implied no upheaval: it was applicable anywhere, and needed only a few cheque-books (credit cards) and an administrative body.

"I have thought of a way," I began, "and I must tell you about it, however fanciful it might seem: it is simply Unlimited Credit. I visualise a State that gives unlimited credit, one in which only a few hundred citizens, at first, then several thousand and finally, Heaven-knows how many, would have a right to a bottomless credit-card."

"How d'you mean a credit-card?"

"Just a credit-card, and its owner would be able, like a millionaire, to pay out any sum of money anywhere: with the difference that, in this case, the money would not be limited, as is even a millionaire's, however wealthy he may be."

"What?! But, this is a crazy idea! You want to give a citizen the means of spending more than a millionaire?"

"My citizen would not spend as much as one or two good salaries: but the lack of limitation would be on his side, and with one stroke, he could put to shame the wretched millionaire!"

"But, you say that he would not dispose of as much as the millionaire...?"



“He would not be spending as much, because man does not really need too much: but, it is sufficient for him to know that he can dispose of however much he wishes: this would keep him quiet, and he would be minding his own business.”

“And what would society gain by this?”

“Well, here is the whole problem: society will begin to define itself, or to find its equilibrium and become stable through those individuals to whom it gives this credit. It would begin to know what kind of men it wants to breed. Doesn't it strike you as strange that we know how to elect Miss Austria or Miss Europe, but we haven't thought of choosing the model citizen of a society? We have plenty of prototypes of beauty. Could we not also have a prototype of humanity? Perhaps one of the things which have contributed to almost upset American society was the anarchy of prototypes. In the New World, precisely because it was new, there arose a definite need of prototypes. What trail should one follow? What should be one's aim? What sort of success should one covet? Hence all these idols, picked higgledy-piggledy from the ranks of heroes, adventurers, boot-polish 'kings', or newspaper-boys, who became Presidents of the Republic. But these idols could not, at the same time, be prototypes, because their success was a closed one and often strictly personal. The only kind of success open to all was that of money, and that is a sad one. In the Old World the prototype was offered by the aristocracy, but this has its limits, and at any rate it held no real message of humanity. So, if a State is to have responsibilities beyond administrative or national ones, it should have that of producing and supporting exceptional human beings.”

“Pensions or special favours on merit have always existed,” someone chimed in.

“But here is not a question of pensions, but of investment: not rewards, but credits. The selection should be made from the ranks of young people between the ages of 30 and 35, that is, the age when the human promise has asserted itself, but has not yet been fulfilled. At first, two or three hundred young men would be chosen, of those to whom the material means would be given as well as every freedom. One would avoid choosing young people with exceptional personal talents like artists, mathematicians, physicists or



poets - men who would make their own way in the world, because they are so outstanding - but rather, prefer people, who are gifted with complete intellectual, moral, practical and creative qualities. We would select men, drawn from all professions, men who, by the ages mentioned would have proved their abilities and desire for creativity throughout their lives. They would be allowed to live where they chose: to move to any other home whenever they thought it necessary: to travel wherever they wished, to turn their thoughts and ideas to good account: and to bring up their children as they thought fit. Each one would receive his credit-card, and would simply be told 'make use of this, as you wish.'"

At that moment something happened in the ward that to me seemed quite extraordinary: suddenly, my idea ceased to belong to me. It became, somehow, a sort of toy or game for my inmates, that set them off arguing, wrangling, bickering, quibbling, splitting hairs, as if they had all gone crazy. Perhaps, it was the effect of that extra bit of bread, or the sunlight, which had given them new hopes of life. or, maybe this idea of "unlimited credit" had galvanised them, but never before had I seen men so entranced, so seized with frenzy over an idea. Everyone made plans and destroyed plans. Then I realised that there was one good point about my idea: it was the fact - and this I felt quite clearly - that each one considered himself responsible, as if he was wondering whether he would deserve to become the owner of this unlimited credit-card. Hence their personal positive or negative reactions.

"I would not accept the credit-card," said one.

"Oh, but you would have to, if it were offered to you."

"I don't want it! I like to earn my own money."

"Don't be silly: your own money which you would have earned by your behaviour up to the age of 30."

"Being rewarded for my behaviour would turn me into a guinea-pig, wouldn't it? I, my friend, want to be free, to do as I please!"

"But this is just what you will be allowed to do with the unlimited credit: to do as you please at long last!"



"I would like to buy myself a yacht."

"No! You would not like to buy yourself a yacht, you would simply like to go out sailing in one from time to time, which is perfectly justifiable."

"I object! I want the yacht to be mine: I want to fit it out and decorate it in my way, and paint it the colour I like!"

"In this case, you are not yet 30."

"I beg your pardon, I'm 40!"

"And I am telling you, you're not yet 30. And you'd never be 30, if you'd want your own castle, or if you'd wish to own a painting by Turner or Rembrandt, only to be admired by yourself and a few of your personal friends. You can't make the grade in this manner. Something has changed in the world. We know now that reason, good taste, the benefits of leisure and the capacity of man to enjoy life, are not the prerogative of one class, let alone of one person: we know, moreover, that we don't really like a thing unless the liking is shared by others..."

"This is true," interrupted Matthew. "I, too, have noticed that if the bride is not admired by others, the bridegroom ends up by not liking her either..."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, do you realise what anarchy would arise from this, if a number of people were allowed, nay actually paid, to do what they liked?"

And now the theologian - he was the one who had started all this - declared:

"I think that, when our friend dreams of a Government, which would tell a few men: 'Make use of this as you wish': he, unknowingly or unwittingly, repeats what Saint Augustine once told his son: 'Love and do what you wish.' This also seemed a crazy thing to say: but, we know now what it meant: namely, that, if a man loves really and truly, he will no longer do what he likes but what he should, because what it adds up to is, that love is love of God, which means doing His will. These men, to whom society would give unlimited credit, would also have unlimited responsibility."



"But, how could they be chosen? Even if, at first, there were only, say, three hundred citizens, one would have to know their way of life, their potential, see that they have the right sort of wives - for these as well as, respectively, the husbands of women credit-card owners, could ruin the whole game. It would have to be assessed whether their human qualities were of genuine service to society, etc., etc. Who would choose these people, and by what method? By ballot, as they choose Miss World?"

"...could I just tell you how I think a beginning could be made..." I tried to intervene, but, to my relief, someone else butted in: my opinions mattered no longer.....

"Let us suppose," the other chap began, "that, somehow or other, the selection of the first 300 has taken place: that 50 or 40 or 30 of these have been really well chosen. Do you realise that this group would already form the nucleus for the development of the State of Unlimited Credit? From this point onwards, it would be known who would be giving the credit to others, who would demote those who have proved unworthy, who would control the others - firmly, but with discretion - in the same way as they control their own lives. Besides, public opinion would also have a say in it..."

"Thank you very much...I'd be a V.I.P., I'd be under permanent control, where and what I ate and drank, when I entered a good restaurant, because, of course, I would be doing all this with their money...no, thank you!"

"You would not need to be a V.I.P., because you would be ruled by your conscience, by an inner voice which would enable you to do only what was right."

"I would enjoy auditing the annual accounts of one of these bigwigs," came the voice of one, an accountant by profession.

"I see," said the would-be yachtsman, "that the possession of this bottomless credit would be a doubtful privilege, if all eyes were on me, what with my inner eye into the bargain...what sort of life would it be?"

"It is a real man's life," decided the doctor, categorically, "or else we are



good-for-nothings. If we are not able to bear the responsibility of being real men with the help and support of our society, then....”

“Then,” interrupted another, “we must do like the existentialists, bewail the human condition...”

“Not at all,” rejoined the doctor, “then it would be better if we committed mass suicide.”

“All right, all right, this is all very fine from the point of view of the individual, or the person, or whatever you wish to call him. But, what does all this do for the State?”

“How d’you mean ‘what does it do’?” rejoined another. “It changes everything! In a capitalist state, it would be a drastic corrective: I would even say a stimulus: just think, how people struggle, toil and sweat, to earn the money they need, and even more than they really need, but to their minds, never enough, leaving everything else - honesty, humaneness, culture and creativity to ‘come of itself’, as it were, whereas in this State all these things would come first, and the money would be ‘coming of itself’ without tensions and tribulations and always in sufficient supply. Now, for a Communist State, it would be a still greater corrective, because here, where men are dispossessed of everything by force and at all levels, their right to possession would be restored to them in such a measure, that it would cease to interest them. Here, where man is under continual supervision in every way, as if he were a minor, what a boon it would be to give him unlimited credit, not only concerning money and freedom of movement, but human dignity as well...”

“I’ve thought of something else,” a professor joined in. “Even if these men were not in themselves exceptional human beings, their educational function alone would be most valuable. Every parent would try to bring up his child in the hope of his becoming one of the “chosen few” - provided, of course, the number of these was not limited - and I am sure that very many young men would - after sowing their wild oats - start thinking of how to behave in order to obtain the qualification. There would be some very high goals to which to aspire.”



"Yes, but, when you come to think of it, seriously now, what would these 'princes' be doing?"

"Ah, but this is just what I find interesting, that we don't know too clearly what they would be doing! We cannot foresee what a man is capable of, when placed in a position that is not narrowly professional. The State, which in ordinary circumstances circumscribes men's lives, as much as to say: 'Smith is going to do this: Jones is going to be that': for once does not only tolerate the freedom of this individual, but even supports it by its own means. Formerly, man used to be free, as an individual, now he would be free as a member of a society."

"I think that one should also be able, normally, to select the political leaders of this society from among the ranks of these 'chosen few'."

At this point of the discussion, when it seemed that the State of Unlimited Credit seemed to have won the game, a subtle and sombre thought crossed the mind of engineer Goldstein.

"What you are saying is that you are building a State, which is to give total freedom to certain persons, who in turn are to create a new State, is that it? I'll grant you that those particular men will be good men. But, what guarantee have you that the State they build will not be a bad one?"

A shiver ran down my spine, as I remembered the tyranny of the 'good rulers' of history. What do I know, after all, about a man, any man, once he is seized by the demon of Power? I would have liked to retract my whole plan, but it was too late. The theologian went on:-

"Look here, gentlemen, this State is, in any case, a good basis for discussion. I suggest we set up commissions to study every aspect of it, like, for instance, the method of constituting it, the administrative problems, the function of these very free and mobile human specimens in the sphere of Economy and Production, the limits of the unlimited credit, etc., etc. Don't you agree that it would be better to 'organise' the discussions?"

Dr Goldstein came up to me, and whispered: "I didn't want to let you talk about Don Quixote, but it was about him that you spoke all the same....."



CHAPTER TWELVE

Goldstein was wrong. I did not speak about Don Quixote, but rather, unintentionally, inoculated some of my fellow prisoners with the virus of quixotism. On second thoughts, though, something better emerged from all this: an achievement in the nature of "secretaryship". By "secretaryship", I mean the assertion of self through another agent even to the point of losing one's own identity: "secretaryship" is the only expression I can think of to describe this idea.

Every virtue has something too personal about it: goodness, equity, courage, wisdom, altruism, all these usually react upon others, but they really serve to define oneself. That is why every virtue is liable to become impure: the great danger is pride. You remain a person, because you are the one who gives, in the same way as you are the author of the fact, in general. You do not dissolve into the Great All. But, when it comes to this "secretaryship" - that is, the organising of others - you merge into the "Little All", which you have created.

What is wrong with Don Quixote is that he is not a "team". The ideal is, of course, a team as an autonomous creation, which would then go on working on its own without you. I call a virtue the capacity of creating this sort of thing, because it requires self-sacrifice, as well as renunciation: and I deem it superior to all the other virtues, not only because, more than all the others, it defeats personal pride, but because it is open to all, as life is. There is here no question of a moral automatism: request - fulfilment (the poor and the alms): here is something which is born, grows and may never die, if it is a good thing.

"Secretaryship"...yes...the following joke was attributed to Stalin, a joke full of meaning in the bad, as well as in the good sense. 'The history of mankind' - he was supposed to have said - 'is made up of three eras : the era of matriarchy, that of patriarchy and that of "secretaryship".' Indeed, this is so, from the matriarchal agrarian economy up to the society of 'managers' and super-technologists of tomorrow's world. The perverseness of this truth, though, appears at the moment when the secretary turns ruler, when he becomes "first secretary", king. In fact, a "secretary" should be that person who is hiding, who "segregates" himself, i.e. he does not show himself, does not



reveal himself. The expression “first secretary” is a violation of the language and of the mind, a contradiction in terms. General Secretary, yes: but “first”? One ought, rather, to say “lowest” secretary, because the secretary is precisely that diffuse energy, the unidentified centre that One-and-Multiple, of which the ancients dreamed, and which nowadays is taken for granted. A good Secretary-General will ask himself: “What will come out of this concept that I am setting in motion?” We are living in this splendid historic hour of “secretaries”, who, when they do not have the impudence to call themselves “first”, represent the fermenting agent and the cement of our world today.

And so, on a much smaller scale, I found myself acting as a fermenting agent there, in that place. I felt I was going to have a few happy and, I dare say, morally clean days. Others were going to create the “state of unlimited credit”. So, let my thought take shape and may it prosper according to their will. And then I remembered Alex again: would I have managed to rouse his interest in my idea? May be that with the help of others I might have persuaded him, at his age of 22, to endeavour to become worthy of the “unlimited credit”.

That thought made me so happy that I decided to “summon” him into our midst, into this crazy room, by doing the third exercise, of which he had made me a present on the day we were separated. It was the right sort of time, directly after our morning wash.

I walked up to the open window, put my hands on my hips, and raised my left knee. I could not manage to raise it high enough to touch my chest, as Alex had shown me, so I lifted my leg again more firmly, and this time my knee touched my chest. But the violence of the movement seemed to cause some internal discomfort. I was seized by a pain in my stomach, and was soon quite sure that something nasty had happened inside me. I sat down on my bed, and stood up with some difficulty when the guard was changed, and sat down again, my whole body tense with cramp.

“Is anything the matter?” the theologian asked me. “Why didn’t you ask to see the doctor?”

I asked someone to draw the attention of the warder. He came to the spy-hole, and I said: “Take me to see the doctor, please.”



“You stupid fool! You should ‘ave asked that of the last guard. Now you can lie there to moan till tomorrow morning!”

So I lay there, and was ill indeed till next morning.

“It is probably a hernia,” the doctor said, later.

I felt worse and worse as time went by and out of consideration for me, my pals refrained from resuming the discussion about the “state of unlimited credit”, the only thing, really, which would have cheered me a little. All that promise of future “secretaryship” bliss had suddenly vanished completely. I wondered whether the debate would ever be resumed?

When they came to take me to the prison hospital next day, I could hardly walk. I noticed that the surgeon, who was going to operate, was a fat man. I don’t know why, I have more confidence in fat doctors. Perhaps I get the impression that a fat surgeon would make fewer useless movements, and so would have a steadier hand. He palpated my stomach which by now was very swollen, and said from the very first : “Intestinal volvulus”.

“Volvulus”...thought I...“what a lovely word!”...and I recalled my school days : “volvo - volvi - volutum - volvere...” This is where “volute” comes from. What beautiful language doctors use, and how delightful it is to hear two young medical men discussing.

“Are you afraid?” the surgeon asked, hearing me mumbling.

“I was thinking about ‘volvulus’,” said I.

“Well, yes, it’s serious enough. But how the devil did you manage this?”

He lowered his head onto my chest, as though for auscultation....but he asked me in a whisper so as not to be overheard by the warder: “Have they beaten you badly?”

“No,” said I. “I tried to do a more violent exercise.”



“What a thing to do, when your bowels are already dropped because of your general weakness.....”

“I hope Alex won’t hear about this!” I exclaimed.

“Who is Alex? Your wife?”

“No,” I answered. “It’s a young prison pal who taught me this particular exercise.”

“That wasn’t too clever of him,” said the surgeon. “Well, now let’s see what we can do.”

On the operating table I was made to inhale oxygen, which made me feel good immediately. The lower half of my body was anaesthetised. In the white globe of the lamp under which I lay, I could see the open abdomen to which something was being done: but this was happening there. I felt better and better under the oxygen, and seemed to have reached a state of lucidity and detachment from my own physical being. In the meanwhile, the surgeon, who was assisted by an ordinary doctor, was saying: “You see, it is twisted three times over. If there had been a delay of several hours more...”

After all, thought I - detached as I was - why this obsession with “le roi se meurt”? Why this universal lamentation which is going on nowadays and which only Ionesco’s extraordinary talent has filled with meaning: “we are dying, we are dying.” Every one of us - produced in a series as we are - feels he is a king, and the king is complaining that he is dying. Perhaps it would be a disaster if the king were not to perish: and it would be a disaster, not only for mankind - as my friend, the doctor, who had been talking about the demographic explosion, had said - but for each one of us.

How is it that the “king” cannot see that after a certain age, certain regions of his person, his life, are already dead? And, what is more serious is not just the fact that we die physically every hour of our lives, but that, from a certain moment our mind dies too, so that not to perish would be quite unbearable. If one is honest about one’s own endowments, one must realise that, from a certain point in time one’s life becomes repetitive - like a faulty mechanism,



first in one zone, then another, of one's mind. And, what is dying, if not a relapsing into an inertia of repetition?

That poor little king within us, finds even more unbearable the fact that he is repeating himself, than that he is being told, from the outside, "stop it, for goodness' sake!".

You declare your love in the same way, if you are a Don Juan: you have died. You clean your teeth in the same old manner, approach people, attack new world situations in the same way, give the same advice, have the same feeling of sad enjoyment of whatever it is, every time. At certain times I realised that in some particular zone of my life I was no longer capable of anything new. One fine day I shall feel that I am practising the same type of "secretaryship", and so I shall have died, together with what had seemed to be the best thing in my whole life.

Moreover, "dying" is not only a relapsing into repetition: to me it seems a rediscovery of the same limitations, the same thresholds. You try to understand something in a particular sphere of life, and you give up, because you feel you have reached a threshold. You try again, later in life, but you stop at the same point. There are people, for instance, who cannot go beyond a certain point in learning a language or a science. This does not mean, necessarily, either that their intelligence, or their memory is diminishing with time, but these are not increasing either. Three times over, during my lifetime, I tackled mathematics: I stopped every time at the same point. Every person has his limitations, i.e. a frontier or a limit of his mental being, of his receptivity, and, after all, of his human condition. Somebody once declared that: "Scientists must die, if science is to progress." Otherwise they would be holding back its advancement, because of the position of authority, which they hold, and because of their own limitations.

So, if there are limitations, there is death. One has no right to live beyond one's own limits, limits of passivity, not only activity: for, from a certain moment, one is receptive only to a limited number of things and, however much one were to travel, one would not be able to "see" anything new. At that hour the only justification we would have, in asking for our life to be prolonged, would be - mere curiosity. I had a friend in the past, who used to say: "It is



worth being alive, just to read the newspaper every day." But, is being alive at all worth while?

Life will be different, perhaps, in the future. We might, through this scientific and technological revolution, have a better memory and a better capacity of assimilating knowledge. We shall learn more languages in our sleep, we shall be making more and more unexpected new associations of ideas, and with the help of some little gadget adapted to our organism, we shall be able to experience the most varied sensations. Good: then we shall have the right to live longer. I defy anyone to produce today any sort of claim to justify living over the usual 80 years.

Oh, I know very well how much it would interest Pascal to have a look at our present world, the world of computers and calculating machines, like those he imagined, and of moral reflection, which he too illustrated: I know how eagerly Archimedes would pore over a book of elementary physics, or how excited Faraday and Maxwell would get about our electronics! But I feel I do not possess their inner boundlessness: and I do not think anyone does, after the precedent of Lord Rutherford, who gave the model of the atom, but declared that the atomic energy could never be released, or after the example of Einstein, who came to a full stop at a certain point in physics. As to our philosophers, historians or economists, oh dear! In what a faulty mechanism they often get stuck after a time, blindly and endlessly repeating themselves, over and over again.

I could vaguely hear them talking. The surgeon, who was operating, was explaining to the doctor: "I think we can save him.....I only had to cut off 12 cms of the intestine. Now look: the problem now, when the intestine has to be stitched together again, is to do it in such a way that the tiny veins on one side should be rejoined to the tiny veins on the other side. You must work in such a way as to ensure that the organism does not record the fact that you have made a resection in it."

I thought: "Does not our whole civilisation rest on our capacity to cheat nature?" 'So that it should not record...' Now I felt like going to sleep under this euphoria, caused by the oxygen I was inhaling, but the sister would not let me. I suppose that, in order to deceive nature efficiently, she must not be



allowed to sleep, in case she should be angry when she wakes, to find that she has been carved up. Perhaps this is why nowadays the victories of men are imperfect : they have drugged nature, so that "she should not feel", instead of prodding at her cheek from time to time, and talking to her kindly, as the sister was doing with me now, so that I should not fall asleep...



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

(written....years later)

This chapter was sent to England by the author from Romania five times over by post - in the same way as all the other chapters had been sent - but this one never reached its destination. The original MS also got lost, somehow.

In this chapter he described the two years spent in solitary confinement, at first convalescing after his operation in the prison hospital, and later, because he was still too weak to attend the "re-education" programme, which was undertaken in all prisons at the time, in view of the release of all political detainees: U Thant, the then Secretary General of the UN, had demanded this release, and obtained it.

In the first period the total solitude was real bliss to him. But, after a certain time, what a curse it became, when he realised his own incapacity to give a full content to his life! Maybe the spiritual techniques of the East know better how to fill the hours of loneliness - whether in the Indian forests, or even in the prisons of Eastern Europe - but the author of these pages did not know them. He tried Ignatius Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises", but did not get very far: neither did Descartes' "Meditations", which he remembered, help him much. Then, as Pascal had done as a boy, he tried to compose a "geometry" with a few straws that he pulled out of one broken end of the mattress, that covered his concrete bed : then he tried to remember, if only in part, one of these "geometries", like, for instance, the vectorial calculus. Nothing of that came either.

At this point he begged to be forgiven that he existed. "My Lady" - said he to himself - "or rather 'Mother Nature', write me off your list of the living, and forgive the spermatozoon that gave me life, for having hurried to get in the way of another spermatozoon that might have been destined to create a worthier being than myself!"

At one such moment, the warder opened the peep-hole, and gave the prisoner the first volume of the Complete Works of Karl Marx.

Gradually, all the other volumes were to follow, one by one.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Objectively speaking - and without licking the hand that beat me - what beautiful things one finds, here and there, in Marx. I can even say that I feel sorry that this doctrine will, as a matter of course, soon become obsolete in this era of automation, as miners and workers gradually disappear from the factories. It was for these, and for these men only, that Marxism has been of real value for a while - about a century : as for the rest, namely, the peasantry, the office worker, the self-employed, the intellectual and the tradesman, it has meant something only in the way of "resentment" - to use Max Scheler's word - that is, of that irrepressible feeling of dissatisfaction, arising from seeing someone else, and even whole classes, better equipped than oneself for a life of leisure and happiness.

In Marx one finds pages that are staggering. How moving - as I was to find out later, because, in the edition I was given to read there, these pages were, for a good reason, left out - is this notion of "alienation" in his youthful manuscripts. Everyone invokes them nowadays, but how many of us really came under his spell, or are impressed by their ambiguity ? In those pages he describes how there are three, or four, or even more kinds of these estrangements or alienations, all of them most impressive in the light of the living condition of modern man.

At the stage reached now by capitalism - says he - work produces not only goods, it produces the workers themselves, as goods. The object produced opposes work, this being something alien, a force independent of its producer. The more the latter produces, the more he falls under the domination of his own product.

But, one is tempted to ask : who is thus afflicted ? Is it only the workers, or is it also the employer, poor man? If everything happens, as in religion, as Marx puts it - where the more man invests in God, the less he keeps for himself - then one could say that the worker only invests his works, whereas the employer gives it his own soul. One ought, perhaps, to pity both, the servant as well as the master, as does Hegel: but, considering that an auto-alienation takes place also in the product, as we are told, the worker still has the chance to opt out of the delusion, by escaping back to his poverty, or to



anywhere else in the world. He could go back to his patch of land (if he is allowed to own it, or if, in the meantime, it has not been converted into a golf course, or something...): but the master has given it his whole life and soul, once and for all - as is to be seen in so many cases, for instance, in the case of wealthy families, where not only the father is the slave of his own riches, but also his son has to be fashioned, mutilated respectively, according to the demands made on him by the possessions.

But Marx shows no mercy at all to the men of property. At the period of history in which he found himself, his task was to denounce the exploitation and alienation of the individual who was made to work: so, in this regard, he shows very clearly that no less than four kinds of alienation take place, considering the fact that not only the result of work is at stake, but the production activity itself. First of all, says he, the worker's effort is something external, and does not belong to his essence as such: hence the mortification generated by what feels like forced labour. Secondly, the type of work established by industrial capitalism, only allows the individual enough free time for the exercise of his basic functions, like eating, drinking, and procreation. Thirdly, on the other hand, the ordinary individual is a universal being, a species, who considers nature as his inorganic body: but, the present kind of work estranges him from nature. In the fourth place, likewise, he is being estranged from both his human nature and from himself, then from Nature herself, and finally, from other human beings.

It may be that we oversimplify his thoughts, or summarise them imperfectly - but, how profound and open is his investigation! Maybe it was for this reason that this part was not included, as first, in the edition of his complete works, which I was given to read in translation. Nevertheless, even in this version, one comes across astounding passages in the very first volume. For instance, I would probably never have read - the adepts themselves do not - the article entitled "Debates on the Law concerning the theft of wood"! There, in prison, I discovered in it the beauty of a psalm. When the author says that one possesses the tree, but not really its dry branches too, and when he adds that the poor - who not only in Germany, but everywhere else, steal wood for the winter from other people's forests - bear a kind of relationship to these dry branches, which gives them the right to take them, then, what do we find in this sentence: economics? the Law? an instigation to revolt? or rather, something akin to the psalmist's poetry?



Nowadays, of course, people no longer like - if anyone ever did - those polemic writings, which were so full of that rather clumsy German irony, like "The Holy Family", "German Ideology", or "The Miseries of Philosophy". But even here one finds thoughts, even whole passages that must dwell in one's mind. How true the assertion sounds today, in the first of the works mentioned, that the ruling classes, as well as the proletariat, both suffer from the same self-alienation of the human being, with the difference that the first of these is satisfied, whilst the second is annihilated by this same alienation. It is almost the "compassion for the strong" mentioned earlier here: just as, in the same work, the idea that "all progress achieved by the mind has always been to the detriment of the masses of mankind, whose situation had become more and more inhuman" is valid, not only for the masses, but also for the well-to-do classes, if we consider the progress achieved by the European mind on the line of prosperity only.

I would not care to overlook too easily - as the official commentators do - some deeply significant thoughts, like the one (crossed out by the author, it is true) in "German Ideology", in which he boldly declares: "We know only one science, the science of history", which obviously comprises the history of nature, as well as that of mankind. Is this not, to be sure, Hegel's and, later, Marx's novelty, namely, that they have brought fluidity into everything? If, further along in the same work, one cannot be satisfied with cheap, historical-materialistic explanations, like, for instance: "What made the Germans rise against Napoleon was the scarcity of sugar and coffee (caused by the blockade)": on the other hand, how impressive is the thought - in further pages - that the separation of the city from the village represents the greatest division of work (an evil, which, he believed, could be overcome in the new social system), and that such a division can only exist in conditions of private ownership, and leads to the idea of "the urban animal" and "the rural animal". (Here, one may ask oneself: is it not precisely the new doctrine that has increased urban animality?). I would not care to overlook all these things - in a bad, but also in a good, sense regarding Marx's intuitions - and I would certainly not easily overlook the bewildering, sombre prophecy, so near, perhaps, to realisation: "The hour will come, when individuals (the urban sector of society precisely) will take upon themselves this product of the species, language." I do not know, but, of all the philosophers, Marx is the only one who is something of a prophet - and this is something new. Plato



gazes too much into eternity: Hegel looks too much into past history, which, besides, he integrates admirably. No one else has looked into the future. But this one...

Now, the most surprising thing is this - leaving aside so many pages of the first order, beginning with the "Manifesto", which has not been surpassed by any others - that Marx's ten years of journalism in the "U.S. Tribune" are passed over, I may say almost with compassion and condescension. It is true that those articles are not edifying as to the ideology itself, but they are fascinating as cultural and historical documents. The articles between 1853 and 1863, having been written for the American reader, as weekly reports on the European situation, are so complete, so vivid and full of ferment and tumult, that they read like a "Private Diary" of Europe, that Europe which, at the time was unfolding its "imperialist" manoeuvres across other continents. Beginning with Gladstone and Russell in England, Napoleon III, or the Crimean War, on to the misery and lethargy of India, the Thai war in China, the Russian absolutism, to reactionary Switzerland, and the revolutionary United States of America, he goes on more deeply into Europe's struggle to create something unique on this planet with the industrial revolution, whilst coupling great hopes with great risks - what a dramatic conscience this tiny, but incomparable Europe has, this small continent that is like a man inflamed with the spirit of adventure. But then, if continents also have a conscience, then Marx has certainly been, at least during these ten years, the chronicler and frenzied spokesman of this particular conscience. He who does not read this "Private Diary" of the middle of this century simply denies himself as a European.

I do not intend to mention all that I have liked in Marx's works, prior to "Das Kapital", neither will I try to encourage those who are studying it under duress, to try to enjoy it. I only wish to point out, that it is rather in the minor works, in short expositions, in portraits or clarifications, that the reader is going to find this author's real gold, which he himself has scattered among the sands of action.

Multiple, as he wished to be, and beyond specialisation, although having the vocation of a specialist, a fighter for all, though in the name of his own idea of all, suffocated as he was in that England, which alone could bear him,



and which, in fact, was for him too the only bearable country, how could he have confined himself to a well balanced work? He really had no time for “works” and, besides, like Nietzsche later, what he wanted was not to be an author, but a destiny.

It is interesting to see how his “great occasions” phrases penetrate even into the most trifling speech. In his speech for the commemoration of “The People’s Paper” in 1856, he says: “It seems that, while mankind is gradually subduing Nature, man himself becomes another man’s slave, or the slave of his own baseness.” And then further: “All our inventions seem to be leading to one single result: to endow the forces of matter with a spiritual life, and to reduce human life to just a material life.” And is not this precisely what happened a century later? And, finally, here is Marx’s sentence, contained in this manifesto-cum-speech: “The new forces of society need one thing only : they need new men who will know how to master them - these men are the workers. Like the machines, the workers are the invention of our times...History is the judge, and the proletariat - the executive of the sentence.”

Now, as I find myself here behind bars, I don’t care whether it really was so or not, but, as I contemplate my own intellectual emotion, which this man’s work has awakened in me at certain moments, I wonder: am I not, in truth, licking the hand that beats me? But, no: what really interests me is only this, to me an unexpected aspect, that I discovered in him: the prophet, a prophet, as it were, an upside-down philosopher and the monotheist in him, the single-minded man, who, nevertheless, sees far into the future of concrete history, and who is supposed to have said to Chekhov (see the article “Herr Vogt”): “In the end, it would not really matter if this pitiable Europe were to perish - which, besides, will soon happen anyway, unless a social revolution takes place - and, if Europe will then be exploited with her own old system, by America.”

And then, there is something else. The fact that I see in him, in this conqueror for a short while, another Brother Alexander. “Pitié pour les forts!” I feel again like exclaiming from this place, where I now am: Take pity on this great thinker, who in certain parts of the world, where he is too often and quite wrongly quoted and invoked, has become an object of ridicule and irony. Be merciful for the way in which his triumph has turned against him. Stop



mocking him with jokes, those of you who think you are his victims: give up describing him as a poor nobody, according to the reports of his London neighbours, and being ironical of him because his wife was of noble descent: stop your sarcasm, because he grew a beard in his old age, since, in a letter to Engels, he made fun of those exiled German prophets, who after 1848 had let their beards grow. Pity him for all the curses that, one fine day will rain down upon this unhappy conqueror's head!

The Russians will curse him because for so many decades he obstructed their historical testimony, as no tsarist absolutism ever managed to do in the 19th century. His co-religionists, the Jews, about whom he said more infernal things than any known anti-Semite had done, will curse him. The workers, whom, for a short while he deluded by telling them that they were a supernatural unitary class, that they had a full human identity, and that they, and they alone, could be the salt of the earth and of history, will also curse him. The communists themselves will curse him, because in his obsessive way of talking "scientifically" he forbade them the freedom of active idealism, the power of creation, and access to new ideas. He will also be cursed by matter, which he laid waste, because of his craze for industrialisation during the first stage of clumsy machinery. The machines, too, will curse him in their later refinements, when they will adorn themselves, like brides, in order to be wedded to the human being, instead of being handled by the rough hands of workers. He will be cursed by the gods and their religions, because he mocked them as being nothing but opium for the people, whereas they attempted, and sometimes succeeded, in giving the world all that he himself wanted to give it, plus that extra something of which he no longer knew, or did not want to know.

Then someone will come and say: "Forgive him, for he too was one, who stood under the spell of the Supreme Good. Pray for the soul of brother Karl....."

Pray for the Big Brother.....



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I was given paper and pencil again. I read 17 volumes of the works of Marx and Engels, then the 5 volumes of the History of Philosophy, published by the Soviets and translated for us - a pitifully poor account of European culture, pitifully poor with regard, in the first place, to Marxism itself - and I worked frantically on four papers which I copied out neatly in pencil, and gave to the person who was in charge of my "re-education". Months and years went by in this way - two? three?

In the meantime, (I was to hear about this much later), most of my prison pals were undergoing a period of re-education. To all appearances this re-education was quite harmless, but in fact it was dangerous for the men's consciences. They were given certain books to read which were all about the regime's achievements : they were shown propaganda films, and, towards the end of their term, they were taken for a whole morning's coach tour round the newly built industrial plants, new town districts, or the State farms in the countryside. The dangerous part about all this was - as I was to find out later - that some of the more easily converted prisoners became propagandists themselves, which gave rise to discussions and accusations among each other, terminating in the deplorable situation that some overstepped the mark, and, while still in prison, became the fiercest supporters of the regime, whereas others became so obstinate, that they refused to recognise even the good changes that had taken place in the country and rejected everything, because they believed this to be a more "dignified" attitude, with the result that they would be more hostile than ever to the regime when they came out of prison.

I was spared all that, maybe because I was considered too weak after my operation, or perhaps they thought - who knows? - that I was to be re-educated by other special methods, so that, to my delight, I was left to myself in the cell with the books I was given to read, and pencil and paper, and, towards the end of my solitary confinement, even some magazines, one of which - a publication for the popularisation of science - thrilled me, because I learned about the extraordinary inventions and discoveries that were going on in the world in the field of the technological and scientific revolution.



Neither can I forget my encounter with the Russian language - the very first, to my shame - because, with my desperate craving for a printed book, and the right to read something, anything, and the opportunity to exercise my memory, I had begged for a Russian handbook. I guessed, and was proved right, that such a book would not be forbidden. But it was only when I had the book before me that it became clear to me what an utterly stupid - although, at the time, apparently legitimate - fear of the Russians and of Russian annexation had not only prevented us all, young and old, from learning Russian, but had actually made us incapable of learning it. I remembered how, at the time before my imprisonment, I had noticed the behaviour of school children and students with regard to this language, which was being taught during all the eight years of "lycee" (secondary school), and was compulsory also in universities - and how even the most brilliant were not learning it, but went as far as to declare proudly at the end of their studies that they "didn't know a word of it".

To me, judging by the little I was able to learn on my own, Russian seems an extraordinary and wonderful language. This time I did not experience the fear - which had possessed me during the study of Marxism, namely, the "kissing the hand that beat me", because I was only learning the language of a people, not of a regime: so I gave free rein to my linguistic interest in one of the grandest and most powerful affirmations of the human Logos. Everything in the Russian language appeared to me as remarkable and awe-inspiring, beginning with that vigour of the emphasis, which in Russian words can be laid on the fourth, or, believe it or not, even on the fifth syllable before the last, whereas, in the classical languages, the emphasis could be laid only on the third syllable before the last: in French the emphasis falls invariably on the last : in other languages on the second, and again in some others on the first syllable, which, of course, restricts the realm of speech : in the case of languages with a fixed emphasis, it restricts also that miracle of modern poetry, the rhyme, leading thus to blank verse, which is sometimes beautiful, but is often lacking in "responsibility" and rigour: then, the almost complete absence of the auxiliary verbs "to be" and "to have" (instead of "I have a book" the Russians say "with me - book"), which could give the feeling that the book happens to be "with me", but could, just as well, be "with you" or with anyone else - this, with a little imagination, could explain the ease with which the Communist system was applied in a country, whose people think and feel



thus. Leaving aside so many grammatical and lexical aspects of the language, and looking finally at that splendid "aspect" in the proper sense, the aspect of the verb, with the Russian imperfective, which certainly lends itself to great beauty of expression, when formulating thought or relating facts - everything in the Russian language made a deep impression upon me. Its indetermination (from the lack of a few articles to the imperfective tense) made me feel that infinitude, which - if I am not mistaken - Gogol mentions in "Dead Souls", when he describes a troika advancing in the boundless expanses of snow.

Unfortunately, I was not to get very far with my investigations into the Russian soul on these lines. Like German, Russian is difficult, and if one does not learn it in one's youth, one really needs to be endowed with a special talent or aptitude, I should say, as some have for mathematics, or else one needs something, which, unfortunately, few of us have - but which the technological and scientific revolution will probably give tomorrow's generation of intellectuals: an excellent memory.

Well, from a certain moment, I was called about once a week to the investigation bureau, where a highly distinguished and intelligent person in civilian clothes, whom, not knowing what his title was, I addressed as "Mr Adviser" - he sometimes came alone and sometimes with his adjutant, a captain, who was probably learning on the spot how to "handle" people - and who lectured me extensively on the situation in our country and in the world. That was how I heard that President Kennedy had been assassinated ("a great misfortune for mankind", the Adviser said), and that "we" - meaning the socialist camp - had been the first to send a man into space. This was at the time when the socialist side was nourishing hopes of catching up with the rest of the world regarding prosperity, so that my adviser was grandiloquently unfolding the rosy prospects in this respect.

What upset me a little was by no means the fact that, as he was assuring me, the tables had turned in favour of the East, nor was it the pomposity with which he presented his arguments and testimonies, but the idea that a man like this, who seemed outstandingly intelligent and well-informed, was wasting his time trying to "indoctrinate" me. Had the regime no better use for such remarkably fine human specimens as was this adviser of mine?



This feeling I had, that the regime still continued to misuse human intelligence, whilst endeavouring so impatiently to harness all the other kinds of raw material in the country, was confirmed to me on the day on which my adviser summoned me, only to enquire how I was getting on, whether the food was good enough, and would I not like, for instance, a nice tin of sardines, "you know, some of those delicious ones", he said, and smacked his lips, thinking that this would whet my appetite. Quite frankly it made me deplore the fact that this remarkably gifted man had to stoop to this pathetic office of "winning over" the victims. I replied quite unostentatiously that I would prefer to have a jar of yoghurt from time to time, because I really am, as far as food is concerned, a "milk sop" in the proper sense of the word. I was quite sure that there was not the slightest trace of virtue, or "strength of character" in my reply, and it was due to just the plain fact that a less robust sort of being has not too many appetites. I believe that what appears to us as "virtue" can very often be just a vital deficiency, and that, in general, one ought to be very pleased - as a moral person - when one's more delicate health, or simply the existing circumstances become a safeguard against temptation. Christianity is perfectly right when it tells us to "avoid temptation", one should not look for trouble, just to show that one is strong. The ascetics know quite a lot in this respect, and Nietzsche's advice to the contrary, namely, that one should seek temptation, "gefährlich leben" (live dangerously), which in my youth I liked so much, appears to me today in all its foolishness. In order not to commit adultery - from a man's point of view, at least - it is advisable in life not to have a divan in the house - like in that anecdote of the Jew, who, after catching his wife with another man on the divan, went and sold the divan : likewise, you should not live in a bachelor flat, and not deliberately try to meet too many beautiful women. Otherwise, if you "vivere pericolosamente" as Mussolini had translated Nietzsche's saying, what happened to that dictator on a large scale might happen to you on a smaller one.

My adviser did not look upon my refusal as a provocation - indeed, I had expressed it with perfect simplicity - and came to the point: what he wanted was for me to write something against a friend of mine who lives in the West. "But, how can I write?" I asked him, "here, in prison?"

He let this matter drop - in fact all this made me feel, indirectly, that things were looking brighter, perhaps I was going to be free - and added: "He



is a great enemy of ours." I told him I could not believe this, because I knew my friend to be completely detached from everyone and everything, even from life, and that for years and years since I had known him, I had always feared that he might take his own life. "He is a very great enemy of ours," emphasised the Adviser in conclusion.

I returned to the cell rather depressed by the whole scene, and, I must confess, worried, because I was sure that as a consequence of my refusal to write against my friend, the books, pencil and paper were going to be taken from me. Next day I was called by the Adviser's adjutant, the captain. I went, resigned to the thought that I would be punished for my refusal. The captain received me in a friendly manner, and gave me an orange!

Many, many years had passed, even long before my imprisonment - because of the scarcity in my country - since I had merely set eyes on an orange. My hand trembled, when I took it - out of sheer eagerness? Out of nervousness, because they resorted to these almost Chinese methods of alternating good and bad treatment in order to make us give in - and I put it in my right pocket, ashamed (more for them than for myself), and so that the warder would not feel it when putting the goggles over my eyes and taking my left arm to lead me back to the cell. There I ate it with relish, as the Adviser thought I would the sardines. When I was left with the peel, I started wondering what to do with it: throw it into the latrine, which was in the corner of the cell, or give it through the spy-hole to the warder? Then I remembered that long ago my mother used to make candied orange peel in syrup, and so I began to bite off small bits at a time, until I had eaten it all.

When at the end of these happy days, I was summoned rather solemnly for an interview with an important person - so I was told - who kept me waiting for about half an hour in the office, I was in that splendid frame of mind in which one is quite indifferent to whatever may happen, but in a positive, not a negative way: it is all right if it happens one way or the other : in other words, you don't give a damn. This time the person was a colonel, more precisely the chief of the team of investigators, who had cross-examined me before. Things were coming full circle: I was in his presence once more.

"What would you do, if you were free?" he asked me, abruptly.



For one moment the answer, "I would read the 18th volume of the works of Marx and Engels", crossed my mind: but I abstained, fearing it might sound like a provocation. The question, being sprung on me so unexpectedly, had put me in a state of real emotion, so that I asked for a cigarette from the younger officer, who was accompanying the colonel, and who happened to be smoking. He gave me the cigarette at once, and I began by saying that, of course, like all other prisoners, I had nourished hopes of being set free some day, in spite of the very long term I had been sentenced to, and had asked myself the same question.

"From the most insignificant sort of employment as a teacher, or a deputy teacher, for maths or foreign languages in the humblest school anywhere in the country, to some job at a higher intellectual level, I would do anything."

As I smoked, I felt my courage returning, so I began to develop the idea and dared to say that I could be used, perhaps, as a "coach" for the study of Marxism. I explained that, on the whole, no one bothered who the coach was: the result was all that mattered. As I knew that no one could study Marxism properly without having a previous knowledge of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and all the others, I could help anyone in the study of these philosophers, I boasted, or I could whet their appetite for higher mathematics or any other science, thus making them more receptive at the right level, and better prepared for the study of Marx's philosophical message.

The colonel listened, took note of my reply, as being positive, and said: "Tomorrow, you will be free." And he added: "Would you like to keep in touch with us? Or is it against your conscience?" For an instant I was staggered. This meant that they had not changed at all: on the one hand, they were generous enough to give us back our freedom, and on the other, they were asking us to become their agents. It made no sense whatsoever.

I could easily have availed myself of the opportunity he offered and said: "It is against my conscience." But, I preferred to give another answer, which was just as true, namely, that I had no intention of leading any kind of social life. My family had left long ago, and I was sure I had no longer any friends because I harmed very badly the nearest and dearest of them. "Neither have I a country, colonel," I answered. "I am detached from everything."



The colonel got up and left, but his subordinate remained behind for a while: "How can you say you have no country? We are all making every effort to raise the country's level: we are even defying the Russians, when they make demands that are not conducive to the good of the country, and you say you have no country?" At that point I had a moment of weakness - perhaps as a result of the mental strain I had been subjected to earlier - and broke into a fit of sobbing. In fact, had they themselves not been the ones who had made me break with everything, even with my country?

I went back to my cell with the words "tomorrow you will be free" ringing in my ears.

Next day nothing happened: they just came to take away the books, the papers and the pencil. I sat thus another day: two, three, four days. On the fifth day I thought to myself: "They're just playing with me, they're using the hot-and-cold method again." The next morning I asked to see the prison governor. I was going to beg for the paper and pencil to be returned to me: but my real intention was to find out what was going on, and what my situation was. After a while I was summoned to the governor, and before I could express any request, a chap in civilian clothes came up to me with a tape-measure and started taking all possible measurements. The following day I was brought out again, and given a brand-new suit of clothes and a pair of shoes. After my last night in the cell, and wearing my new suit, I was led to the store to get my luggage (all my clothes were worn out : that was why they had kept me in those extra days: I had nothing proper to wear). I took hardly anything out of my suitcase, and left that behind too, because it was damaged: although it was still full summer, and although my overcoat was worn out, I took it. With this old thing over my arm, and a small bundle containing some underwear, I appeared before the governor who handed me a banknote, the equivalent of about ten bus-fares.

I gave a long look at the prison governor before walking out through the door, to freedom. I smiled at him, and he smiled back. We stayed, like this, for a while, both of us caught up in the smile, and I remembered some lines of William Blake's:

There is a smile of Love,
and there is a smile of Deceit,
and there is a smile of smiles,
in which these two smiles meet.



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR.

Constantin Noica was born on 24th of July 1909 on his father's landed property of Vitanești, 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 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".



Constantin Noica

THE TIME OF REALITY AND THE TIME OF THE LOGOS

Logic is the science of pure time, just as geometry is the science of pure space.

In the past one would not have dared make such a statement. Just as geometry seemed to deal only with stable shapes and not with transformations and deformations, logic seemed to deal with the static modalities of thought and among its connections only with the syllogistic—and that as a matter of privilege. But geometry has become the science of moving spatial shapes; everywhere mathematics has brought in the fluxional element; on the whole, science considers rest as an extreme instance of motion. Logic too—even leaving aside mathematical logic—cannot keep its classical image. For thought cannot confine itself—and confines itself even less than mathematics does—to reflecting the static. While a circle can still be looked upon as a simple circle and not deformed by topological vision, a form of thought is always *condensed time*.

Translated by Nicolas Slater



The Time of Reality and the Time of the Logos

It was claimed in the past that a logical step had nothing to do with time. Today one would say that it juxtaposes to real time another time, but not that it concerns itself with the eternal. Even its detachment from *real* time is a matter of some doubt: Hegel and Marx have demonstrated their interdependence by dialectics. But if one confines oneself to formal logic itself, one could still say that it reflects, by its specific temporality, time and its properties, just as geometry reflects and constructs space and its properties.

Topology has done "as it listed" with spatiality. It has taken a circle, has rumbled it at its pleasure and—under certain conditions—has found that there was a "circle" in the new figure, in the property that it has of being a "simple closed curve" (having a single loop). The new science has thus found another form of spatiality. Could one not do the same thing with time? Or rather: has one not already done this? It is true that time seems to be a "measure" *par excellence*; but just as the spatial forms have become detached from their rigidity, time itself can be taken out of its rhythm. In its own way, time can be compressed, extended, deformed, "rumbled;" it can thus lose what seemed to characterize it, its measure, while still continuing to be "time," or else a form of temporality. And the question remains, just as in the case of space. Despite its deformations, which are the characteristics it must have to maintain itself as time? The nature of temporality could acquire some new characteristics; its structure would then become more evident; and above all, having a changed image, time will prove to be present precisely where things seemed to be characterized by its absence: in logical forms, on the one hand, and on the other hand, in that creation of the modern world, the machine.

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Before attempting a description of simultaneously deforming and modelling time, which we will call "time of the logos," we can perhaps give some common examples of certain of its deformations.

From a question to its answer, there elapses a time, however brief; likewise from a problem to its solution. It is not a question of psychological time, but—as has been said—of "the time of



the problem.” This cannot be suppressed: an electronic machine could shorten the calculation in an amazing fashion, but it has only shortened it. Each operation requires time, operational time, just as time is needed for the establishment of any foundation.

This seems natural, because there is no question as yet of a striking deformation of time. Hence it might be objected that the creation of an interval for each operation or sequence stands to reason and that we are free to call this interval—nay, this *distensio*, as Saint Augustine said, by the name of “time.” But where is the time of a “concept,” for example? To this one might answer that the concept itself would be an example of this other form of temporality, just like the identity of concepts and their contradiction, or that of judgments.

But let us continue to dwell on general examples, this time laying stress on the deformations brought about by the “time of the logos.” An expression of surprising exactitude has been used of the prophets: they “remember the future.” In the “time of the logos” in which every prophet lives, a necessary logical sequence has already taken place; what must happen appears so evident to him that it seems to him like something that has already happened, allowing him to draw conclusions from something that does not exist as though it were an antecedent. In the perspective of the time of the logos, the future is transformed into the past.

While this is the case with prophecy, sometimes the time of the logos intervenes in the opposite sense, so that the past appears as the future. It thus happens in our conscious experience, that we first find the answer and then the question; and there are questions which can hardly be propounded before the answer is given. The formulation of the question, with all that lies behind it and with its uncertain gaze upon the future, only comes about when real time has already answered the question.

What we call “experience of life” consists, in large measure, of such inverted processes. One understands and one learns, without necessarily harvesting more profits in real time. But when one has made one’s way into it, the time of the logos sends one back, towards things whose significance and even whose reality were not apparent when they occurred. It does this by forcing one to link up significant elements in an inverted fashion and in this way to put the past into the future.



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A last general example: wisdom. To be wise could mean: to make of the future a form of the past. This time, one does not perceive the future like the prophet; one does not necessarily perceive the past like the sagacious man, but one knows something essential about their relationship. For the character of the wise man is, perhaps, to be able to "recognize" things which he has never known. Anything that could happen to him, he knows already. The time of the logos has become for him so objective that, in real time, there will no longer be "anything new under the sun" for him.

We can now return to philosophy, to find there the most characteristic example of perturbations brought about by the "time of the logos." It is the one offered to us by the philosophic vision of Kant: it is the *a priori*. In the concept of *a priori*, which after all represents Kant's most original contribution, the history of philosophy shows in a striking fashion what happens at the moment when the "time of the logos" and real time interfere. *A priori* means "before;" but on this occasion it appears afterwards. In a certain sense, it existed before experience. All knowledge begins *with* experience, even though its source may not always be *in* experience—such is the famous formula which opens the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The forms of sensation—time and space—and the categories of understanding—unity, causality, etc.—cannot be conceived before experience: they barely appear at the latter's call. And yet they are, according to Kant, the precondition of experience—they are *a priori*. Hence the complications of this *a priori*, which one is tempted to seek before experience and which, in reality, one transforms into a new experience, preceding habitual experience. This is precisely what some commentators have done, in evoking atavistic experience as a foundation for present experience, phylogenic experience as preceding ontogenic experience, or some determinism, psychological or otherwise, as a source of logical necessity. But the *a priori* thus ceases to be what it claimed to be: it just becomes a banal *a posteriori*, produced by an experience of a more general order which is only operative, with the appearances of an *a priori*, in the consciousness of the individual.

The import of Kant's thesis, however, seems to us to be categorical: the *a priori* renders experience possible; hence it precedes each experience—and not only the individual and



historical experience—in the time of the *logos*; yet the *a priori* is born at the call of experience, in the “consciousness in general;” for every conscious mind it happens after experience, even for an individual’s conscious mind, *in real time*. Therefore one is in the habit of saying that *a priori* means only “independently” of experience; which is true, but skirts the problem of the two times.

There are indeed two times. Let us investigate the nature of the second one.

THE TIME OF THE LOGOS AND ITS NATURE

The appearance of the time of the *logos* as a simple modality of psychological time can be dispensed with from the start. Even if some of the preceding examples leave the impression that the question under discussion concerns the intimate experience of man, and nothing else, the time of the *logos* remains a specific time; Kant’s *a priori* was not of a psychological order, and neither was the “time of the problem.”

The appearance of logical time, a specific one when it is related to psychological time, as a purely subjective human creation, also vanishes. The simple fact that today one poses the problem of *contact* with other rational beings of the cosmos implies that the latter too could duplicate their real time by a time of the *logos*, communication proving impossible without this. The time of the *logos* has *at least* the objectivity of intersubjectivity.

Finally, the appearance of the time of the *logos* does not go beyond the contingent intersubjectivity, since it is only of a rational order and not related to reality. It is destroyed by the science of logic itself. For logic is not a *free* product like mathematics. Even if one only takes one of them into consideration, one must admit that there are three logical orders: the order of expression, that of thought and that of reality. Along with mathematical logic the science of logic deals with expression and its pure form in thought; it deals with thought and its pure form in classical logic; and it deals with reality and its pure form—in what might be called comprehensive logic, but which, all things considered, is philosophy itself. For it is precisely to bear witness to a logical order, nay to necessary connections,



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that reality can be known. Hence logic can abstract from every predetermined connection, but cannot elude the problem of consequence. But the last logical chain of consequence, the most closely and at the same time the most loosely worked out—is time itself.

Does this provide a definition of time? Man has given names to certain things, and then he has asked himself what the meaning of these names can be. He has called a great thing God and he has then asked himself, through the centuries, what God was. He has called an aspect of reality "time" and he has since continually asked himself what time is. Or, to use the expression of St. Augustine once again: man knows what time is, if one does not question him about it, but if questioned he knows nothing about it. Even today one could not define time in an unequivocal manner. But modern man has reversed the problem of the investigation: we no longer begin by defining things, to use them later in terms of their definition, but we make models of them, we quite simply remake them, and it is only later that we try to define them.

The tendency to model things and processes, which is apparent on the technical plane, could also take place on the speculative plane. Just as man does not know what time is, he has in fact had no knowledge about what space is. But mathematics has *constructed* other spaces, that is, it has given new models (non-Euclidean spaces—in particular Riemannian-topological space), and to our surprise we found not only that we thus approached a definition both wider and more rigorous (space of colours, of sounds), but also that certain new forms of spatiality could be found in reality, thus proving that they were "objective." The image of space detached from reality has been transformed, and it has ended by being applied to reality itself. One should perhaps do the same thing and in an explicit fashion with the idea and image of time. We are finally on the point of penetrating into other times and perhaps of encountering the times of others. It is thus very pertinent to establish a new model of time.

But the time of the logos has already done this implicitly. Starting from real time, it has transformed it, has modelled from it another time, and finally has superimposed this other time upon real time. Let us follow the stages of the construction.

Had it been necessary, in spite of all, to define real time at



historical experience—in the time of the logos; yet the *a priori* is born at the call of experience, in the “consciousness in general;” for every conscious mind it happens after experience, even for an individual’s conscious mind, *in real time*. Therefore one is in the habit of saying that *a priori* means only “independently” of experience; which is true, but skirts the problem of the two times.

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the outset, then—to the surprise of us modern men—the definition of Aristotle could still serve as a point of departure (which proves that we do not know much better than the ancients what time is). In his *Physics* (219b et seq), Aristotle says “time is the number of movement.” And he adds: “to be in time means to be measured, for things are enclosed by their number as they are by their location.” But since the movement of displacement in a circle is best fitted to the category of “number,” as being homogeneous and incessantly repeated (the movement of the stars), it is this type of movement which will give—as everyone knows—the unit of measurement of time.

All seems clear, as far as habitual time is concerned. But the time of the logos comes to change the picture. Time can be “number,” but *it is not necessarily measurement*. The ancient definition says too much, if by number one means measurement. But if number means order, then the definition would make sense; one could still use it to determine a certain form of time. It is not the uniform measure of movement, but rather its ordering that is involved, with another temporality; not at all the sort of time that strikes the hours, but the sort that advances. In space, the number that the definition of time implies could be the ordinal and not the cardinal. But this changes everything.

At the rather elementary level at which we place ourselves, one could say that the ordinal has triumphed over the cardinal as soon as the scientific spirit has become riper. In any case the rigidity of the cardinal number does not seem to derive from the essence of numeration. It would be for the ordinal number to do this, after all, since it suggests continuity. The cardinal indicates things, the ordinal indicates developments; the one concerns itself with what has happened, the other with what is happening. It is thus the latter that has to represent the “number of the movement” that time would be.

The first deformation of real time, of the perspective brought into play by the time of the logos, is a deformation in the proper sense of the word: it is the elimination from time of the rigid rhythm of measurement and of uniformity, which is made fluid. In place of continuous discontinuities (days, periods or “now’s”), the time of the logos provides pure continuity. The very thing that seemed essential to time, the measure, is not essential at all. However, order always characterizes it, even if it tolerates



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various "times." Indeed, Leibniz defined time in this way as a simple "order of succession," as opposed to space which is only coexistence. Consequently the Aristotelian definition would seem to be saved, at least in its literal sense. Nevertheless Aristotle would be passed by, even in his literal sense. When one defines time as "order of succession," it is no longer possible to lay stress on the word "order," i.e. on the recollection of the number, but on the succession. After all, order is only too telling on the subject of time, if the former has as its domain of definition the breadth of the ordinal number. Rather than by the order of succession, time could be characterized by the *fact* of succession. At all events, the time of the logos can keep succession alone as its own.

A *second* deformation of real time by the time of the logos has just appeared: time is not order of succession, but succession that barely creates an order. One could, therefore, no longer say that ordinality is the nature of time. It is the result of time, its work or its trace. Time would represent pure succession. At least, one can perfectly well conceive it in this light, as detached from the number-measure, detached from numerable order, and even from the uniqueness of succession. Here, then, is another model of time, that of successions in the plural, a ramified time, indeed a sort of temporal space for processes, operations, developments and creations. The time of the logos has abandoned the naivety of the image of time considered as a unitary procession of things as a whole, or as "a present that advances." For there is no more unity of time, seeing that there is no measure, hence no more "totality" nor "uniqueness" of time. The successions can be free.

Nevertheless the successions must *hold*, precisely in order to be taken out of the unique time where they were bound, at least externally. In order to be constituted as successions, they needed a link, and this link is internal. But in this way, the simple succession which also seemed to characterize the essence of time, would not constitute its definition. The model must be further defined: there is here the question of a *bound* succession—and on this occasion time will have found its character. Thus it is rather for the connection than the succession to account for itself.

A *third* and last deformation of time has thus appeared, and



it leads to the model of time that we will call, properly speaking, the time of the logos. It represents the reduction of time to a sequence. The time of reality is constantly disconnected from the present, being in a sense pure disconnection (Hegel used to say: pure negativity, incessant suppression of self). This is why the time of reality appeared as an interminable collapse which made Aristotle say that time was rather destructive than generative. But it is the contrary with the time of the logos; it connects incessantly. And just as succession was the source of order, and not the reverse, the connection which is established on this occasion (not the one already established) will be the principle and the source of succession. By the very connection, time seems to have a direction and a meaning, like a vector. In relation to real time, which was only a "scalar" (it counts, but does not orientate), the time of the logos has the nature of a vector; but beyond all measurement, only possessing direction and meaning.

The time of reality could now itself appear as an extreme case of concatenation, just as Euclidean space is an extreme case. Purely by virtue of its sequence, the time of the logos is nevertheless richer, more varied and—to use Hegel's expression—more powerful. For Hegel discovers a very strange aspect of the time of reality: it is both the most powerful thing in the world and the weakest. We would say: the power of real time is the manifestation of the sequence (all is linked in time), and its weakness is the loosening of all sequence (everything unbinds in time).

Consequently, the new model of time, the time of the logos, reflects something of real time, but changes its nature. To sum up, in its new version the nature of time would appear to be of this kind:

(1) Time is not number as a measurement, but number as an order.

(2) It is not simply order either, that is order of succession, but it is succession.

(3) Strictly speaking, it is not a simple succession, but a connection in act.

After stating exactly what is the nature of such time, we will attempt to describe its structure. It will then remain for us to show that this model of time has in fact become superimposed on reality (by means of a machine, as we shall see) and further-



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more that it has always been at work in the logical consciousness of man, and, for over a century, at work in his history.

THE TIME OF THE LOGOS AND ITS STRUCTURE

Considered on its own, apart from its connection with the time of reality, the time of the logos, thus defined, presents the following characteristics:

- (1) it has only two dimensions, the past and the future, the present being non-existent;
- (2) it can be compressed and extended;
- (3) it has direction, without being irreversible like habitual time;
- (4) in contrast to real time, it can be brought back or begun anew.

The first characteristic, the absence of the present, might seem to be the most unexpected. The time of the logos was defined as a connection in act. Besides the time of reality, in which things are or become, there exists a time of "how a certain thing is possible." Thus it is the necessary time taken by an operation or creation (in things or by means of thought), of an explanation, an implication, an integration or a deduction, in a word, the time of a chain reaction; and it is also in its most extended meaning, the time of the revealing of identity or of the development of a contradiction. It gives the pure content of logical forms of thought. Thus if logic is endowed with temporality, it would seem natural to find in it all the dimensions of time. But the present is missing.

The past and the future are clearly in evidence here. Aristotle defined time more exactly as "number of movement according to the *anterior* and the *posterior*." Even if the expression were faulty (for a time which demands definition is already implied in "anterior" and "posterior,") it is nevertheless significant that when characterising time the ancient philosopher did not at first speak of the present. There does indeed exist a "primum" and a "deinde" for the time of the logos, but between them there is nothing. What comes first, basis or principle, possesses in fact the character of a past; as such it will vanish; what follows, the chain of reasoning, is the future, or, for completed consecutions, the future spent. The present is nowhere to be found in



the time of the logos, which is the time of the necessary opening of the past towards the future, of the antecedence towards the consequence, and nothing else. At the most the present can be a combination of past and future; but in that case there would be no question of an authentic present which is transition. Thus through the present's being totally missing, the logical forms have seemed to be divorced from all temporality—to such an extent was one accustomed to see in the present the true mark of time.

And indeed, within real time, the present is decisive. If one considers it as "order of succession" time becomes a succession of presents, notwithstanding the constant displacing of the "now," its position and its function mark it out as the true kernel of real time, to which it gives stability. In this way time is usually centred on the present, and it is the present which provides an equilibrium for its simplicity. For, inasmuch as in time there is no totalisation possible, it being infinite, so the past does not increase at the expense of the future, it does not seem to absorb the substance of the future, but as the volume of the past increases, so that of the future increases also, the present remaining an unaltered centre which has before it just as much as it leaves behind.

But quite different is the picture of the time of the logos. There equilibrium is no more to be found. Lacking a present, it is out of centre. While real time envelops all things in a universal, regularly advancing procession, the time of the logos is hasty and propulsive. That is why, when thought encounters the time of the logos (in the field of knowledge) under the guise of a necessary opening, that is to say of an antecedence, it can find no rest. Just as one cannot stop in the middle of an unfinished train of reasoning ("every spring the swallows come; this is the spring..."), so thought is incapable of stopping at the brink of the void created by new time. Real time is continually filling the world with new but corruptible contents; the time of the logos is continually emptying the world, by moving out towards what is to come. It is the rôle of the future and not of the present to be the principal dimension of the time of the logos and that is why it is a vector of it.

With its *second characteristic*, that of being able to be freely compressed and expanded, the time of the logos loses not only



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its centre but also its proper measurements. Habitual time had an exact measurement, as we have pointed out: in a last analysis, that of the cosmic rhythm inherent in every corner of the universe. It is with this measurement that all other forms of time are connected, however varied they may appear: organic time (time of growth and of life), in man also psychological time and historic time. But the time of the logos has no inner or outer dimension capable of adopting any tempo whatsoever. Considered in its capacity of slowing or slackening, this time can confirm the impression that logical forms are engulfed in the eternal. However it is not the slackening, but rather the tension which gives its specific character to the time of the logos; and this is why its novelty, for those who can grasp it, is the contraction of "times."

Man has always been aware that to think, for example, means to shorten. The act of thinking is indeed the act of unifying a diversity and the better one thinks the more one unifies. What are the limits? Beyond all limits would seem to be the ideal of thought: until one reaches direct vision. Philosophic thought itself throughout history considered that it could throw light on the human mind by referring it back to "intellectual intuition," which with its direct vision, could be said to represent an ideal of knowledge. In cases where the human mind has been denied intellectual intuition, thinkers have continually invoked such an intuition for mind of a superior order, angelic or divine. Even thinkers of scientific formation, such as Descartes and Kant, did so, the latter openly invoking an *intellectus archetypus*. But it will always remain for Kant to fix the turning point; for while admitting that the human intellect is limited, the thinker ends by making these very limits (we would call them of time, of the progression which must be called in question) man's supreme title. It is precisely because we do not know the world directly that we possess a science and a scientific vocation; it is precisely because we do not do good spontaneously, as angelic natures do, that we possess a moral conscience.

Hegel goes further. He says that one can conceive of no other form of Mind than the mediate mind, revealed in the time of the logos ("God is syllogism"). In demonstrating by his dialectic that the nature of Truth is to be mediate, Hegel brings to an end intellectual intuition and the desire for ecstasy.



He it is who finally opens up the path through speculation to a new time, that of the logos. However, having immersed the rational in reality, Hegel wraps them both so closely together that he seems no longer able to separate them, nor detect the contractions of time; as has been rightly said, he entirely misses the revolutionary character of the logos. And nowhere in his vast logical machine does he have the *presentiment of the machine* which was about to burst on the world. But it was precisely by means of its capacity for contraction that the time of the logos was about to increase reality twofold with the machines which now people the earth.

The *third characteristic* of the time of the logos emphasizes its inflexibility. It can be limited and extended as much as one likes without losing its rigour. And this time it is a total inflexibility unsullied by irrationality or irreversibility. The time of reality was irreversible (only nowadays, one can speak of a certain reversibility with regard to particles). In contrast, the time of the logos can move backwards. Or else, if it also is irreversible in a certain sense, it is not in succession, but as succession. In its case, the reply can precede the question, the analysis is duplicated by synthesis, just as, on the material level, fission is duplicated by fusion and explosion by possible implosion, the progressive taking place just as inevitably. For its part contemporary scientific thought is dominated by the idea, strange at first glance, that the simple does not precede the complex, but that, on the contrary, the complex must be postulated before the simple. It must be accepted that, in nature, the heliocoïdal movement appeared first and rectilinear movement only later, as a particular case of the former; similarly in the time of the logos in which thought has its place, one must accept the fact that non-Euclidean geometries preceded those of Euclid. The world does not merely regulate itself; better still, by means of logical movement, it re-regulates itself.

But in this way logical order transcribes order, and it does so according to strict rules. Notwithstanding their irreversibility, the sequences suggested by reality are only states of fact, in which necessity is slow in making its appearance, one might say posthumous. On the other hand, with the time of the logos necessity is an evolving progression. Thus in relation to the time



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of the logos, which is total inflexibility, the time of reality is laxity itself.

And yet the *fourth characteristic* of the time of the logos, that of being able to begin anew, endows it with a flexibility which is foreign to real time. For in spite of its slow, slack course, there is discernible in the latter an element of the implacable: its essence allows of no recommencement. Once accomplished its development cannot be challenged, and its advance has not only a single line of direction but also unicity. On the other hand the time of the logos is not arrested at the point of "once." One can return to the different stages it has accomplished and by this means reconstruct the order which one has not achieved at a first attempt. Thus if real time can be symbolized by the straight line (what Hegel calls: the wrong infinite), the other can be conveyed by movement which circles back on itself.

In the hands of man the time of the logos turns back on the time of reality and, when it cannot transform it as it wishes, stimulates its course by means of practical thought, by transforming its content and duplicating it with isotopes. By repeatedly returning to reality, on which it confers a different tempo, the time of the logos might seem to cause disintegration, just as its creations might appear artificial. And yet it is in this time that things are accomplished, while the time of reality is that of corruption. The former combats entropie; the time of reality increases it. In the final analysis the time of the logos is disclosed as being just as paradoxical as the other time, but in an opposite sense: it is revolutionary, but constructive, while the other is conservative but destructive.

So now we can see it more clearly: the time of the logos is—like space in geometry—a model of man. But if it is found in reality, or if it can act upon reality, or indeed even become incorporated in it, it no longer belongs to man alone.

TIME OF THE LOGOS AND THE MACHINE

We do not know what time is, but we *make* it, and then our lack of knowledge is at an end. Man has incorporated into reality a form of time for which he had constituted the model; he has objectivized the time of the logos, with its pure connectivity in



the form of self-moving creations, machines, whose nature is perfectly temporal, if time is the "number of movement in relation to the anterior and the posterior." But on this occasion we are no longer dealing with Aristotle's time, nor with that of nature, or of God. We are dealing with the time of the logos, which has freed itself from the cardinal number, the ordinal and from all free succession, to become connectivity in act. This is the time, with its four characteristics, which we find in the machine.

First of all, the machine *has no present*. It is a presence without a present. We can attribute its own present to the machine, when we consider it either in repose or in activity, but in itself the machine is foreign to the present in all forms. Not because it is dead: stone is also dead—and yet it possesses a present, or at least it figures in the present of real time. The machine, on the other hand, withdraws from real time and takes refuge in the time of the logos. It is not true that everything which is not in time is in eternity. The machine is in *another* time.

Because it is not in the present, the machine has no temporal centre. It *all works* at the same time, rejecting the distribution of its progressions into pasts and futures *across* the frontiers of any present whatsoever. Nevertheless, without a separation taking place at any point, the necessary connections of the machine always possess a form of past and future, but closed, in a circle, as was movement in the time of the logos. For there are in fact anterior progressions and others which follow them because they have been set in motion by them, in spite of the fact that all chains of action take place "in the same time," from the point of view of real time. The temporal dimension which dominates, with the machine, is the future, as is the case with all time of the logos; for the machine is pro-pulsivity *par excellence*. It sends things forwards. So what does the machine do? With it, in contrast to living organisms which are always "doing" something in the present, the matter in question is what it is about to do, not what it has done. The machine exists in its own result.

Secondly, just like the time of the logos, the machine can *extend or compress* its working time. In principle it has no fixed measurement, and does not take into account an external dimension (as for example natural rhythm). And yet it is unable completely to suppress its "time". Like Hegel's Mind, it is only time by



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mediation; or one could also say: its truth is development. One could hardly imagine a machine whose working was instant. But one can indeed imagine a machine whose time (as in the time of the electronic machine, or of accelerators of particles, or even of historical revolutions) would no longer be subjected to the all-lelling tyranny of real time.

Thirdly, the machine possesses inflexibility by the double orientation of its work in one direction or in another. For one can hardly imagine a machine which would work backwards, reversing with just as much accuracy the forward progression it had already made. Like the new time of the logos which it incorporates, and, from another point of view, like the irreversible cosmic accident which is life (even if the subtlety of the machine is not comparable to that of life) the machine, by its order, opposes the disorder of the world. For dead matter, at least, it represents a principle of order *such* that it can bend to its own interests the most rebellious powers of nature and can even create others still more rebellious.

By means of the machine man has stolen from the gods the mastery over movement, just as long ago he stole from them the mastery over fire. It is probably, in the history of the earth, a new event of the same order. Or perhaps we have here an even greater exploit, for fire has no rigidity, it only consumes, whereas movement possesses the rigidity of its progression, whether it be open or closed. And it is on the sure orbits of closed movement, not in the flames of Heraclitus' fire, that things trace their message—things such as the elements and the substances of the world and also the "machine beings" already in existence or which will exist one day.

Finally, with the time of the logos, the machine is never in the power of the *irrevocable and the unrepeatable* which constitute the precariousness of reality. If for time and for times there is no return, the time of the logos, on the other hand, and its own times are by their very nature *revocable*. Furthermore in this connection the machine possesses something of the nature of man, who sprang from natural spontaneity and claims to be—as Goethe says—a creature capable of renewing his being. The machine has made the striking innovation of being able to do the same thing over and over, in a world where everything (and, in most



cases, man also) is flowing and changing, to such an extent that, as Heraclitus says, one cannot bathe twice in the same river. The machine recaptures time itself, and enables one to plunge not only twice but innumerable times in the same current. Nothing can recall the time of Heraclitus, in the case of the machine. And yet the machine is time incorporate.

Or else some vestige of real time does remain; and this is a most significant aspect. If Hegel said, and rightly, that time is the most powerful and the weakest thing that exists, then—in its own way—the machine is power itself and weakness too (“a jumble of metal”). Everything depends, as with time, on connectivity in action. The machine seems to have concentrated within itself the essential principle of temporality, connectivity, and it is of this connectivity, first and foremost, more so even than of empty succession, that the machine is composed.

That is why, by reason of the connectivity which the machine incorporates exclusively, one might make up fantastic stories about machines in general, as if they were not yet in existence. In the philosophical perspective—which always follows things but which nevertheless places itself before them—a classification of machines yet to be invented should be allied to possible types of connection. But the logical experience of thought through the ages has thrown light on *five* modalities of connection: that based on identity, on causality, on functional relation, on system and, finally, on contradiction. Their reasoned presentation figures, or should figure, in every work on logic. But their *materialisation* is perhaps to be found here in the apparent jungle of machines, which made their appearance on the surface of the earth a century and a half ago, and which, like a new, more gifted species, call in question all other terrestrial species. Thus one could imagine the following classification of machines: there would be machines based on *identity*, by the simple repetition of their progression; others based on *causality* (perhaps the motor with four speeds, that dying divinity of our world); a third type based on *functional dependence*; another on *systematic centralization*; and the last type—perhaps the machine of tomorrow—based on *contradiction*, that is to say stemming from anti-energy or anti-matter.

Confronted by such a picture of real or possible machines it can be said that at best no machine has ever been invented by



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means of such empty plans. But no philosophical thought worthy of the name has ever failed to amuse the scientist.

*

The time of the logos is a reality with man, and, in the machine, it is objectivated reality. It is supported by real time, in which it has found its starting point; it can be confirmed by the meeting of man with that-which-is-not-man; and it must have a doctrine—as we shall show—in the science of logic.

For the moment man is making use of it, as if it were a model of time which had been made operational. From the intimate alliance of man with such a time; an alliance which will probably lead to man's being implanted in machinity—just as there were dreams in antiquity of man implanted in animality, the sphinx or the centaur—something new has sprung into being in history. There has appeared a time which takes a stand against time. The man of today can still momentarily believe that he has to choose between one and the other, between the time of reality and the time of the logos. But if he knows himself in his capacity as man, he realizes that he has already chosen the time of the logos.



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par

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La logique est la science du temps pur, de même que la géométrie est la science de l'espace pur.

On n'aurait pas risqué une telle affirmation dans le passé. Tout comme la géométrie a semblé concerner les seules formes stables et non les transformations et les déformations, la logique a semblé concerner les modalités statiques de la pensée et, parmi les connexions, à titre privilégié, la seule connexion syllogistique. Mais la géométrie est devenue la science des formes spatiales mouvantes; partout les mathématiques ont apporté le fluxionnel; dans son ensemble la science considère le repos comme un cas limite du mouvement. La logique elle aussi — même indépendamment de la logique mathématique — ne saurait garder son image classique. Car la pensée, encore moins que les mathématiques, ne se résume pas à refléter le statique. Alors qu'un cercle peut encore être regardé en tant que simple cercle et non dans les déformations de la vision topologique, une forme de pensée est toujours du *temps condensé*.

On a prétendu, dans le passé, que la démarche logique n'avait rien de commun avec le temps. Aujourd'hui on dirait qu'elle oppose au temps réel un autre temps, mais nullement qu'elle porte sur l'éternel. Même le détachement par rapport au temps *réel* est sujet à caution : Hegel et le marxisme ont décrit, par la dialectique, leur entrelacement. Mais si on se restreint à la logique formelle elle-même, on pourrait encore dire qu'elle reflète, par sa temporalité spécifique, le temps et ses propriétés, tout comme la géométrie reflète et construit l'espace et ses propriétés.



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La topologie a fait de la spatialité « ce qu'elle a voulu ». Elle a pris un cercle, elle l'a déformé à sa guise et — sous certaines conditions — elle a trouvé qu'il y avait « cercle » dans la nouvelle figure, dans la propriété qu'elle avait d'être une « courbe fermée simple » (à une seule boucle). La nouvelle science a donc trouvé une autre forme de spatialité. Ne pourrait-on pas faire de même avec le temps? Ou plutôt : ne l'a-t-on pas déjà fait? Il est vrai que le temps semble « mesure » par excellence; mais, de même que les formes spatiales ont été détachées de leur rigidité, le temps lui aussi peut être sorti de son rythme. A sa façon, le temps peut être comprimé, étendu, déformé, « chiffonné »; il peut donc perdre ce qui semblait le caractériser, la mesure, tout en restant « temps », ou alors une forme de temporalité. Et le problème se posera, comme pour l'espace : quels sont, malgré ses déformations, les caractères qui lui sont essentiels pour se maintenir comme temps? La nature de la temporalité pourra de la sorte obtenir quelques traits nouveaux; sa structure en ressortira plus clairement; et, surtout, ayant une image changée, le temps s'avérera présent justement là où les choses semblaient caractérisées par son absence : dans les formes logiques, d'un côté; d'un autre, dans cette création du monde moderne qu'est la machine.



Avant de tenter une description du temps déformant et modérateur à la fois, que nous appellerons « temps du logos », nous pouvons peut-être donner quelques exemples communs de certaines de ses déformations.

De la question à la réponse, il se passe un temps, tout bref qu'il est; du problème à la solution, de même. Il n'est pas question de temps psychologique, mais — comme on l'a dit — de « temps du problème ». Aussi ne pourrait-on l'annuler : la machine électronique a pu raccourcir le calcul d'une façon fantastique, mais elle l'a seulement raccourci. Il faut un temps pour chaque opération, un temps opérationnel, de même qu'il en faut un pour l'établissement de tout fondement.

Cela semble naturel, car il ne s'agit pas encore d'une déformation frappante du temps. Aussi pourrait-on objecter que la création d'un intervalle pour chaque opération



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ou enchaînement va de soi, et que nous sommes libres d'appeler temps cet intervalle, voire cette *distensio*, comme disait saint Augustin. Mais où est le temps d'un « concept », par exemple? A quoi l'on répondra que le concept lui-même sera un exemple pour cette autre forme de temporalité, tout comme l'identité des concepts et leur contradiction, ou encore celle des jugements.

Mais arrêtons-nous encore à des exemples généraux, en mettant cette fois-ci l'accent sur les déformations apportées par le temps du logos. On a employé à propos des prophètes une expression d'une surprenante exactitude : « Ils se souviennent de l'avenir. » Dans le « temps du logos » où vit tout prophète, un enchaînement nécessaire a déjà eu lieu; ce qui doit s'accomplir lui apparaît avec une telle évidence que la chose possède pour lui un caractère de déjà accompli qui l'autorise à conclure à partir de quelque chose d'inexistant comme s'il s'agissait d'un antécédent. Dans la perspective du temps du logos, l'avenir s'est transformé en passé.

S'il en est ainsi de la prophétie, l'intervention du temps du logos agit parfois en sens contraire, de sorte que le passé apparaît alors comme avenir. Il nous arrive ainsi, dans l'expérience de notre vie consciente, de trouver d'abord la réponse et ensuite la question; et il existe des questions qui se posent à peine devant la réponse. La formulation de la question, avec tout son passé et son ouverture incertaine sur l'avenir, se fait seulement lorsque le temps réel a déjà répondu à la question.

Ce que nous appelons « expérience de vie » consiste, dans une large mesure, en de tels processus renversés. On comprend et on apprend, sans plus nécessairement récolter des profits dans le temps réel. Mais quand on y a pénétré, le temps du logos renvoie en arrière, vers des choses dont la signification et même la réalité n'apparaissaient pas à leur heure, en obligeant à enchaîner les significations de façon inversée et à mettre de la sorte le passé dans l'avenir. On pénètre alors dans l'inconnu du passé, comme on le ferait dans celui de l'avenir.

Un dernier exemple général : la sagesse. Etre sage pourrait signifier : faire de l'avenir une forme de passé. Cette fois, on ne détient pas l'avenir, comme le prophète, on ne détient pas nécessairement le passé, comme l'homme avisé, mais on sait quelque chose d'essentiel sur leur rap-



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port. Car le caractère du sage est, peut-être, de pouvoir « reconnaître » des choses qu'il n'a jamais connues. Tout ce qui pourrait lui arriver, il le sait déjà. Le temps du logos lui est devenu à tel point objectif qu'il n'y aura plus pour lui, dans le temps réel, « rien de nouveau sous le soleil ».

Nous pouvons maintenant revenir à la philosophie, pour y trouver l'exemple le plus caractéristique des perturbations apportées par le temps du logos. C'est celui qui nous est offert par la vision philosophique de Kant : c'est l'*a priori*. Dans l'*a priori*, qui représente en fin de compte la grande nouveauté de Kant, l'histoire de la philosophie montre d'une façon frappante ce qu'il arrive au moment où le temps du logos et le temps réel interfèrent. *A priori* veut dire « avant » ; mais cette fois il apparaît ensuite. Sous un certain rapport, il existait avant l'expérience ; mais dans la perspective du réel il n'existe pour Kant lui-même rien avant l'expérience. Toutes les connaissances commencent *avec* l'expérience, même si elles n'ont pas toutes leur source *dans* l'expérience, — telle est la formule célèbre qui ouvre la *Critique de la raison pure*. Les formes de la sensibilité (temps et espace), tout comme les catégories de l'entendement (unité, causalité, etc.), ne sauraient être conçues avant l'expérience : elles naissent à peine sous la sollicitation de celle-ci. Et pourtant elles sont, d'après Kant, la condition préalable de l'expérience ; elles sont *a priori*. De là les complications de cet *a priori*, que l'on est tenté de chercher avant l'expérience et que l'on transforme, en réalité, en une nouvelle expérience, antérieure à l'expérience habituelle. C'est bien ce qu'ont fait quelques commentateurs, en invoquant l'expérience ancestrale comme fondement de l'expérience présente, l'expérience philogénétique comme précédant l'expérience ontogénétique, ou quelque déterminisme, psychologique ou autre, comme source de nécessité logique. Mais l'*a priori* cesse de la sorte d'être ce qu'il prétendait être : il devient un bien banal *a posteriori*, produit par une expérience d'un ordre plus général et à l'œuvre seulement, avec les apparences d'un *a priori*, dans les consciences individuelles.

Le sens de la thèse kantienne nous semble pourtant catégorique : l'*a priori* rend possible l'expérience ; donc il est antérieur à chacune — et pas seulement à l'expérience individuelle et historique — *dans le temps du logos* ; l'*a*



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priori, toutefois, naît dans la « conscience en général » sous la sollicitation de l'expérience; il est donc postérieur à l'expérience pour toute conscience, même pour la conscience individuelle, dans le temps réel. Aussi a-t-on l'habitude de dire qu'*a priori* signifie seulement « indépendamment » de l'expérience — ce qui est vrai, mais dissimule le problème des deux temps.

Il y a bien deux temps. Recherchons la nature du second.

Le temps du logos et sa nature.

L'apparence du temps du logos comme simple modalité du temps psychologique peut être dissipée dès le début. Même si quelques-uns des exemples précédents laissent l'impression qu'il s'agit de l'expérience intime de l'homme, et de rien d'autre, le temps du logos reste un temps spécifique : l'*a priori* kantien n'était pas d'ordre psychologique, et le « temps du problème » non plus.

L'apparence du temps logique, spécifique par rapport au temps psychologique, comme création humaine simplement subjective s'évanouit elle aussi. Le simple fait que l'on pose aujourd'hui le problème d'un contact avec d'autres êtres rationnels du cosmos présuppose que ces derniers eux aussi pourraient doubler leur temps réel par un temps du logos, toute communication s'avérant sans cela impossible. Le temps du logos a au moins l'objectivité de l'intersubjectivité.

Enfin, l'apparence que le temps du logos ne dépasse pas l'intersubjectivité éventuelle, puisqu'il est seulement d'ordre rationnel et sans rapport avec le réel, est détruite par la science de la logique elle-même. Car la logique n'est pas un produit libre, telles les mathématiques. Même si on n'en prend qu'un en considération, on doit bien convenir qu'il y a trois ordres logiques : l'ordre de l'expression, celui de la pensée et celui du réel. Avec la logique mathématique, la science de la logique traite de l'expression et de son ordre pur pensé; elle traite de la pensée et de son ordre pur dans la logique classique; et elle traite du réel et de son ordre pur, dans ce qui pourrait être une logique d'ensemble, mais qui est en fin de compte la philosophie même. Car c'est justement pour témoigner d'un ordre logique, voire des connexions nécessaires, que



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le réel peut être connu. Aussi la logique peut-elle faire abstraction de toute connexion déterminée, elle ne saurait éluder le problème de l'enchaînement. Mais l'enchaînement dernier, le plus serré et le plus lâche à la fois — c'est le temps.

Serait-ce là une définition pour le temps? L'homme a donné des noms à certaines choses, et puis il s'est demandé quel pourrait bien être le sens de ses appellations. Il a appelé la grande chose Dieu et il s'est demandé ensuite, tout au long des siècles, ce que Dieu était. Il a appelé « temps » un aspect de la réalité et il ne cesse de se demander depuis ce qu'est le temps. Ou, pour reprendre l'expression de saint Augustin : l'homme sait ce qu'est le temps si on ne le lui demande pas, il l'ignore lorsqu'on le lui demande. Aujourd'hui encore on ne saurait définir le temps d'une façon univoque. Mais l'homme moderne a renversé le problème de l'investigation : nous ne commençons plus par définir les choses pour les utiliser ensuite en fonction de leur définition, mais nous en faisons des modèles, nous les refaisons tout simplement, et c'est seulement par la suite que nous essayons de les définir.

Evidente sur le plan technique, la tendance à modeler les choses et les processus pourrait l'être aussi sur le plan spéculatif. Tout comme l'homme ignore ce qu'est le temps, il a ignoré au fond ce qu'est l'espace. Mais les mathématiques ont *construit* d'autres espaces, c'est-à-dire qu'elles ont donné de nouveaux modèles (espaces non euclidiens — en particulier riemanniens —, espaces topologiques) et on a eu la surprise de voir non seulement qu'on s'approchait ainsi d'une définition à la fois plus rigoureuse et plus large (espace des couleurs, des sons), mais encore que certaines formes nouvelles de spatialité se rencontraient dans le réel, s'avérant ainsi « objectives ». L'image de l'espace détachée du réel s'est transformée, et elle a fini par s'appliquer sur le réel même. On devrait peut-être faire de même et d'une façon explicite avec l'idée et l'image du temps. Nous sommes en définitive sur le point de pénétrer dans d'autres temps et peut-être de rencontrer le temps des autres. Il est donc bien à propos d'établir un nouveau modèle du temps.

Mais le temps du logos l'a déjà fait, d'une façon implicite. Il est parti du temps réel, il l'a transformé, il en a modelé un autre, pour finir par rabattre ce



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dernier sur le temps réel. Suivons les étapes de l'édification.

S'il fallait quand même, pour commencer, définir le temps réel, alors, à notre surprise à nous, modernes, la définition d'Aristote pourrait encore servir de point de départ (ce qui prouve que nous ne savons pas beaucoup mieux que les Anciens ce qu'est le temps). Dans sa *Physique* (219 b sqq.), Aristote dit : « Le temps est le nombre, du mouvement. » Et il ajoute : « Etre dans le temps veut dire être mesuré, les choses se trouvant enveloppées par le nombre comme par leur lieu. » Mais puisque le mouvement comme déplacement en cercle tombe le mieux sous le nombre, comme étant homogène et sans cesse repris (le mouvement des astres), c'est ce type de mouvement qui donnera, comme tous le savent, l'unité de mesure du temps.

Tout semble clair, pour le temps habituel. Mais le temps du logos vient changer le tableau. Le temps peut être « nombre », mais *il n'est pas nécessairement mesure*. La définition antique en dit trop si par nombre on entend mesure. Mais si nombre veut dire ordre, alors la définition garderait un sens; on pourrait encore déterminer, par elle, une certaine forme de temps. Ce n'est pas la mesure uniforme du mouvement, mais plutôt son ordonnance qui pourrait être en jeu, avec une autre temporalité; non pas un temps qui frappe les coups, mais celui qui avance. Dans l'espèce, le nombre qu'implique la définition du temps pourrait être ordinal et non cardinal. Mais cela change tout.

Au niveau plutôt élémentaire où nous nous plaçons, on pourrait dire que l'ordinal a triomphé du cardinal dès que l'esprit scientifique est devenu plus mûr. De toute façon, la rigidité du nombre cardinal ne semble pas tenir de l'essence de la numération. Ce serait au nombre ordinal de le faire, en fin de compte, car il suggère la continuité. Le cardinal indique des choses, l'ordinal des développements; l'un porte sur le devenu, l'autre sur le devenir. C'est donc au dernier qu'il revient de représenter le « nombre du mouvement » que serait le temps.

La *première* déformation du temps réel, de la perspective mise en jeu par le temps du logos, en est une au sens propre du mot : c'est d'enlever au temps le rythme rigide de la mesure et de l'uniformité, et de le mettre en fluidité.



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A la place d'une continuité de discontinuité (les jours, les périodes ou les « maintenant »), le temps du logos apporterait la pure continuité. Ce qui semblait précisément essentiel au temps, la mesure, ne l'est pas. En échange l'ordre le caractériserait toujours, même s'il tolère des « temps » variés. D'ailleurs c'est ainsi que Leibniz définissait le temps, comme simple « ordre de succession », par opposition à l'espace qui n'est que de coexistence. Par conséquent la définition aristotélicienne semblerait sauvée, dans sa lettre au moins. Pourtant Aristote sera dépassé même dans sa lettre. Lorsqu'on définit le temps comme « ordre de succession », l'accent ne saurait plus tomber sur l'ordre, c'est-à-dire sur le souvenir du nombre, mais sur la succession. Au fond, l'ordre en dit trop sur le temps, si le premier a comme domaine de définition l'ampleur du nombre ordinal. Plutôt que par l'ordre de succession, le temps pourrait se caractériser par le *fait* de la succession. Le temps du logos, de toute façon, peut retenir pour lui-même la seule succession.

Une *deuxième* déformation du temps réel par le temps du logos vient de surgir : le temps n'est pas ordre de succession, mais succession qui crée à peine un ordre. On ne saurait plus dire, par conséquent, que l'ordinalité est la nature du temps. Elle est le résultat du temps, son œuvre, ou encore sa trace. Le temps représenterait la pure succession. Tout au moins on peut parfaitement le concevoir ainsi, comme détaché du nombre-mesure, détaché de l'ordre nombrable, et même de l'unicité de la succession. Voilà donc un autre modèle de temps, celui des successions au pluriel, un temps ramifié, voire une sorte d'espace temporel pour les processus, les opérations, les développements et les créations. Le temps du logos a abandonné la naïveté de l'image du temps en tant que procession unitaire de l'ensemble des choses, ou comme « présent qui s'avance ». Car il n'y a plus unité de temps, du moment qu'il n'y a pas de mesure, donc plus de « totalité » ni d'« unicité » du temps. Les successions peuvent être libres.

Néanmoins les successions doivent *tenir*, justement pour être sorties du temps unique où elles étaient liées, au moins extérieurement. Il leur faut, pour se constituer en tant que successions, une liaison, et cette liaison est intérieure. Mais, de la sorte, la simple succession qui, elle



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aussi, semblait caractériser l'essence du temps, ne saurait en constituer la définition. Le modèle doit être précisé davantage : il s'agit d'une succession *liée* — et cette fois-ci le temps aura trouvé son caractère. Ainsi c'est plutôt à la connexion qu'à la succession de rendre compte du temps même.

Une *troisième* et dernière déformation du temps est ainsi apparue, et elle mène au modèle de temps que nous appellerons à proprement parler temps du logos. Il représente la réduction du temps à l'enchaînement. Le temps du réel déconnecte sans cesse du présent, étant en un sens pure déconnexion (Hegel disait : pure négativité, incessante suppression de soi). C'est pourquoi le temps du réel apparaissait comme un interminable écroulement, ce qui faisait dire à Aristote que le temps était plutôt destructeur que générateur. Mais c'est le contraire avec le temps du logos; il connecte sans cesse. Et tout comme la succession était la source de l'ordre, et non inversement, cette fois la connexion qui s'établit (non pas celle déjà établie) sera le principe et la source de la succession. De par la connexion, le temps semble avoir une direction et un sens, tel un vecteur. Par rapport au temps réel, qui n'était qu'un « scalaire » (il compte, mais il n'oriente pas), le temps du logos a la nature du vecteur — mais au-delà de toute mesure, seulement avec direction et sens.

Le temps du réel pourra lui-même apparaître maintenant comme un cas limite du temps de l'enchaînement, de même que l'espace euclidien est lui aussi un cas limite. Avec son seul enchaînement, le temps du logos est pourtant plus riche, plus varié et — pour parler comme Hegel — plus puissant. Car Hegel découvre au temps réel un aspect bien étrange : il est à la fois tout ce qu'il y a de plus puissant au monde et de plus faible. Nous dirons : la puissance du temps réel est la manifestation de l'enchaînement (tout se lie dans le temps) et sa faiblesse est le relâchement de tout enchaînement (tout se délie dans le temps).

Le nouveau modèle de temps, par conséquent, le temps du logos, reflète quelque chose du temps réel, mais en change la nature. Dans sa nouvelle version, pour résumer, la nature du temps apparaîtrait de la sorte :

1. Le temps n'est pas nombre en tant que mesure, mais en tant qu'ordre;



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2. Il n'est pas non plus simplement ordre, voire ordre de succession, mais succession;

3. A proprement parler, il n'est pas simple succession, mais connexion en acte.

Après avoir précisé quelle est la nature d'un tel temps, nous tâcherons d'en écrire la structure. Il nous restera à montrer que ce modèle du temps s'est effectivement appliqué sur le réel (avec la machine, pour anticiper) et d'ailleurs qu'il opère depuis toujours dans la conscience logique de l'homme et depuis plus d'un siècle dans son histoire.

Le temps du logos et sa structure

Considéré en lui-même, par-delà son enchevêtrement avec le temps réel, le temps du logos ainsi défini présente les traits suivants :

1. Il n'a que deux dimensions, le passé et l'avenir, le présent n'existant pas;

2. Il peut être comprimé et étendu;

3. Il est orienté, sans être irréversible comme l'est le temps habituel;

4. A la différence du temps réel, il peut être repris, ou il se refait.

Le *premier trait*, l'absence du présent, pourra sembler le plus inattendu. Le temps du logos se définissait comme connexion en acte. A part le temps du réel, où les choses sont ou deviennent, il existe un temps du « comment quelque chose est possible ». C'est donc le temps du déploiement nécessaire d'une opération ou création (dans les choses ou par la pensée), d'une explicitation, d'une implication, d'une intégration ou d'une déduction, en un mot le temps d'une réaction en chaîne; et ce sera également, à la limite, le temps du déploiement de l'identité ou du développement d'une contradiction. Il donnera le contenu pur des formes logiques de la pensée. Aussi, au moment où on accorde à la logique une temporalité, il semblerait naturel de retrouver toutes les dimensions du temps. Mais le présent manque.

Le passé et l'avenir s'imposent ici de toute évidence. Aristote définissait plus exactement le temps comme « nombre du mouvement selon l'*antérieur* et le *postérieur* ». Même si l'expression était vicieuse (car « anté-



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rieur » et « postérieur » impliquent déjà le temps à définir), il est toutefois significatif que pour caractériser le temps le philosophe antique ne parlait pas de présent, de prime abord. Il existe bien un *primum* et un *deinde* pour le temps du logos, mais entre eux il n'y aura rien. Ce qui vient d'abord, fondement ou principe, possède véritablement le caractère d'un passé : il se perdra comme tel; ce qui s'ensuit, la chaîne des raisons, c'est l'avenir, ou, pour les consécutives accomplies, l'avenir consumé. On ne saurait trouver nulle part le présent dans le temps du logos, qui est un temps de l'ouverture nécessaire du passé vers l'avenir, de l'antécédence vers la conséquence et rien d'autre. Tout au plus le présent pourra-t-il être cet ensemble passé-avenir; mais alors il ne s'agirait plus d'un présent authentique, qui est passage. Aussi, pour manquer totalement de présent, les formes logiques ont semblé étrangères à toute temporalité — tant on s'était habitué à voir dans le présent la vraie marque du temps.

Et en effet, au sein du temps réel le présent est décisif. Si on le considère comme « ordre de succession », le temps devient une succession de présents. Malgré le déplacement incessant du « maintenant », sa position et sa fonction l'indiquent comme le vrai noyau du temps réel, auquel il donne de l'équilibre. De la sorte le temps est d'habitude centré sur le présent, qui justement crée un équilibre à son infinité. Car, pour autant que le temps n'a pas de totalisation possible en tant qu'infini, le passé n'augmente pas sur le compte de l'avenir, il ne semble pas en consommer la substance, mais, à mesure que le volume du passé s'accroît, celui de l'avenir augmente lui aussi, le présent restant un centre inchangé qui aura devant lui tout autant qu'il laisse derrière lui.

Mais tout autre sera le tableau du temps du logos. On n'y trouve plus d'équilibre. Faute d'avoir un présent il est décentré. Alors que le temps réel enveloppe toutes les choses dans une universelle procession à avance uniforme, le temps du logos est accélérateur et propulsif. C'est pourquoi, lorsque la pensée rencontre le temps du logos (au sein de la connaissance) sous l'image d'une ouverture nécessaire, c'est-à-dire d'une antécédence, elle n'aura plus de repos. Tout comme on ne saurait s'arrêter à un raisonnement incomplet (« chaque printemps les hirondelles arrivent; nous sommes au printemps... »), de même la



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pensée ne saurait s'arrêter sur le vide que crée le nouveau temps. Le temps réel ne fait que *remplir* sans cesse le monde, avec des contenus nouveaux mais corruptibles; le temps du logos *vide* le monde sans cesse, en débouchant vers ce qui est à venir. C'est à l'avenir et non au présent qu'il revient d'être la principale dimension du temps du logos, et c'est pourquoi c'en est un vectoriel.

Avec son *deuxième caractère*, celui de pouvoir être comprimé et étendu librement, le temps du logos perdra non seulement son centre, mais aussi sa mesure. Le temps habituel avait une mesure précise, comme nous le rappelions : en dernier lieu, celle du rythme cosmique propre à chaque coin de l'univers. C'est à cette mesure que se rapportent, aussi variées qu'elles puissent paraître, toutes les autres formes de temps : le temps de l'organique (temps de croissance et de vie); chez l'homme encore, le temps psychologique et le temps historique. Mais le temps du logos n'a pas de mesure intérieure ou extérieure pouvant adopter n'importe quel tempo. Considéré dans sa capacité de ralentissement ou de relâchement, ce temps-ci a pu confirmer l'impression que les formes logiques baigneraient dans l'éternel. Toutefois ce n'est pas le relâchement, mais plutôt la tension, qui donnera son caractère spécifique au temps du logos; et c'est pourquoi sa nouveauté, pour l'homme qui en devient conscient, est le raccourcissement des « temps ».

L'homme s'est toujours rendu compte que penser, par exemple, signifie raccourcir. L'acte de penser est bien celui d'unifier une diversité, et mieux on pense, plus on unifie. Jusqu'à quelle limite? Par-delà toute limite, semblerait être l'idéal de la pensée : jusqu'à la vision directe. La pensée philosophique elle-même, tout au long de l'histoire, a jugé pouvoir jeter une lumière sur l'esprit humain en le renvoyant jusqu'à l'« intuition intellectuelle » qui, avec sa vision directe, représenterait un idéal de la connaissance. Dans les cas où l'intuition intellectuelle était déniée à l'esprit humain, les penseurs ne cessaient d'invoquer une telle intuition pour les esprits d'ordre supérieur, angélique ou divin. C'est ce que faisaient même des penseurs de formation scientifique, tels Descartes et Kant, ce dernier invoquant ouvertement un *intellectus archetypus*. Mais il reviendra toujours à Kant de marquer le point de retour; car tout en admettant que l'intellect humain est limité,



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le penseur finit par faire de ces limites mêmes (nous dirons : du temps, de l'enchaînement qu'il faut mettre en jeu) le titre suprême de l'homme. C'est justement parce que nous ne connaissons pas directement le monde que nous possédons une science et une vocation scientifique; c'est justement parce que nous n'accomplissons pas spontanément le bien, telles les natures angéliques, que nous possédons une conscience morale.

Hegel dit encore davantage : qu'on ne saurait concevoir une autre forme d'esprit que l'esprit médiat, se déployant dans le temps du logos (« Dieu est syllogisme »). En montrant par sa dialectique que la nature de la Vérité est d'être médiante, Hegel met fin à l'intuition intellectuelle et à la soif de l'extase. C'est bien lui qui a fini par frayer dans la spéculation la voie à un temps nouveau, celui du logos. Seulement, tout en faisant plonger le rationnel dans le réel, Hegel les a si bien couverts l'un par l'autre qu'il ne semble plus savoir les séparer et qu'il ne lui arrive plus de surprendre les temps raccourcis; il perd, comme on l'a bien dit, tout caractère révolutionnaire du logos. Aussi nulle part, au sein de sa vaste machine logique, n'aura-t-il le *pressentiment de la machine* qui était sur le point de surgir dans le monde. Mais c'était précisément par sa capacité de raccourcir que le temps du logos allait doubler le réel avec les machines qui peuplent déjà la terre.

Le *troisième caractère* du temps du logos met en relief sa vigueur. Il peut être restreint et étendu tant que l'on veut, il ne se déploie pas moins rigoureusement. Et cette fois la rigueur est totale, sans être entachée de l'irrationnel de l'irréversibilité. Le temps du réel était irréversible (c'est seulement de nos jours qu'on a pu parler, pour les particules, d'une certaine réversibilité). En échange, le temps du logos peut faire marche arrière. Ou alors, s'il est lui aussi irréversible d'une certaine façon, ce ne sera pas dans la succession, mais *comme* succession. Dans son cas, la réponse peut précéder la question, l'analyse est doublée de synthèse, tout comme, sur le plan de la matière, la fission est doublée de fusion et l'explosion d'implosion possible, le processus découlant tout aussi nécessairement. De son côté, l'esprit scientifique contemporain est dominé par l'idée, étrange à première vue, que le simple ne précède pas le complexe, mais qu'au contraire le complexe doit être posé avant le simple. Il faut accepter que, dans la



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nature, le mouvement hélicoïdal soit apparu le premier et seulement ensuite le déplacement en ligne droite, comme un cas particulier du premier; de même, dans le temps du logos où se place la pensée, on doit accepter que les géométries non euclidiennes précèdent celles d'Euclide. Le monde fait mieux que de s'ordonner : avec la démarche logique, il se réordonne.

Mais de la sorte, l'ordre logique transcrit l'ordre, et il le fait rigoureusement. Malgré leur irréversibilité, les séquences que propose le réel ne sont que des états de fait, où la nécessité est tardive, disons posthume. En échange, avec le temps du logos, la nécessité est celle du processus en train de se déployer. Par rapport donc au temps du logos, qui est la rigueur totale, le temps du réel serait le relâchement même.

Et pourtant le *quatrième trait* du temps du logos, celui de pouvoir être repris, lui confère une souplesse dont le temps du réel ne témoigne guère. Car malgré son cours lent et relâché ce dernier finit par avoir quelque chose d'implacable : il n'y a pas de reprise possible dans son sein. Une fois accompli, son développement est sans appel et son avance n'aura pas seulement eu un sens unique, mais encore de l'unicité. Par contre, le temps du logos ne se fige pas dans l'« une fois ». On peut revenir sur les étapes parcourues et, de la sorte, refaire l'ordre que l'on n'aura pas obtenu du premier coup. Si donc le temps du réel peut être symbolisé par la ligne droite (par le mauvais infini, disait Hegel), l'autre sera rendu par le mouvement qui revient sur lui-même.

Entre les mains de l'homme, le temps du logos se rabat sur le temps du réel et, lorsqu'il ne peut pas le transformer à son gré, il en stimule le cours, avec la pensée pratique, en transformant son contenu et en le doublant d'isotopes. Par le retour répété sur le réel, auquel il confère un autre tempo, le temps du logos pourrait sembler désagrégant, tout comme ses créations pourraient paraître artificielles. Et pourtant il est le temps où les choses s'accomplissent, alors que le temps du réel est celui de la corruption. Le premier combat l'entropie; le temps du réel l'augmente. En définitive, le temps du logos s'avère tout aussi paradoxal que l'autre, seulement en un sens opposé : il est révolutionnaire, mais il édifie; tandis que l'autre est conservateur, mais agent de la ruine.



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On le voit donc plus clairement maintenant : le temps du logos est — comme l'espace des géométries — un modèle créé par l'homme. Mais si on le retrouve dans le réel, ou s'il peut agir sur le réel, voire même s'y incorporer, il n'appartiendra pas seulement à l'homme.

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On ignore ce qu'est le temps; mais on le *fait*, et alors on cesse de l'ignorer. L'homme a incorporé dans le réel une forme de temps dont il avait constitué le modèle; il a objectivé le temps du logos, avec sa pure connectivité, dans des créations qui se meuvent toutes seules, les machines, et dont la nature est parfaitement temporelle, si le temps est le « nombre du mouvement selon l'antérieur et le postérieur ». Mais cette fois il ne s'agit plus du temps d'Aristote, ni de celui de la nature ou du bon Dieu. Il s'agit du temps du logos, qui s'est détaché du nombre cardinal, ordinal, comme de toute succession libre, pour être connectivité en acte. C'est bien ce temps, avec ses quatre caractéristiques, que nous retrouvons dans la machine.

Tout d'abord, la machine *n'a pas de présent*. C'est une présence sans présent. On peut bien lui conférer son présent lorsqu'on la considère soit en repos, soit en activité, mais en elle-même la machine est étrangère à tout présent. Non parce qu'elle est morte : la pierre l'est aussi — et pourtant elle possède un présent, ou tout au moins elle figure dans le présent du temps réel. La machine en échange se retire du temps réel pour se réfugier dans celui du logos. Il n'est pas vrai que tout ce qui n'est pas dans le temps est dans l'éternité. La machine est dans un *autre temps*.

Puisqu'elle est en dehors du présent, la machine n'aura pas de centre temporel. Elle travaille *toute*, à la fois, en se refusant à la distribution de ses processus en passés et futurs *par* la frontière d'un présent quelconque. Néanmoins, sans que la séparation se produise quelque part, les connexions nécessaires de la machine possèdent toujours une forme de passé et d'avenir, mais fermée, en cercle, comme c'était le cas pour le mouvement dans le temps du logos. Car il y a effectivement des processus



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antérieurs, et d'autres qui leur sont postérieurs parce que déclenchés par eux, malgré le fait que tous les processus ont lieu « dans le même temps », du point de vue du temps réel. La dimension temporelle qui prendra le dessus, dans la machine, sera l'avenir, comme pour tout temps du logos; car la machine est pro-pulsivité par excellence. Elle renvoie à. Que fait donc la machine? A l'encontre des organismes vivants qui « font » sans cesse quelque chose dans le présent, il s'agit avec elle de ce qu'elle fera, non pas de ce qu'elle fait. La machine est dans son résultat.

En deuxième lieu, tout comme le temps du logos, la machine peut *étendre ou comprimer* son temps de travail. En principe, elle n'a pas de mesure déterminée et ne tient pas compte d'une mesure extérieure (le rythme naturel, par exemple). Toutefois elle ne saurait supprimer totalement son « temps ». Comme l'Esprit hégélien, elle n'est vraie que par la médiation; ou encore : sa vérité est développement. On ne conçoit guère une machine à travail instantané. Mais, certes, on peut bien en imaginer une dont le temps (comme celui de la machine électronique, ou des accélérateurs de particules, ou alors celui des révolutions historiques) ne subisse plus la tyrannie égalisatrice du temps réel.

En troisième lieu, la machine a *de la rigueur* par la double orientation de son travail dans un sens ou dans l'autre. Car on peut bien imaginer une machine qui ferait le parcours inverse, en remontant tout aussi sûrement le processus qu'elle l'avait d'abord parcouru. Comme le temps nouveau du logos qu'elle incorpore et, d'un autre côté, comme l'accident cosmique irréversible qu'est la vie (même si la subtilité de la machine n'est pas comparable à celle de la vie), la machine s'oppose par son ordre au désordre du monde. Pour la matière morte, du moins, elle représente un *tel* principe d'ordre qu'elle sait plier à ses intérêts les plus rebelles énergies de la nature et même s'en créer d'autres, encore plus rebelles.

Par la machine l'homme a volé aux dieux la maîtrise du mouvement, comme il leur avait volé naguère celle du feu. C'est probablement, dans l'histoire de la terre, une nouveauté du même ordre. Ou peut-être s'agit-il d'un exploit encore plus grand, car le feu n'a pas de rigueur (il consomme seulement), alors que le mouvement possède la rigueur de son processus, qu'il soit ouvert ou fermé.



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Et c'est sur les orbites assurées du mouvement fermé, non pas dans les flammes du feu d'Héraclite, que les choses s'inscrivent, — tant les éléments et les substances du monde que les « êtres de machine », actuels ou à venir.

Avec le temps du logos, enfin, la machine n'est jamais sous l'emprise de *l'irrévocable* et de *l'irrépétable*, qui font la précarité du réel. Si pour le temps et les temps il n'y a pas de retour, le temps du logos en échange et ses temps à lui sont par leur nature *révocables*. Sous ce rapport encore, la machine exprime quelque chose de la nature de l'homme, qui est sorti de la spontanéité naturelle et s'avère être — selon le mot de Goethe — un être capable de recommencement. C'est une frappante nouveauté de la machine que de pouvoir faire la même chose, dans un monde où tout (et l'homme aussi, le plus souvent) coule et change, au point de ne pas pouvoir « se baigner deux fois dans le même fleuve », comme disait Héraclite. La machine reprend le temps même et fait que l'on plonge non seulement deux fois mais d'innombrables fois dans le même cours. Rien ne saurait rappeler le temps d'Héraclite dans le cas de la machine. Et pourtant, elle est du temps incorporé.

Ou alors il reste quand même quelque chose du temps réel; et c'est un aspect des plus significatifs. Si Hegel disait à bon droit que le temps est ce qu'il y a de plus puissant et de plus faible, alors — à sa façon — la machine est la puissance et la faiblesse mêmes (« de la ferraille »). Tout dépend, comme pour le temps, de la connectivité en action. La machine semble avoir concentré en elle le principe intime de la temporalité, la connectivité, et elle n'est rien d'autre, pas même succession vide, si elle n'est pas une telle connectivité.

C'est pourquoi, en raison de la connectivité que la machine incorpore d'une façon exclusive, on pourrait imaginer quelque chose sur les machines en général, comme si elles n'existaient pas encore. Dans la perspective philosophique — qui vient toujours après les choses, mais se place devant elles —, une classification des machines à inventer devrait être solidaire des types de connexion possibles. Mais l'expérience logique de la pensée millénaire a mis en lumière cinq modalités de connexion : à base d'identité, à base de causalité, à base de relation fonctionnelle, à base de système et enfin à base de contradiction. Leur présentation raisonnée figure, ou devrait figurer,



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dans tout traité de logique. Mais leur *matérialisation* a lieu peut-être ici, dans la jungle apparente des machines qui, depuis un siècle et demi, ont fait leur apparition sur la surface de la terre et qui mettent en question, comme une nouvelle espèce mieux douée, le reste des espèces terrestres. De la sorte on pourrait imaginer la classification des machines qui suit : il y aurait des machines à base d'identité, par la simple répétition de leur processus; d'autres à base de *causalité* (peut-être le moteur à quatre temps, cette divinité périssante de notre monde); un troisième type, à base de *dépendance fonctionnelle*; un autre, par *centralisation systématique*; et le dernier type — peut-être la machine de demain — à base de *contradiction*, c'est-à-dire à partir d'anti-énergie ou d'anti-matière.

Devant un tel tableau de machines réelles ou possibles, on dira, dans le meilleur des cas, qu'on n'a jamais inventé une machine à partir de schémas vides de ce genre. Mais une pensée philosophique qui ne provoque pas le sourire des hommes de sciences n'en est pas une.



Le temps du logos est une réalité avec l'homme, et il est une réalité objectivée, dans la machine. Il a un support dans le temps réel, où il a trouvé son point de départ; il pourra avoir une confirmation dans la rencontre de l'homme avec l'autre-que-l'homme; et il doit avoir une doctrine — comme on le fera voir — dans la science de la logique.

Pour le moment l'homme l'a mis dans son jeu, tel un modèle de temps qu'on a pu rendre opérationnel. De par l'alliance intime de l'homme avec un tel temps, une alliance qui mènera probablement à l'homme implanté dans la machinité — ainsi que l'Antiquité avait rêvé de l'homme implanté dans l'animalité, le sphinx ou le centaure — quelque chose de nouveau a surgi dans l'histoire. Il y est apparu un temps qui affronte le temps. L'homme d'aujourd'hui peut encore croire un instant qu'il a à choisir entre l'un et l'autre, entre le temps du réel et le temps du logos. Mais, s'il se reconnaît en tant qu'homme, il constate qu'il a déjà choisi le dernier.

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