

SIX MALADIES OF THE CONTEMPORARY SPIRIT



CONSTANTIN NOICA

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BOOKS



Constantin Noica

**Six maladies of the contemporary
spirit**

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The picture of the six diseases

Apart from somatic illnesses, identified for centuries, and mental illnesses, identified only for a century or so, there must be higher-order illnesses, let us call them illnesses of the spirit. No neurosis can explain the despair of Ecclesiastes, the feeling of exile on earth or alienation, metaphysical boredom as well as the feeling of emptiness or absurdity, the hypertrophy of the ego as well as the rejection of everything, empty contestation, just as no psychosis can explain economic and political frenzy, abstract art, technical demonism, or extreme formalism in culture, leading today to the primacy of empty precision.

There is no doubt that some of these tendencies have led and continue to lead to great creations. But they are no less great disturbances of the spirit. However, while somatic illnesses are accidental in nature (even death, it has been said, is an accident for living beings) and mental illnesses are somewhat contingent-necessary, as they are related to individual and social conditioning, both of which are accidental, illnesses of the spirit seem to be *constitutional*.

What we want to say, in the following pages and their extension, is that diseases of the spirit are in fact diseases of being, ontological diseases, and that therefore they may truly be constitutional to man, unlike the others; for if the body and soul also participate in being, the spirit alone reflects it fully, in its strength as well as in its precariousness. Being *is* also sick, in a certain version of itself. Dead and living things can remain stuck in a disease of being, and then hide it with their apparent certainty; but man, with his superior uncertainty, reveals it. And being can be not only sick, but also false.

If, for example, a scientist were to achieve the endless prolongation of life and make the process available to people, then he should be given all the glory in the first hour and sent to trial in the second hour. He would be a counterfeiter of values, or rather *a counterfeiter of being*. Just as there are counterfeiters of money, there can also be counterfeiters of values other than money, for example, counterfeiters of truth or beauty, especially counterfeiters of good. (Some modern technology may be questioned as to whether, by producing certain types of useless goods, it does not falsify the idea of good). To the extent that being is a value, or even "the value" within reality, it could therefore be counterfeited: just as some people give out counterfeit money, that scholar would offer us counterfeit being.

However, it is likely that we would not dispense with the false being we have obtained, just as we dispense with counterfeit money, and the counterfeiter would remain unpunished. Rather, we would use the false being to try to give meaning and anthropological fullness to an existence that does not find its being very well within its usual limits. In other words, with a false being — like the existence of the amoeba, which outlasts all other earthly existences — we would tend to compensate for a void of being.

But perhaps only then, through the expansion of human life in time, would we see *the emptiness* of our existence, as in the Romanian fairy tale "Tine-rețe fără bătrânețe" (Live Forever Without Growing Old), which admirably shows how bleak a human life projected onto the screen of eternity can be. You have no right to ask for the prolongation of such a life, burdened as it is by chronic anaemia or true spiritual haemophilia. You cannot receive the gift of its prolongation. But you can ask yourself, when you understand that eternity is not a sufficient condition for conferring full being (and perhaps not even a necessary one), whether something other than the fact of being "transient" makes man the sick being par excellence, as has been said. And beyond the *chronic* illness of the human being — if illness is — to be measured in time, the true illnesses of man would come to light, of being in time and not finding his measure within time.

However, if the endless prolongation of life is an extreme example for revealing the deficiencies of human beings, let us choose one that is closer and visible to everyone. Ontic diseases, reflected in humans in some cases of the spirit, will appear strikingly in them when they live for a longer period of time in cosmic resorts, as predicted. That person will lack something that we realise from the outset must be an essential characteristic of a complete being: individuality. He will breathe air, but it will be conditioned and general, not *the* air that is always present on his earth; he will feed himself, but with general substances; he will experience and know, but rather about essences than about particular realities; he will delight in looking at a plant, but it will be a greenhouse plant. He will therefore lack something: individual reality, that particular thing, "tode ti", as the Greek philosopher said. His illness will be *todetita*, let us say. Neither those around him nor himself

will have the character of specific reality, but rather that of the generic. Man will thus have to return from time to time, or for good, to earth, in order to be cured of todetitis.

But there are already people suffering from todetitis, and indeed there always have been, among the great theoretical minds, such as Dostoevsky's heroes in *The Possessed* — or perhaps some of Thomas Mann's heroes — for whom real society provides ample examples. Plato himself suffered from todetitis from time to time, since he insisted, as if obsessed, on implanting his ideal city in the reality of Syracuse. On the other hand, it may be that, as theoretical construction and programming become increasingly prevalent in tomorrow's society, the disease of todetitis (the need to rediscover the individual) will also spread more and more. But until now, the somewhat reversed disease has seemed more common, one in which it is not the lack of the individual that causes suffering, but the lack of the general. If we invoke the Greek term again, this time the general one, "katholou", the disease could be called *catholitis*.

In a sense, *catholita* is the spiritual disease typical of human beings, tortured as they are by the obsession to elevate themselves to a valid form of universality. When, through an elementary act of lucidity, man emerges from the narcosis of general meanings by which he is always manipulated, in the interest of the species and society, he then seeks in every way to heal his discontent at being a mere individual existence, without any particular significance of a general order. With most of his deliberate commitments, he then seeks to storm the generals. He often allows himself to be caught up in the ready-made (such as "ideologies") that he encounters in his historical path, thus healing himself only in appearance and leaving the disease hidden. But *catholita* reappears virulently, even

in ordinary human natures, whenever the act of lucidity lasts long enough for man to see the vanity of the general chosen by him.

Literature — which is life itself — once again provides ample examples. In "Salavin's Diary," French writer Du-hamel describes the turmoil of a mediocre man who, finding no other way to elevate himself to higher meanings, simply decides to become a saint in the midst of the world. The Catholic disease, latent in every man but deliberately activated here, this time has a rigorous and slow, somewhat serene evolution in the disaster it brings: the hero gradually detaches himself from society and family, from ordinary life and ultimately from life itself, under the gentle obsession of a general order that does not fit into them. In contrast, the same illness takes on a hysterical character with Balzac's hero, Cesar Birotteau, leading to convulsions and the pathetic attempt to confront, at his level as an ordinary man, Napoleon himself, in reality to rise to a level of general affirmation by confronting a destiny that seemed to him to be of the utmost generality. These are two extreme clinical cases, it seems, within which there are countless nuanced forms of catholicity that test us all, widowed beings that we are.

But a third disease, alongside catholitis and todetitis, also afflicts us from the depths of our spiritual being. The lack of the appropriate general in catholitis, as well as that of the appropriate individual in todetitis, are not the only reasons for man's spiritual crisis. He also needs *the right determinations*, that is, manifestations that correspond harmoniously both to his individual being and to the general meaning he aims for. Because the disease in this case depends on not obtaining the determinations, let us call it *horetitis*, thinking

the Greek term for "determination", "horos". The illness therefore expresses the torture and exasperation of not being able to act in accordance with one's own thoughts. In European culture, there is an extraordinary model of the horetitis sufferer: Don Quixote. His whole struggle is to make his determinations; but they are denied him, with their truth in the first part of the work (they are windmills and flocks of sheep), because he invented them, and in the second part they are not real determinations because everything is the invention of others.

As with catholite, however, there may be a less turbulent clinical form of the disease, leading to a calm and serene, but futile, wait for the results throughout one's entire life. This is what happens in the book by a contemporary, Dino Buzzatti, entitled "The Tartar Steppe", where the hero gradually succumbs to the disease of horetitis, waiting for the eventual battle at a border post with an unknown enemy. But the real enemy will be pure and simple death, that is, the *ultimate* determination that arises in people's lives, which are, for the most part, devoid of meaningful determinations. And again, *between* these two extreme clinical forms, there can be any kind of horetitis, as a third spiritual illness of man.

It therefore seemed to us, in the above, that we can identify three spiritual illnesses, which reflect in man the possible lack of the terms of being: the general, the individual and the determinations. We gave them names, as in another medicine, not without a smile, of course. But what else can we do but name them, if the illnesses appear so clearly in humans, and as "situations" of being in things as well, perhaps? And the list of higher-order illnesses does not end here.

Three more new diseases may arise, it seems to us, this time not through deficiency but through *refusal* (in humans) or inability.

(to things) for each term of being. Since the first three had to be given names, the other three that will appear in the picture of the diseases of being or of the spirit cannot be denied. We will call them: *acatholia*, *atodetia*, *ahoretia*, and we will now let them present themselves in a more detailed way, in humans, because they are somewhat strange at first glance. We will illustrate their presentation through three creations of culture, since culture is the magnifying mirror of human spiritual life.

1) *Don Juan and the general's refusal*. Let us choose the case of Don Juan for the disease of *acatholia*. It is a case of an extreme human destiny, where the general proves to be categorically denied — or has become a mere stone statue. In such a destiny, one can clearly read the syndrome of the respective spiritual disease.

Don Juan fully embodies *the first term of being*, the individual, being a true "individuality", that is, a man detached from the inertia of common generality. Not everyone is an individual. People are usually, like things, simple particular realities, not individual ones, i.e. particular cases of the human species and the commandments of society. If, however, we want to distinguish between "individual" and particular case, as being indivisible (like a bean that cannot be divided into beans), then we must say: not every human being rises to the level of individuality.

So Don Juan broke away from the inertia of being *in* something ready-made, giving himself his own image. He no longer wants to be caught up in the truths (prejudices) of society and faith. He is a libertine, and as such he does what he likes; in this sense, he has individuality, but he is not yet a personality, for he has left one order and should open himself up to another, his own. But he is deliberately nothing. He is a pure man. He is the devil's man, says

his valet Sganarelle (in Molière's version), that is, the island of lawlessness, of general refusal.

Detached and suspended as he is, the individual tries more than to float through the waters of the world and let himself be dragged in all directions by it; he sets his own determinations, he takes the initiative in the events that will come to describe him. A libertine like Don Juan thus brings into play *the second term of being*, determinations, the libertine being precisely the one who sets his own free determinations. His being and his deeds are, in this respect, perfectly comparable to those of the living nature beneath man. The usual comparison made, saying that Don Juan is a butterfly that goes from flower to flower, makes sense in itself, just as it would make sense to say that he is an element of nature that is subject to attractions and repulsions. However, in the case of man, two new notes appear in the chapter on determinations: infinity and, above all, guilt, that is, responsibility.

Molière's Don Juan does not actually keep track of his conquests, the "1003" female conquests, but he also puts into play an "infinity" of such determinations and explains his impulses to Sganarelle, theorising about human infidelity towards any determination, any given love. How can one remain faithful to just one?

Someone else had already developed this theory of necessary infidelity in matters of eros: Plato. But while for him infidelity to a single or any number of beautiful embodiments *ascends* towards the Idea of beauty, that is, towards a general in which all surpassed determinations are contained, here for Don Juan infidelity is blind and remains at the same unascending level. He simply wants to "do justice" to the beauty of all the beings he encounters. But he does not know how to say: to pure and simple beauty, to the general. That is why he loves conquest for its own sake, for the "small advances"

which he accomplishes day after day in overcoming resistance, and this gives him the feeling of being a conqueror on a grand scale. He feels like Alexander, he says, capable of conquering, in his own way, the whole world. And here comes the remark that reveals his indecision: he would like *other* worlds to exist, so that he could make new conquests of love there, endlessly.

Having thus the first two terms of being, Don Juan rejects the third, the general. In its place appears the bad infinity of which Hegel spoke, the infinity of more and more. It precipitates Don Juan into nothingness, just as it turns into nothingness everything that is a mere repetition of itself, a blind rotation. There is no longer any need for the moral condemnation of society, nor for the religious condemnation of heaven, invoked by Sganarelle, Don Juan's father, or even Elvira. The simple fact that he has fallen into the bad infinity of determinations condemns him. And if this accident of being, of falling into the evil infinity, may be, in essence, the lot of dead things or of low life, what Don Juan adds, as a second note, truly characteristic of man, is *guilt*: not so much the guilt of contravening earthly or heavenly laws, that is, a certain general, but the guilt of repudiating the general as such.

What is interesting about Molière is that he seems to actually say this, unlike his Spanish or Italian predecessors, who emphasised only divine vengeance. In fact, after introducing the hero, the entire play focuses on the confrontation with the inert, stone-faced general. Don Juan is described as reaching his final hour, when the mechanism of determination, in the absence of the general, breaks down as well. Instead of the hero continuing to revel in "small advances" of conquest, as he had said, and exercise them subtly on selected cases, he only conquers simple girls from

country, with the most rudimentary and unrefined means: marriage proposals. Perhaps, like Sganarelle, the refined means that Don Juan would have employed would still have fascinated him. But as it is, he is exasperated by pure and simple disorder, uncompensated even by the refinement of sacrilege, or even by the fleeting pleasure of his master's hour. And Don Juan's disorder is perfectly reflected in the disorder of Sganarelle's speeches, now desperately trying to bring him back to the right path.

Here, halfway through Molière's play — and in the middle of nowhere, that is, *anywhere* — the statue of the Commander, Elvira's father, whom Don Juan had killed, appears before them. Inert generality can indeed appear anywhere. Disorder is now opposed by the lowest order, dead matter. At least this should tame the fury of Don Juan's senseless determinations. The appeals of the others, of his father, of Elvira, of Elvira's brother, whose life Don Juan had saved by chance, are all warnings from the statue, as it were. And Sganarelle himself feels nothing but the general's empty warning when he asks, "Will you not surrender, master, even in the face of this unbelievable miracle of a moving and talking statue?" To which Don Juan replies, "There is something here that *I do not understand*; but whatever it is, it can neither convince my mind nor shake my soul." What he does not understand is that even the void speaks in the name of order, if you have not been able to find another.

However, total disorder does not yet appear in him, since he knows how to control himself and brave the storm, but appears in the mind of his valet, who now, in scene 2 of the last act, enters into madness and argues deliriously: "Man is like a bird on a branch, and the branch is tied to the tree, and whoever is tied to the tree follows good precepts..." continuing like this, madly, until he reaches the conclusion,

perfectly justified in itself but deduced from it: "...so you will be thrown to all the devils." The general appears (but from outside) now, at the end of the play, to bring non-existence to a world that had refused any opening to being. First, the general appears in the guise of a woman in a black veil, a harbinger of death, who says to Don Juan:

"You have only a moment left"; then there is the general closest to final inertia, Empty Time, with a scythe in his hand, who does not even say that much to him; then there is the Stone Guest, the ghost of the Commander, who takes him by the hand. Upon touching the stone (of the inert general), Don Juan feels the destructive fire.

In older Spanish and Italian versions, the play was called "The Stone Guest." Probably everything is more artistically successful in Molière's version than in those of his predecessors, except for the title. For *the guest* is an admirable idea regarding the general defied by man and accepted by him only as a guest, not as a true master, as he should be.

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

2. *Tolstoy and the rejection of the individual.* Compared to acatholicism, which puts forward real individuality, with its provocative rejections, *atode-tia* has a more subdued character, as it puts forward the general, with its more discreet resistances. In the name of the general, that is, of an entity or law, refusal now occurs, which is no longer an act of defiance — ranging from rebellion, as in Don Juan, to superior irony, as will be seen in the analysis of acatholicism — but rather an act of compassion towards the world, or one of indifference towards it and the individual. Perhaps acatolia was characteristic of the European world, where individuality prevails, while *atodetia* appears in the form of indifference towards the individual at least,

rather in the Asian world. In any case, someone caught *between* the two worlds took it upon himself to describe, and even experience for himself, the rejection of the individual. That person is Tolstoy.

The ordinary world does not know that its actions and manifestations are governed by laws that destroy any individuality, even that of Napoleon. But just as in acatholia the denied general reappears, ultimately bringing about the dissolution of the individual, now with the disease of atode-tia the individual will take revenge, causing the atodetic man to have neither a place, nor a secure identity, nor a home. The work through which we seem to be able to illustrate atodety, *War and Peace*, does not suffer from this, ultimately as a work of art, just as Molière's *Don Juan* did not diminish artistically; they feed and flourish like all great creations, from the sufferings and disorders of man. Tolstoy himself was doomed to suffer, through the unfulfillment of his ideas and his life. But the work *theorises* omniscience, even if it often denies it, as a work of art.

The refusal of the individual dominates Tolstoy's entire novel, appearing from the very first scene, with the reception of Anna Pavlovna Scherer. All the characters who appear on stage — with the exception of Pierre Bezukhov, whose authenticity the author will need in order to organise the novel around him — bear within themselves the imprint of a society that is well defined in its generalities, which no longer understands how to leave room for individual authenticity. However, if Tolstoy's artistic sensibility does not allow him to turn them into mere "typical" characters throughout the book, the author will at least place them in typical *situations*, or — when the characters risk escaping his control with their living truth and becoming captivating individuals — he will try to crush them by insistently invoking the general, under the weight of his omniscience. He will do this in both large and small ways: with Napoleon

and Tsar Alexander, on the one hand, with the "typical" Russian peasant, Platon Karataev, on the other. Between these extremes, the characters are all ready to burst with life and individual pulsation; but the general meaning tries and sometimes succeeds in preventing them from blossoming.

In this case, between these extremes, all the heroes, especially the lucid characters, are made to feel their own insignificance, as well as that of others. Andrei Bolkonski, lying wounded on the field at Austerlitz while Napoleon inspects the scene of his victory, tells himself that Napoleon is nothing compared to the vastness of the sky. When, the next day, he is lifted from the field and taken among the more seriously wounded, he sees the emperor again and clearly feels all the "insignificance of greatness." Countless times in the novel, the general's wave, or rather ebb, comes to level and wash away everything that tries for a moment to take on individual contours. But, as if the work still risked contradicting its own universality, Tolstoy is forced to revisit the issue of the non-existence of the individual at *the end* of the work. What truly exists in history? he asks himself.

This issue, of what *is* real or, more clearly, of *the true force* that gives meaning and consistency to events in history, and thus to historical accounts, is explicitly addressed in *the Afterword* to this great work. Tolstoy's theorising is usually viewed with indulgence, as the weaker part of his work, even if it is admitted that the visionary in him, like the prophet at the end of his life, is in solidarity with the artistic creator. It is difficult, however, not to see in these theorising *the honesty* of Tolstoy's creative nature, and from the perspective of omniscience, striking in his prophetic vision as a constitutional disease of man, his theorising has something as disturbing as his work.

We will not remind you that art itself brings the individual into play and that it

ultimately represents the conversion of individual determinations into general ones, that is, removing things from their "catastrophe" in order to save them "anastrophically" from falling, instead of cancelling them out; Tolstoy's artist could not help but save them in this way, no matter how much he talked about cancelling them out. However, we would say that his theoretical lucidity is as surprising and, at times, as captivating as his artistic inspiration, even though it sometimes seems to contradict it.

"To grasp life directly, even that of a single people, in order to describe it, is impossible," Tolstoy writes in *the Afterword*. You cannot give all the determinations of this great individual reality that is a people, and you cannot say from the outset what force sets peoples in motion. For indeed, what force, what law, what reason creates history? Divine will, says Tolstoy, can no longer be invoked; the will of the masses can never be adequately formulated. The actions of "heroes" or great personalities brought into play by modern historians, in place of divine will, cannot be considered when you see their humanity, their all-too-human nature, as he saw in Napoleon and Tsar Alexander. With his soul open to all humanity, Tolstoy sees history as a product of *everyone*.

Every person is, in their own way, an agent of freedom, as dictated by their own conscience. But at the same time, every person feels their will dominated by laws, and reason discovers certain laws even in history, such as statistical laws or political-economic determinism. In fact, says Tolstoy, history is like all sciences: certain forces manifest themselves in the form of laws. The force of humanity is freedom, just as the forces of nature are gravity, inertia, electricity, and vitality. But what do we know about these? he asks. As little as we know about the essence of freedom. But we do know

one thing: that if there were a single body that moved in a way other than according to the laws of mechanics, then all natural science would disappear. The same applies to freedom: it must *ultimately* find necessity.

Tolstoy is criticised for leading to fatalism. One could argue, on the contrary, that he gives too much credit to the masses and to each individual, thus arriving at the "infinitesimal" of human freedom, as he himself says, and ultimately abolishing the human person. By invoking the "free" will of great men as the cause of history, you do not actually make history, says Tolstoy, because you are bound to arrive at the infinitesimal freedom of each individual, which is nevertheless inaccessible to us. But it happens that in science, where without knowing the essence of gravity you still see its laws; you will not know what the ultimate historical necessity is, but you will see its laws, through *the integration* of infinitesimal elements, which are also unknown. "The course of world events depends on the coincidence of all wills," was the author's comment on the inexplicable historical events that culminated, at that time, at Borodino.

In fact, Tolstoy says this admirably, firmly confirmed by science: that the relationship between two sets of unknown things can be something known. We do not know what freedom really is, nor do we know what necessity is, but we know what their *relationship* is. The individual gives itself different determinations, which we cannot know in their totality, let alone predict; the general will also bring its organised infinity of determinations, again unknown. But being, now historical being, is born from the relationship formed by determinations which, without conversion to something general, are nothingness, and from this general itself, about which we do not know whether it is not nothingness. As in infinitesimal calculus, something determined is born from two nothingnesses.

Where is the individual really? Tolstoy denied it — at least here in *War and Peace* — and his greatness lies in having attempted the impossible: the fullness of artistic vision without the fullness of historical being brought into play.

In reality, beyond the individual destinies that Tolstoy cannot help but outline artistically, and even beyond the agreed success of *a* character, Pierre Bezukhov, the work lives on through the extraordinary highlighting of an equally individual reality: the era. It can no longer be crushed by historical laws, nor can it be reduced to the role of an infinitesimal element. But for Tolstoy's "omniscience", his artistic failure is deeply significant precisely in relation to *the key character* of the work (even if episodic in appearance) who should have been Platon Karataev. The author *can no longer portray him vividly*, but only as a typical "Russian peasant" under the vain declamation of generalities. And it is the refusal of the individual that manifests itself in this key work, which should have been Tolstoy's own life, with its prophetic nature, and which leads him to restlessness in his historical world, as in his own existence, culminating in his flight from "home", that is, from any dwelling place. One might say that he is "der Unberhauste," like Faust, if his omniscience were not in itself the typical disease of prophets of all kinds.

3. *Godot and the refusal of determinations.* After the refusal of the general and the individual comes that of determinations, with *ahoretia*, a disease that is also significant for the contemporary world (the *ahoretia* of hippies, for example), even if it is essentially constitutional to man, and therefore eternal in a way.

There is nothing absurd, at least in terms of practical consequences, in saying that divinity, laws or anything of a general nature do not exist, as Don Juan says. Again, there is nothing absurd in

say that the individual as such does not exist, but is immersed in something vaster than himself, or that he is simply disappearing, as Tolstoy says. What is absurd is to say that the manifestations of the individual, his communications, when it comes to the human being, and in general *the determinations* of the individual or of individual situations do not exist, or that they can be anything, or that they mean nothing. "There is nothing to be done" is the first line of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett.

Don Juan was an individual who made all kinds of decisions (thousands of them), but he also collapsed, lacking a general plan of his own. The historical vision (from the Afterword to *War and Peace*) depicts the infinity of determinations — the free will of people — as caught up in the necessity of the ultimate general; but it risks knowing nothing about the individual, which became an infinitesimal reality. Contemporary absurdity (like that of *Ecclesiastes*), on the other hand, resents determinations and disrupts them, starting with communication between people and human contacts.

Each of these three great moments in human literature damages what we are tempted to call the "onto-logical triplet," destined in some unknown way to be re-edited by literature, a triplet that brings into play both the individual and the determinations and the general. But what is even more serious is that being, and with it speech, is harmed by contemporary absurdity, which, by disrupting and suspending determinations, primarily communication, risks being unable to say anything except in the form of saying nothing (as in Ionesco's theatre).

Here, more than in the tragedy of Don Juan, or in the eventual tragedy of the individual as seen by Tolstoy, there lies something that could be called modern tragedy. Unlike the ancient tragedy, which depended on the strength of the general, the modern tragedy depends on freedom.

chaotic nature of *determinations*, and ultimately their pulverisation. Modern existentialism sensed something of the tragedy of this perfect freedom to do anything, or rather the torture of not knowing what to do; and the technical-scientific revolution took on, in the eyes of some (of the "Club of Rome", for example) as something terrible, precisely because it has total freedom of means and because, thus, anything can grow in the jungle of determinations that they give themselves: knowledge, creativity, even demographic development freed from the fate of early death.

For some time, this freedom of determination did not appear as a disorder, but as a celebration of modern man and a triumph. Just as art, freed from ancient or religious themes, gave way to freedom and expressed *everything*, up to impressionism and the schools that followed it; just as scientific knowledge spread everywhere and lifted the veil from all mysteries, or claimed to do so ; just as technology created all the tools, needed and unnecessary, until it approached, with its manufacture, that strange tool which is the human brain — so did literature, which described all lives, all eras, all consciences and depths of consciousness, along with all lost, forgotten or yet undiscovered worlds.

But what has been achieved with this total freedom of the determinants contained in the model of being? Certainly not being; but rather the risks of non-being — which should not always be said as a condemnation, but in our time should only be said as a warning that man must give himself. In the visual arts, after rendering so much (every face could be portrayed, every corner of nature could be captured in a landscape, every object on the table could become a "still life"), creators no longer want to render anything that is, but instead create

at best, abstract art; in scientific knowledge, where some of the mysteries of the past have been unravelled, new mysteries have appeared, even in the most rational field, mathematics, with the paradoxes of logic; in technology, where once again more has been achieved than the lazy imagination of past man, bound to the animal model (the flight of birds, for example), could ever have dreamed of, we have reached the point of assaulting nature and asking whether a brain that has the rest of the body artificial, or vice versa, a natural body with an artificial brain, would be the *same* human being, another human being, or simply a human being. As for literature, after all messages had been conveyed, there was a lack of message, and since even the lack of message was a way of saying something, it led to anti-word and anti-meaning, to anti-discourse about anti-nature and anti-human.

Beckett's success in *Waiting for Godot* is admirably clear in this regard, for it is a success in some sense. The individual exists; the general existed, under the name of Godot (God, Gott, or their caricature, the master of sheep and goats, the one who does nothing), the awaited one. But *the determined ones* are no longer there, and people no longer want to give themselves any. They are in boycott. One could see a boycott (of nature, of meaning, of communication, of the message, of order) in the various creations of contemporary art. But Beckett's play is actually *a theorisation* of the boycott. "Nothing to do," says Estragon; and Vladimir, who still remembers something and still wants something, even if only a little conversation or play, adds:

"And I'm starting to believe the same thing. I resisted this thought for a long time... And I resumed the fight." But there is nothing to do but wait for Godot to arrive. The empty individual and the empty general remain. There is almost no room between them.

For one looks at his hat, as if hoping to find something there, and the other looks at his boot, and Vladimir asks himself:

"What if we repented?" There would be room for repentance. "What repentance?" asks Estragon. "That we were born?" — and his friend's reflection comes to mind: "It would have been better if man had never been born."

"You had something to tell me," Estragon mutters. To which Vladimir replies, "I have nothing to tell you." Then the first one thinks aloud, "Shall we hang ourselves?" after they have hung and suspended everything else. And the other replies, "Let's do nothing. It's more prudent." All that remains in them is a sense of anticipation, the last possible remnant: what will the general tell them? "I'm curious to hear what Godot will tell us!" exclaims Vladimir. Then Estragon, who is even more detached, immersed in oblivion and nonsense, has a sudden realisation: "Are we not connected to Godot?"

Since they are still alive, they are bound to a form of generality that can be called Godot, and through him they are directly or indirectly bound to other people, such as Pozzo, who now enters the scene with Lucky, the slave pulled by a rope. Pozzo also knows about Godot. "I would be happy to meet him too!" he exclaims. But in the meantime, he obeys nothing general, only his whims as master, which make him pull Lucky (his body? his tool?) by a rope for whatever comes into his head. In the end, he feels indebted in some way to the two, who nevertheless agreed to talk to him. "What could I do for these bored people?" He feels sorry for them, terribly sorry for the boredom of the world. Meanwhile, Estragon says, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's dreadful."

Everything is terrible, except for the fact that Godot is expected, whom one of his messengers, the boy with stereotypical answers, comes to announce for the next day. And the next day will be a repeat of the first. But Estragon has forgotten what he did the day before, around the same

tree, now leafy, so that he might give himself the determinations that people refuse them. Estragon has forgotten: "What is there to recognise ? I've lived this shitty life in the middle of the sand. And you still want me to see the nuances? (Circular gaze). Look at this rubbish. I've never moved from it."

They don't budge even now. "It's not like we can complain about a lack of emptiness," Vladimir comments on their fate. "We always find something that makes us feel alive," he adds. And so, they both move on to trying on boots, but especially to playing with three hats.

— theirs and the one Lucky forgot the night before — placed on two heads. How many arrangements can be made with three hats on two heads? They could go on like this forever. No words are needed now: the simple clowning around with the hats says it all, while the return of Pozzo, now blind, together with Lucky, now mute, has nothing to add to the hat game, except perhaps the suggestion that those who had been agitated the day before had gone too far. "I don't want to breathe anymore," Estragon had said. In this total human entropy that has been reached, "in this immense confusion," Vladimir decides, "one thing is clear: we are waiting for Godot to come."

They sit curled up, like babies, with their heads between their legs, as if returning to the primordial gestation. When the boy from the day before finds them, reminding them that Godot will come "tomorrow," he will give them the most appropriate answer to the question: "What is Mr. Godot doing?" —

"He's not doing anything, sir." It would be worth hanging yourself in a world where even the general has nothing to do and no orders to give. But in such a world, the ropes don't hold. We are in the middle of the sands, as Estragon said.

That was also the case in the Book of Job. But there, the world did not end, whereas in the absurd world of today, nothing means anything anymore

and any determination is superfluous. Ahoretia is the disease that sends people into the desert sands, or young people under bridges, that is, to "nowhere". Acatolia and atodetia could still make people struggle and assert themselves; catholita, todetita and horetita, in turn, could lead, with their attacks or sometimes with their syndrome of calm unfolding of the disease, to great human achievements. Ahoretia, however, is ultimately the disease of non-action. But it too will prove to be creative in the end.

What was striking about all the other spiritual illnesses: that *they do not invalidate man*, like the illnesses of the body and soul, but give him unsuspected powers, even at the moment when they apparently paralyse him, will also prove true for ahoretia.

The six illnesses. Unlike ordinary illnesses, which can be any number, since they are caused by various agents and various external circumstances, higher-order illnesses, those of the spirit, can only be six, reflecting six possible situations or precariousness of being.

The first situation is that of not having, for an individual reality and its determinations, something of a general nature. Things manifest themselves in all kinds of ways, but they are not real. *Catholita*, in humans.

The second is not having an individual reality for the determinations that are caught up in something general. Manifestations can be organised in all kinds of ways, but they are not real. *Todetită*.

The third ontological situation is that of not having, for something general that has acquired an individual embodiment, the appropriate determination. Things have been "fulfilled" in principle, but they are still not truly so. *Horetita*.

The fourth is, contrary to the previous one, not to have

(or, in humans, to *refuse*) for something individual that has risen to the general, certain determinations. There may be order, but things, having no determined manifestations, are not truly so. *Ahoretie*.

The fifth is not to have, or for humans to disregard, for a general that has been specified by various determinations, an individual reality. Manifestations have a certain responsibility, but they have it without concentrating on a reality, so they are not real. *Omniscience*. The sixth precariousness of being is to concentrate (deliberately in humans) in an individual reality determinations that lack in themselves the certainty of the general. Things are fixed, but in something that, lacking the support of the general, is not real. *Aca-*

tholie.

Because of these six maladies, it could probably be said that humans are the "sick beings" in the universe, and not because of the usual maladies, including neuroses, which can also affect other living creatures. They were not given the above name, perhaps they were not always clearly linked to the deficiencies of human beings, but it seems to us that *they* were involved every time, and in any case it is their combination that could authorise the qualification of man as the sick being in the universe, since they are constitutional.

But if we stick to the usual meaning of sickness, how inappropriate this sounds when applied to humans! For it is not only humans who are sick in their very being, but everything proves to be so, standing — unlike humans — under *the negative* of ontological sickness. Something strange has happened within culture: it seemed destined to highlight the perfection of things (their laws and the order they adhere to, and in the case of humans, the laws and order they should adhere to); but by revealing their laws, culture has highlighted their imperfection.

The gods proved to be sick. After making a world worse than you would have expected from them, some of them withdrew, becoming "lazy gods," a kind of overly *general* nature, without form or character; others, on the contrary, interfered too much in human affairs, like the Greek gods, becoming overly individualistic, almost one-sided and mutilated by their specialisation; Others, finally, remaining general natures, still had form and character, but no longer had a clear way of life and did not know how to *determine themselves*, or gave themselves uncontrollably many, like the Indian gods. — The gods are sick.

The sky is also sick. The ancients believed in the incorruptibility of the stars and the heavens (just as they believed in the incorruptibility of the divine). But Galileo's telescope revealed the imperfections of the moon, which his contemporary Cremonini did not want to see; and today, galactic diseases seem to be fairly well identified. There is a worm hidden in the cosmos.

Light is also sick. Goethe still believed in its perfection, protesting against Newton, who saw it as a mixture of seven colours, and therefore impure. But not only is it impure; it is also measured, in its pace as a weak cosmic entity, advancing only 300,000 km per second. Impure in itself, weak, light is also internally fractured, being both a particle and a wave. How many diseases in a simple ray of light!

But even Time, that absolute, homogeneous and uniform time with its relentless rhythm, proved to be less majestic, being merely local time, or time in solidarity with space, while space itself, from the universal order of coexistence of things, became a simple spatial field, a kind of regional reality, as in a universe in which there would be many parts but no whole.

Should we not also say that Life is sick, with its approximations...

its purpose and uncertainties, as it appears to today's biologists, as the result of chance disguised as necessity, a kind of incidental swelling of matter, at least on Earth, always turgid, growing and swelling, with man, perhaps until the abscess bursts? In any case, the Logos is sick, broken as it manifests itself in natural languages, and even if you do not admit that this is the result of divine punishment for man's assault with his Tower of Babel, it is still a form of anomaly for the Logos to be divided, when it should carry within itself, as its name implies, the unity of *reason*.

But if all large entities are sick (not to mention smaller realities, poor beings and things) and if culture comes to show their illnesses as constitutional, how can we not talk about the illnesses of *being*? The critical situations of being itself must be taken into account all the more, as they directly concern man and his own being. Culture has tended to highlight the illnesses of *things*, and although man is caught up in time, space, life and logos, which have proven to be precarious, he could still consider himself, through spirit and reason, to be above them. One could even argue that man is the only *healthy* being, or susceptible to healing, in the world, with everything else being imperfect and sick, rather than man alone being a "sick being" in the universe. In a sense, this statement by Nietzsche (but unfortunately not only by him) is one of those great stupid sayings of humanity, which we record without critical examination. But the simple fact that man is made to *know* himself as a sick being would give him the unique opportunity to escape his sickness, or at least to rise above his condition, if his sickness were incurable. Of course, the blind man does not gain his sight if he "knows" he is blind. But in fact, he does not really know; he is only told. In any case, he does not know.

to see. Whereas man, as a sick being par excellence, in the midst of supposed general health, would know what his illness is and what the health of the rest is — or if in reality the rest is sick, as culture shows him, and he comes to bring only his own extra sickness, the latter is certainly of a different nature from everything that is precarious, uncertain and sick in the world.

What will become clear in the following is that in humans, and only in humans, the maladies of being are ontological *stimuli*. After all, what kind of Being would not allow for an increase in being? And what kind of human being could not increase their humanity? The only true illness in humans is the vain and crushing awareness of transience, perishability, and the futility of any temptation to be and to do; it alone weakens man (when it does not itself become poetry or song). On the other hand, the illnesses of being, and therefore of spiritual being, have or can have a positive human aspect in their disorder. Man's disorder is the source of his creation.

In each of these six illnesses, individuals, peoples or entire historical eras become infected — and bear fruit. Six constitutional illnesses of man can lead to six major types of human affirmation. There can be no question of *curing* such illnesses, and a "medicina entis" would be meaningless. It is only a matter of *knowing* the diseases and recognising oneself, with the fate of humanity, in them. In a sense, they cover human existence so well, with human endeavours and even thoughts — since thoughts are born in the face of several disappointments — that, as there are six of them together, they can form a real structure for each of man's orientations. One could speak of six *ages* of man, just as one could speak of six *objects* of his love; there are six ways of *creating* and, one might say, six ways of constructing *philosophical systems*; there are

There are six types of *cultures*, six types of *freedom*, six *historical experiences*, just as there are six *tragic meanings*, six *hazards* with corresponding necessities, six meanings of *infinity* and six meanings of *nothingness*.

How far can this organised exercise of development be taken — through an assembly of ontological maladies and, ultimately, through a system — of the variety of structures in the human world? One justification would be precisely the fact that, thanks to the six maladies, one sees a variety of things where the appearance of a single meaning usually reigns (who usually sees more than *one* meaning of freedom, or one of tragedy?); another justification would be the very structures obtained on so many levels.

But a thought that succeeds too well becomes suspect to itself. Who knows if it is not a *seventh* disease of the spirit, that of bringing, with a touch of novelty, an immensity of monotony. Let us then depict only the six diseases, in the order they suggest, in the great disorder of man.

Catholita

I have therefore called *catholita* — from *katholou*, which means "in general" but is also used in Greek as a noun — the anomalies produced by the absence of the general in things and in man. In fact, nothing is devoid of general meanings, and just as any reality in the present, living or dead, has several billion years behind it, so too is it the crossroads of countless general meanings. But it may lack or be uncertain of its generality, and humans sometimes feel this situation acutely. It is as if they needed another general, a single one, tailored to their individual needs, no matter how many others they might have. What is more, it is as if this general were not to be found somewhere, in a storehouse of lazy generals, from which the right one could be summoned, but each time it would have to take on a new form, along with the manifestations of the individual.

Through this investiture of the general, man wants to *be*. He wants to be for others, for himself, in the absolute, in history, he wants to be like a statue, like fame, like justice, like truth, like a doer, like a destroyer — just to be. Man's turmoil is, in discreet or exasperated torment, that of reality, which also tends to be, at least

in the elementary sense of persisting. Being is so good! *Ens et Bonum convertuntur*, said the medievalists. And while the current placidity of things, in terms of being, stems from the fact that they cannot have, through themselves, a general "other", man's suffering is that of being *able* to have another but not really obtaining it. It resets itself all the time, within the span of its life, just as things reset themselves only within the span of vast evolution; but it is not always so. It calls this imbalance, in the pursuit of something of a general nature, *catholita*.

The state of imbalance arises precisely from the inconsistency of the ways in which things and people manifest themselves. Free processes take place in the world; all kinds of waves from the electromagnetic spectrum run in all directions; life events and human actions pulsate *without culminating in anything*. They are blind manifestations. Are they not "blind" because we do not perceive their laws and consistency? But they are blind in themselves, just as things happen in the Brownian motion of particles of matter in a liquid.

A striking example of this first type of precariousness, arising from blind manifestations, is provided by biology. Within biology, a distinction seems to have been made between protenoids and proteins. The former have all the constituent elements of the latter, but their letters, in the genetic code, are random. They therefore represent a kind of being that is perfectly assured, but which has not been able to fulfil its destiny. Only proteins, in which the letters are in *order*, manage to give life, to lead to the existence of life. Protenoids have letters, they even have "words", but these do not constitute a language, that is, something of a general nature.

Protenoids exist everywhere. Reality must be full of substances or processes that have elements of order within them, but do not have

achieved order, so they remained chaotic. Thus, there were perhaps many ways of communicating and even speaking that did not find a grammar, did not become fixed in a system of general rules, and as such did not constitute a language. But aren't people the same? Don't they also reproduce, on their own level, an ontological approximation?

One could say that Napoleon was a mere protenoid of history: he manifested himself, or provoked all kinds of manifestations, but there was no order in them. Order — the general meaning of acts, their justification — was to be attempted by the "Memorial" at St. Elena. But it was too late, and the protenoid Napoleon could no longer become a protein. At most, it was taken over by other proteins, the real ones, of history.

But just as protonoids represent a way of being in life, blind manifestations within reality are, in turn, a way of simply being. They do not remain suspended in a vacuum. They are held together by something individual, to which they give expression, for example, a human destiny (Napoleon), a particular matter, or a particular situation. Such individual realities have broken away from general inertia and give themselves specific determinations, but they do not obtain the "code" of being. They are a bundle of manifestations that are caught in one pole, the individual, and need a second pole, the general, through which they can achieve the full balance of being.

What catholita highlighted from the outset was that, at least in humans, not every general coupled with the individual brings equilibrium. "Why aren't you satisfied with what you have? Can't you see that you're fine?" say others to a person, and could say to the person himself in his entirety. He is not in order. The general presents this special condition in humans, of being specific; of even appearing to be an individual

, in any case his own. You have to step out of the individual condition and at the same time confirm it. You have to find *the general*. The tension of catholicity arises from here, from the need for the general. But this is also where the risk arises of not knowing that you are missing the general, since it is still unidentified.

Arising from the general's deficiency, catholita is the only spiritual illness in which the general can be ignored. All the others will arise through his presence or, in the case of acatholia, through his *conscious* refusal. Here, in the case of catholita, his consciousness may not exist, and then manifestations of one type of the disease appear, while the consciousness of the general, or rather his deficiency, will give rise to manifestations of another type, also in catholita. There are therefore *two types* of catholite. With Salavin and Cezar Birotteau, we encountered manifestations of the disease related to the general's consciousness, which was lacking in them; with Bonaparte, one might say, we encounter the extreme case in which, on the contrary, the disease of catholite appears without the consciousness that the general meaning is missing. With him, therefore, we can begin the description of the first clinical aspect of catholite.

1) This man, whose ego was completely hypertrophied, did not deny the generals, like Don Juan. He did not even seem to lack them, but rather allied them all together: revolutionary meanings, the historical destiny of France, the European idea, even the Church. But precisely because he combined them, subordinating them to his own person, he proved that he did not truly have a conscience, showing no form of submission to anything beyond himself. He easily abandoned the revolutionary idea; he could only give France good administration (plus vain pride); and he compromised the European idea, whatever the consequences, for the sake of his historical adventure. The only effective determinations he was able to make for himself

The military campaigns were mere performances. The general's deficiency, in his case, led to the catholite syndrome typical of all great rulers: *the blind need for action*. And indeed, in this form, catholite is the disease of tyrants, whose manifestations become exacerbated in the absence of meaning. Tormented by action, the catholite sufferer can then go so far as to shake history with his fevers. For those inflamed by them, the saying could be applied:

"pitie pour les forts".

But the example of the great mutilated spirits, such as Napoleon, risks ultimately distorting things. Just as deprived of the general's consciousness, the ordinary man may suffer from catholyte, whose faded case perhaps better highlights the first form of the disease than the exasperation of the great. The general's ignorance is the very law of this man, and when he is young, the fact that he lacks the general and is even unaware of this lack takes on such delightful forms that one wonders, at first, whether one can still speak of a spiritual illness in his case. Thus, the young being begins by opening up naturally to determinations and facts, without going beyond them. Just as in children there is a pure and simple "thirst for names," that is, the need to fix things by determining them; just as later on the need to make direct contact with things appears and develops to the point of gratuitousness, touching them to see how they are made and to be able to manipulate them, so too does the first age of man appear — in fact, his first precariousness — the age when the individual being gives himself determinations and satisfies himself in their richness, independent of any fear of the general and its rumours.

The child invoked by Goethe in his poem "Prometheus" knows nothing of Zeus, that is, of anything general, but enjoys life by whipping the thistles in the field with his whip. Goethe, too,

, in his early youth, his freest determinations, from the theatrical performances he creates himself and the stories he tells others, inventing them on the spot, to his first encounter with what would later appear to him as "generality," under the name of "the eternal feminine," his encounter with Annette in Leipzig. And Augustine — himself an exemplary representative of humanity in his youth

— prolongs until late, until his confrontation with Manichaeism, as a first entry into the order offered to him, the years in which the only way of life is the fullness or variety of the determinations you give yourself, without reference to anything else.

For people who never delve deeply into humanity, life remains at this first age, that of determinations and free manifestations.

— in the hunt Pascal spoke of, in entertainment in all senses, even that of taking life seriously, with the demonism of its empty deeds — in such a way that a human life can be a mere unfolding of determinations whose fulfilment represents for them the consumption of life. In them, with their feverishness, a beginning of spiritual sickness begins to be evident. For a gentle form of catholicity lingers behind every life lived in perfect novelty and apparent health. And entertainment itself, which is a great conquest of man over blind necessity, may in fact be his punishment. Hell has been described by some theologians as a party that begins, continues, prolongs itself, never ends, thus revealing, in its dilated form, its hidden vice.

There is something well hidden behind everything we do at this stage. You cannot even know of any lack, in the hour of first inspirations, when you live under the magic of verbs: to float, to travel, to dream, or to destroy, to build, to make a world of our own, to raise one for all, a better one. Verb after verb brings its request, offering

so much room for action that no corrective can stop the gifts. The verb is still pure, without adverbs; it has no limits other than those brought by another verb, which appears with the same strength, relating only to its action. Something could still cause unease in this singular condition of the verb, but now is not yet the time for any unease other than that which carries the pure verb furthest.

You cannot stop to see if the action makes sense and has meaning, since it seems to enrich you. "Everything that enriches me is true," said Goethe, with his great innocence. We accumulate facts as we would accumulate wealth, under the hidden belief that accumulation can in itself mean establishment. All forms of accumulation, ending with the enrichment of knowledge, or today the accumulation of desired or undesired technical products, have challenged man, seeming to have their truth in the simple fact that they are obtained, perhaps as in the past, with his myths, man believed that things *are* because he tells them. In a way, we continue to believe this, just like people in myth-based cultures. In his literary creation, man believes that everything that is individual or collective destiny, safely and artistically unfolded, *is*, in a plan of reality of culture and thought. In his painting, he believed that everything he masterfully painted, from the humblest human face or corner of reality and landscape to today's most abstract structure, acquires or has ontological investment. In his musical creation, he believed and believes that he can raise any sonic chaos to harmony, thus giving it the right to be. To be, where and how? We do not know for sure, nor whether this enrichment is commensurate with the world, with man. But "I am rich in deeds and creations, therefore I am" is the reasoning of one who hides his illness.

However, is this a form of sickness, or is it somehow actually a form of human health? At first glance, it is neither one nor the other. If human spiritual health means the coupling of the individual with a general, then the manifestations described above are also a coupling, that of the individual with a *possibility*. Why not say, then, that the possible is the very form of reality of the general, or that, at least, it broadens and enriches it? In any case, there is something innocent in the possible (it is the innocence of becoming), in the first moment when you bring it to life, and the general meaning does not necessarily have to appear yet. At stake here is the right to creation that man has taken for himself, that is, the right "to enhance nature within nature" that Schiller attributed only to genius. Every innocent creation seems to have something pure in it.

In a first attempt at creation, still close to the state of nature, you encounter, for example, the new determinations of an individual reality. A tree trunk or a block of stone can become tables and chairs, as in a "Table of Silence," just as a stone polished by water can be polished further to resemble a human body, or just as an individual destiny can be imagined, in literary creation, as caught up in all kinds of situations and events in life, such as those of Ulysses. On a seemingly higher level, but where nature and culture meet just as well as in the first examples, Balzac gave in his novels — until he became aware of *the general* principle underlying them all: The Human Comedy — a compelling example of the coupling of the individual with the possible, expressing not only the richness of society or the social jungle of his time, but effectively enhancing nature within nature, or civil status lists, as it were. And ultimately, if Balzac had not arrived at the idea (the general principle) of The Human Comedy, he would have

Did this mean that his novels remained a mere accumulation of artistic achievements, concealing within them a sickness of the spirit, a kind of cancer of creativity?

Perhaps it is untrue to speak so quickly and summarily of morbidity in artistic manifestations if they do not take place under the sign of a general meaning. In reality, there must be a primary general meaning in them, since others "like" them; they therefore express their thoughts and ideals, rising to the meanings of an entire community. A work of art ultimately has its justification in itself, as did Balzac's novels, regardless of their subsequent significance; and works can accumulate as much as they want — until a dissatisfaction with success, a disorientation in the mastery achieved, as well as a certain fatigue on the part of the artist and the spectator begin to emerge. If it is not the lack of the general, it is perhaps the lack of *another* general. Flemish painting could sometimes give the impression that it says the *same* thing too well; just as, on the other hand, today's music says everything so well that it becomes taedium culturae, boredom with everything. Picasso sometimes seemed a phenomenon of fatigue, precisely in his extraordinary prolificacy, just as in ancient culture the limited number of themes, the 110 subjects of tragedy that Goethe spoke of, led to a creative impasse alongside the proliferation of creations. A certain creative exuberance, together with a primacy of empty possibility, as well as one of empty mastery (which has always been talked about in times of decadence), doubled today by the mastery of execution and direction, seem to be in solidarity with that loss of self in "action" that betrayed, for the spirit, the sickly state of catholite. There is thus a hint of subtle misery in the hour of apparent glory of any accomplished artistic culture.

But while it cannot be said where and when
betrays art as a form of spiritual sickness — just as one cannot say today
where and when technique began to proliferate in a sickly manner — on the other
hand, for the moral life of the individual, as for the historical life of communities,
things are simpler and the diagnosis is easier to make, at least when it comes to
the sickness of catholite: this arises from the moment when, rightly or wrongly,
one has left the tyranny of a general order and entered into one's "own" order.
Two clear illustrations are available: the prodigal son for the moral life of the
individual and history itself for the life of communities. Perhaps the prodigal son,
on the one hand, and history, on the other, are the true paradigms of catholite, in
its original form.

"I do what I like," says the prodigal son, and he leaves home, breaking away
from *the general meaning* of family and society, to pursue the meanings he
wants and which he ignores as general meanings; for it is precisely this that
exasperates him, the tyranny of generality. Now he is free. If he likes the
enchantment of nature, he will immerse himself in nature; if he wants to know
countries, he will roam countries; when he wants the order or disorder of love,
he will seek love. He will thus wander unknowingly from one generality to another,
proving explicitly or implicitly that his freedom is, in fact, to seek his own
generality. The prodigal son and, in general, the man of adventure are not aware
of this, however, believing that their freedom consists in "pure" adventure. But the
general does not necessarily have to be invoked to be active, in the apparent
disorder of adventure, with his presence or even his absence. Every step and every
stray represents a path and has a sure transcription on the map of the human heart,
just as every curve drawn at random on paper has an equation in mathematics. If
the agent does not fully realise this, he will end up bumping into or-

the lowest level, blind necessity, just as Don Juan's free expressions ended, in their exasperation, in the most common necessity, death.

The prodigal son, or the man who "does what he likes", takes on the image of Don Juan for only a moment. He has before him generals far more varied than Eros, whom he neither rejects nor transforms, just like the other, in defiance of society. His weapon is other than contestation: it is infidelity. Deeper than the infidelity of the other, which is only towards women — therefore within a single general — the infidelity of the son means liberation from any given generals.

He has to give himself one, but he has become too accustomed to running away from everything to think about such a thing. His illness is the lack, of which he is not even aware, of the general, the catholita of the first type. If he had known of a general through whom he could fulfil himself, he could have stayed at home, or he would have gone in search of him; and even if he had not found him, he would at least have known why he ended up guarding pigs. But he knows nothing about generals except the one at home, whom he left, and that is why, when he needs the protection of one, he returns to his own. He could have lived in palaces instead of tending pigs; he would still have returned, if he had been honest with himself. For he is sick, in the prime of his youth and vigour. He has carried his illness all over the world, and now he returns to suffer further, but at least under his father's care. However, neither he nor his brother, who suffers from another illness, will be able to receive more than care from their father (the generality of the family).

There are historical communities that, unfortunately, do not have this ultimate comfort and refuge in a "home". When their destiny or historical adventure brought them to the situation of guarding other people's pigs, many

of them effectively die out as pig keepers; or if, under favourable circumstances and in their own rebellion, some escape from slavery, others remain to wander through history, like the prodigal son through the world.

Indeed, most communities, like most people, give themselves all sorts of definitions, often without pursuing any general meaning, whose slow accumulation claims to one day become "history". But what is history from this perspective? And how can it be rendered? It is *storytelling*, and that is all, not history. Goethe did not accept history as a distinct discipline of human culture, nor did he understand real history as an elevation of human becoming to something meaningful. For him, real history was the entire collective becoming, without residue, so that the only written history could have been the transcription and "biography" of events. And although they cannot do this, many historians, among those who do not see the general and the idea in real history, indeed remain at the simple biography of events. You get lost in chronicles and documents, or in the history of princely families of the Renaissance, just as they themselves got lost in the sands of history. Do things not make sense? Are they not connected by anything general?

The most striking example in history of the inability to escape the precariousness of blind manifestations and achieve a general meaning (even a "state") is provided by a tribe such as the Celts, who for several centuries before our era and until today, in the area that was to become Romanian, then in France, Spain, and England, have continuously—as has been said—undermined everything that constituted a state, but have themselves been unable to arrive at the more general idea and reality of one. History is full of great anonymities, due to the failure to rise to general meanings, but such persistent failure probably has no equivalent, at least in Europe. If

One may speak of catholicity among peoples, that is, of the suffering caused by the absence of a general and his conscience. None of the known peoples have suffered as much as the Celts.

But, in one form or another, catholicity of the first type (without general consciousness) is experienced by almost all peoples, because even those that have risen to the general idea of the state, and even given themselves a general meaning as a "historical mission," are somehow lacking it and are merely sailing under its flag and with its will. They are like the "drunken ships" of history. And when some of them are fortunate enough to reach a port, the others, caught further away in the cold of catholicism, take care to drive them away from there, as if nothing should rest in the general order of things, among those that float across the ocean of history.

If we now bring together the main features highlighted by the cases of catholicity described above, we see that they are all like a response of the spirit to the vaguely felt lack of a general principle to shape the destinies and actions of individuals or communities. The spirit's response has something positive about it at first. In the years of innocence, it carries with it the seduction of *pure, free speech* with its openness and lack of any target. With its reaction as if faced with a void (the void of life), the spirit awakens the richness of *the possible*, which, however, it does not resolve into reality, even when it brings it to fruition, but presents it as a chain reaction, possibility after possibility. Thus entering into exuberance, the spirit could soon lose itself if it did not see behind it *the accumulations* of lived experience, sometimes even of creation, in privileged cases. But accumulations are simply cumulations, just as Napoleon's series of wars were merely a cumulation of empty victories; and man, untamed by a more comprehensive meaning of his deeds, finds himself compelled to provoke new deeds, allowing himself to be narcotised by *action*.

Just as the excessive proliferation of cells in the body betrays a lack of genetic control, plurality for its own sake is, in spirit, always evidence of the lack of the One. Determinations, not subject to a general, can only become *plethoric*, so that, in apparent good health, abundance can reveal precisely the vicissitudes that the spirit experiences.

Why are you so agitated? an Indian said to the Europeans, and they can all say it, from their perspective. The primacy of the verb, of action, of the possible, of accumulation, of proliferation ends up being the syndrome of a loss and waste of self. The son is better called "wasteful" rather than wandering; for it wastes its being instead of gathering it under a general, just as peoples waste it in history. It is significant that the science of history was born on the European continent, where Catholicism is most prevalent. Peoples who live under the sign of the general — such as some Asian peoples — have no need for history. But they suffer from *other* maladies of the spirit.

2) A first form of catholite, in which not only is the general missing but also his conscience, has thus been before our eyes. The second form will have different manifestations, although ultimately similar to the first. Because now we are talking about the spiritual illness of someone who *is* aware that he lacks the right general, the climate will be more refined, but also more morbid. In this version, catholite is an illness of the cultured man and, in any case, of the man haunted by *lucidity*.

In particular, when scientists step outside the safety of their speciality and feel the need to philosophise, they risk being overcome by this second form of spiritual illness that we are analysing. Indeed, he becomes truly spiritually ill — as happened in our time in the case of the French biologist Monod.

— under the spectacle of a world in which, especially for him as a man of science, general laws and meanings should appear, but these refuse to show themselves to him other than in the form of crude necessity. The scientist is therefore aware of the general, but unable to identify it anywhere, he categorically proclaims, although somewhat shaken himself inwardly, that the world is nothing but a blind chain, from the perspective of his science. Such a view is common in history, from Epicurus and Lucretius to Jacques Monod, but the latter highlighted it so provocatively that he can be invoked alone.

That the mystery of life boils down to converting chance into necessity; that life is an accident in the universe and that man is a nomad in the world, a meaningless and aimless being — how many disillusioned and cynical wise men have said this? If these things are now repeated by Monod in *Le Hazard et la Nécessité*, in the light of great scientific discoveries and in particular the genetic code (which the author himself helped to decipher), this interests us less as a philosophical vision, since it is a preconceived one, than as a symptom of a spiritual illness that never ceases to afflict scholars and "lucid" people in particular.

How many objections have been raised and could still be raised to such a vision? One could say, for example, that chance disguised as necessity ("hazard capte, conserve, reproduit... et converti en nécessité", *op. cit.*, p.112) would appear perfectly, in another era of science, as something completely different from simple chance; that, in any case, it is the most trivial form of chance, one at the level of the gambler, who, as is well known, has an equally trivial idea of necessity, so that he often ends up with *a superstition* of necessity; and that — if we must nevertheless speak of chance and necessity — it is worth saying, from the perspective of philosophical thought, that

there are other, somewhat more refined types of both chance and necessity, as will be shown by the other five spiritual diseases described below. But the essential point is that, in the midst of the glory of scientific research, as today, it has been possible to reactivate a disease, constitutional to man, in the perfectly classical style of scientific thought. One wonders whether such spiritual diseases, being constitutional, are not the ones that give impetus and then shape our views of the world. From time to time, catholita would bring into the world systems of knowledge in which the general is nothing but a blind and accidental necessity, as in Epicurus and Monod.

But if what is at stake is the general deficiency and the awareness of this deficiency, then even better than science-based visions, those based on philosophical reflection can give expression to the disorder brought about by catholyte. This is what has happened in our day, in an exemplary way, with existentialism. If one wants to see, *at the cultural level*, what a spiritual illness (with its positive creativity) means, then existentialism is at one's disposal.

From the outset, existentialism, or its precursors, recognised, sometimes pathetically, the morbidity of the human spirit, with its torment of knowing that it must seek a general order, which it nevertheless cannot find. However much apparent certainty there may be in their religious commitment, Augustine at the end of antiquity and then Pascal lived and thought dramatically, in *the absence* of what they professed to have. But while their search was still balanced by a clear openness to the general, in Kierkegaard and then in the atheistic existentialism of our days (especially the French one), where the individual and not the general prevails, exasperation, contortions of the spirit and despair appear.

Kierkegaard is, without a doubt, the great sufferer of catholita in

the history of our culture. He *knows* about the general, feels his presence, in the case of his father, as a curse, resents him and complains about him all the time, but at the same time he avoids him and buries himself in his individual destiny. In specific terms, at the height of his love for Reghina Olsen, he wonders whether "to realise the general or not", which would now take the seemingly common form of marriage and submission to religious and social law. But he does not realise the general and withdraws so much into his individual experience that he ends up declaring that everything he wrote (everything he thought about *his* general) was written for the glory of his beloved. If it is true, as has been said, that he proclaimed the right to subjectivity, against Hegel and all agents of the general, and that he dreamed of people as authentic "individuals", then he succeeded with his own person. But if, at the same time, he wanted, as has been said again, to seek the general in the individual, he did not find it. He was able to avoid pantheism—for without the category of the individual one can easily fall into pantheism—but he could not avoid the primacy of individualism, and thus disillusionment.

Like Kierkegaard, there are thinkers who remain stuck in the individual and the determined, but in a different way than in immediate and "natural" experience, where the general is ignored; in their case, through their inability to find access to a general, whose consciousness they nevertheless possess. The determinations of *existence* (hence "existentialism") then take precedence over "essence", as is particularly evident in French existentialism, with Sartre. The movement from the individual, through determinations, to the general, so harmonious in Plato, becomes tortured here, because the individual ultimately buries itself in determinations, instead of opening up through them; the very encounter with the general, if it takes place, becomes an "earthquake," in the words of the Danish philosopher, rather than

an entry into order. Left alone, existentialism leads to an awareness of exile for the human being, as in the science-based view, or to exasperation, earthquake and anguish. Left alone, existentialism leads to an awareness of exile for human beings, as in the science-based view, or to exasperation, turmoil and anguish.

In fact, what existentialism seems to command us, like the "lucidity" of moderns, is a poor understanding of nothingness and, in general, a hasty fear of "nothingness."

In itself, nothingness is not disturbing, in a certain realm of reality, and should not give the feeling of nothingness: nothingness, or a void, in terms of chemistry, biology or spirit, coexists perfectly with fullness, as seen in Mendeleev's table of chemical elements, or in who knows what other tables of reality; on the other hand, the kinds of nothingness obtained from the perspective of consciousness are nothing more than calm logical or epistemological completions of positive reality through a negative one, as in the case of Kant's four forms of nothingness (*nihil privativum*, *ens rationis*, *ens imaginarium* and *nihil negativum*). You cannot say "nothingness" chemically or physically, nor logically. Only the forms of nothingness within *being* unbalance reality. If sometimes they bring the direction of necessary fulfilment, with their absence, other times they give meaning to the blocking of a thing. And this void of being, which can be fruitful, but can sometimes awaken, with its blockages, the feeling of nothingness, concerns the terms of being: the general, the determinations and the individual. Existentialism did not know, perhaps, that it encounters a *certain* nothingness and nothing more.

Thus, in the place it should occupy in the economy, fi-

In science, the general may be "nothing." You live your life peacefully with its accumulations, in which you can try to see either your freedom and the constraints of the world, or sometimes your inner necessity and the contingency of the world; in any case, you live a life full of various determinations. You then watch the spectacle of reality, where things and beings, caught up in individual situations, also manifest themselves in all kinds of ways, filling the world stage with their exuberance. One might say that there can be no question of emptiness at times when things or people display such a wealth of manifestations. And indeed, there is no *void*, it may clearly be *nothingness* (i.e. a feeling of emptiness) if there is no good conversion to a general meaning that gives consistency to that richness. Nothingness is a more subtle unreality than emptiness; in the midst of apparent fullness, it can make you say, "there is nothing here, in fact." This is what we often say, with the wisdom of later years.

This void of disintegration (for there are other types of void) is also the most common, felt by everyone in the common experience of the "transience" or "limitation" of life and things, even if it is not clear to everyone that it is precisely the lack of the general that causes everything to disintegrate. But *the awareness* of the lack of the general naturally gives a deeper sense of nothingness: you know well that there should be something here — and there is nothing. The collapse of the individual and of accumulated determinations are therefore too little and too commonplace compared to the lack of the general. "God is dead," exclaims Nietzsche, also inflamed by catholicism. How can one replace, according to his thinking, the presence of the general with the simple "will to power" of man, or with the "eternal return" of those who become? One can only *confront* the general, and the tragic collision in which one enters (Dionysus against Christ, from the delirium

Nietzsche on the brink of madness) will be the *extreme* experience of catholyte.

It is one of the forms of tragedy (of the six forms of tragedy), in which the disease of catholyte culminates: the tragedy of the collision between two general orders. For, lacking the general, but aware of the gravity of such a lack, man can give himself such generalities and oppose them to the one he did not know how to recognise. Antigone invokes the "unwritten laws" to confront those of the city; Cid embraces the law of honour to confront the pure and simple law; just as Nietzsche declares himself a god to confront the divine. The classical form of tragedy is thus only the end of the road for catharsis: its extreme approach, the enmity of the generals in the conscious subject.

While, in the subject lacking the general's consciousness, the Catholic disease manifested itself in its first form: loss of action, excess of action, exuberance of possibility, obsession with accumulation, blind plurality, proliferation, now under the general's consciousness, or rather his lack thereof, that is, in its second form, spiritual experiences appear in which the tone is set by: the past event in blind necessity, the feeling of loss of self and exile, anguish, exasperation, and the tragic collision between the subject, sickly potentiated at the general's level, and the general himself. The world should have meaning, but for such a subject it does not. Man tries to give it meaning, struggles and fights for it, but cannot impose it. He is suffering. — But his illness has been a blessing to the world several times.

Todetita

It is a disease caused by the individual's deficiency, a deficiency that effectively leads to the lack of "this particular thing" (tode ti, in ancient Greek) through which both its general meaning and its determinations are fulfilled. While catholita was the spiritual illness of *imperfection*, namely that of not being able to achieve the appropriate general, todetita is somewhat the illness of *perfection*, or in humans, the theoretical disposition in which they are placed by the confiscation of a general meaning, preventing them from finding the appropriate individual.

Nature itself could be imagined as sometimes "suffering" from this disease; in any case, the divine suffers from it. Human religious consciousness has often felt, when thinking of the perfection of the divine, the suffering of not seeing it embodied in anything, seeking it in meteorites fallen from the sky or in realities that seemed miraculous on earth. If Christianity has created a special historical situation among religions, it owes it to the fact that it had the strength to uphold the individual incarnation of the divine to the end. It could be said that incarnation is not a gift from the divine to the world, but to itself: the divine being thus emerged from nothingness and the lack of identity of perfection.

Before reaching the illness of man in general, we can talk about the illness of general realities themselves. Absolute time, imagined by common sense long before it was conceived by Newton, like absolute space, or Parmenides' being, were effectively sick with perfection. Nothing individual came to taint them, leading them towards some kind of "realisation" of themselves, just as nothing individual could resist them. Time appeared as a vast metaphysical irony; it asserted itself—in this conception—through the present, only to contradict itself; or it constantly brought forth children of the moment, only to suppress them, like Cronos. Space was also at the same time the principle of individualisation (*hic et nunc*), through local determination, but also that of the dissolution of any localisation. Compared to the real and individualised times of today's science, determined by the spatiality in which they are caught (earthly time is different from cosmic time), absolute time appeared, with its necessity, as "everything that is stronger and everything that is weaker," as Hegel said. Compared to the space-field of new science, the concept of absolute space referred to the void itself.

The principles that corresponded to them in logic were equally ill-advised: in relation to the real identity of the changing thing (or of the "I", which remains the same even though man changes all the time), the principle of identity expressed as $A = A$ represents a true logical hallucination; just as, with regard to the actual contradictions within reality, the old principle of contradiction demanded something so perfect for things that, under its regime, even mathematics is not free from serious contradictions.

If the "disease" of general entities and their logical reflection seems to some to be a mere metaphor, man has in any case actually suffered because of them and under their consciousness. Their perfection, with no access to the individual — to which entities should nevertheless

to send, for *they* are what frame and sustain him — gave man the most noble, but also the most difficult to bear, form of todetita, not only as a religious man but also as a thinking and knowing being; for todetita is associated with higher pursuits, primarily those of knowledge. One might say that the modern world, with the degradation it has brought to the supreme instances (the divine, pure being, time, absolute space) and with the relativisation through knowledge of any general entity, has escaped the obsession with perfection, and thus one of the forms of todetite. But something completely unexpected happened again: if through exact knowledge the darkness of any external absolute has been dispelled, the absolute of exactness has remained in the knowing man. All perfections have dissolved through knowledge, but the exigency of the perfection of knowledge has remained.

The need for *absolute* accuracy has found striking expression in symbolic logic, whose ideal of rigour is such that it detects serious imperfections in all organised thought and in everything that affirms the logos, first and foremost in natural languages, and even highlights contradictions and paradoxes, as we mentioned, in mathematics. Such a demand for absolute rigour cannot fail to reactivate the spiritual disease of todetism, in the form of the suffering of not being able to discover individual realities that measure up to it and having to invent or propose them as ideal models.

Allied with the machine and with mechanisation pushed to the point of automation, to which it is tailored and at the service of which it stands, symbolic logic expresses in its purest form the primacy of the general over everything that can be individual, and thus the primacy of rigour, accuracy, and mechanistic-rational perfection, under which the still natural being of man risks disruption through excessive regulation. What could awaken spiritual illness in ancient man, namely the feeling and conviction that there is a

an *incorruptible* world, compared to which his world was merely one of the individual and the corruptible; what did *not* make the ancient Greeks ill, thanks to some unknown healthy instinct, risks making us ill, in this age of unbelief and demythologisation. But if logic and the machine express in their pure state the incorruptible form of modern man, their demand for rigour and reliable chain reactions manifests itself concretely in all scientific culture, however deficient it may still be in terms of absolute accuracy in many sectors, thus leading not only to a dramatic tension of knowledge but — we might say — to a form of tragedy other than that in which catharsis could culminate: the tragedy of suspended knowledge, of possessing a general that is completely detached from the individual.

In science, indeed, man is or must be absent, as is everything that is individual. Any science is the reduction of diversity to unity, that is, of particulars to a general. The main problem was that the variety of particulars in nature — increased by the scientist with new particulars from experimentation — — to discover those laws that bring order and truth to the general everywhere. Indifference to the individual does not concern only the one who knows and his world (the subject must not matter), but also the individual object of knowledge. For, to the extent that it knows, consciousness "eats" its object, as has been said; it abolishes it as such, reducing it to law, and even more, to a simple mathematical expression.

That everything in nature is thus shaken? But *fiat scientia, pereat mundus*. The individual as such, even the Great Individual that is our star, is put in parentheses before the truth of knowledge. If one were to say that it is only an appearance of tragedy

here, for the destiny of human knowledge — to the extent that he wants to know *something*, and is left with only a spectre, or the mathematical "blueprint" of something — there is certainly a veritabletragic sense in the technical applications of this knowledge, which, when it ends up trying to rediscover an individual reality, threatens the actual ones or replaces them with others that are simply explosive.

Just as later, for the tragic impasse of culture in another spiritual disease, we will choose the art of music, we can now choose, for the impasse of scientific culture, not so much physics, whose terrible risks everyone knows today, nor chemistry with its pollution, nor biology with its potentially deforming interventionism, but simply medicine, which has reached the point where it cannot fail to save the offspring of humanity, but knows perfectly well that, in doing so, it is hastening the demographic explosion, that is, threatening human life itself, just as, by prolonging human old age indefinitely and in a state of stupor, it is again threatening life itself with its own degradation.¹

Once again, with this tragedy in the consciousness of the person suffering from *togetita*, a *culminating* form of it appears, as we encountered in the case of *catolita*. Let us therefore describe *togetitis* in more common situations, following it in its early forms, and show, as in the case of other constitutional diseases of man, how bright its manifestations may be in young people, or what inspiring and creative virtues it awakens later in life, only to find, in the end, something of the tragic impasse of the disease.

With perfection, now with precision, and finally with the general's confident chain reaction, he made a solemn entrance into life and

¹ Nobel Prize winner in biology, Krick, proposed that after 80 years of age, humans should no longer receive medication.

human culture. But such a general who cannot find his individual well — and therefore risks crushing any individual within reality — is active in immediate forms, not just in higher forms of knowledge. Todeitita is as old as the world, like other diseases. It is a disease typical of half of humanity, of women, who seek to fix the general of the species in an individual: in a love, a child, a home. But likewise, every young person goes through a time in their life when they suffer from todetitis, under their idealism, foolish but full of beauty and exaltation, in this case under the magic *of the ideal*, as a first and unclear rise to the general plane to which they are momentarily enslaved.

In its ideal form, the general is active, in the case of the young man, first and foremost on the heart. It is like a delight — before it becomes suffering — in *the indeterminacy* of the feeling awakened by the experience of the general. You feel the need to do something, but you don't know exactly what, to set the world right, without seeing clearly how; to love, but you don't know whom. There is so much thirst, generosity and love in your heart that you seem to be able to live suspended in them. "Amabam, says Augustine, sed nondum sciebam quod amabam". In turn, Goethe loves Frau von Stein before meeting her, based on the simple outline of her face, which he sees. The state takes precedence over the content in matters of the heart. When the mind is imbued with general meanings, it transforms man into an active being, eager to realise the general; but when the heart is caught up in the general, it remains suspended for a moment. It is not we who love, but something that loves in us. One might say that it is a good passive fullness, if it were not a form of spiritual imbalance, as can be seen as soon as the being emerges from its state of suspension. It may find nothing that measures up to the ideal of the heart, or, on the contrary, it may fixate on anything, just as

Faust, rejuvenated by the witch, found the image of the beautiful Elena in the first girl he met. It is precisely love, which should identify the individual under the guise of a privileged "tode ti", that risks, under the pressure of the general, leading to obfuscation in the face of the individual.

The ideal, however, as an expression of the empty general, is active not only on the heart but also on the mind, at a certain time in a person's life and especially at a certain age. It is the young age of "theoretical consciousness". Almost always, when they reach this point, young people encounter a *degraded* generality. This happens even to great minds. In his younger years, Goethe encountered something akin to theosophy, naturally under the influence of Mrs. von Klettenburg, but with a receptivity that shows how much he needed a general meaning, any meaning. Augustine, feeling the same need, allowed himself to be won over by Manichaeism, which would satisfy his need for the general for a moment and would not leave him open to any other experience except after the disappointment that his long-awaited meeting with Fastus, the apostle of Manichaeism, would bring him.

What is characteristic of this age and striking, both in Goethe's and Augustine's cases, is the fact that the individual being abandons himself, as a whole, to the general meanings that have been revealed to him and delights more in the experience of the order established by the general in various determinations than in his own affirmation or application. Theosophy for Goethe and Manichaeism for Augustine represented, for a moment, that *total* answer that young people need even when they have not asked themselves all the questions and when they do not yet know what to do with such answers. In this security, almost in the dogmatic sleep of youth, people can be caught up in all kinds of ideological fanaticism, which seems all the more convincing to them because they do not yet know how to think for themselves. In this security, almost in the dogmatic slumber of adolescence, man can be caught up in all kinds of ideological fanaticism, which seem all the more convincing to him because he has forgotten himself and the world. — But the individual, in the form of "re-

quality" that resists it, as well as under the truth of its own being, which does not allow itself to be confiscated by the ideal for too long, demands its rights. The feeling of *inadequacy* finds its way into the heart of the sufferer of *toiletitis*, just as the feeling of exile appeared in *catolitis*.

And yet, not only at this age, but at any time in life, man is tempted and rejoices to see how he himself has risen or how things have risen in general, even if he risks no longer knowing how to anchor, or to see things anchored in the individual. Varieties try to become species, Darwin pointed out. From all the variety of situations you have found yourself in and the determinations you have made, you would like to see a human version emerge that will last, a kind of variety that has become a species, that is, a law that applies to many. If you cannot see the meaning of law in your entire life, which is not given to you as such, you look for it in its completed fragments. Then you realise with surprise how, in your life and in the lives of others, disorderly events nevertheless had an underlying order, and you confidently devote yourself to the commandments of a society that had taken care to subjugate and mould you before you yourself consented to its rules.

The joy of seeing such random determinations caught in the net of social and historical law can lead you at any moment to forget yourself, as well as everything that is individual, making you register the organised anthill of the world as a form of subsistence, beyond the individual ants. Without meaning to, you are overcome by a delight, not so much of knowledge as of existence, to experience general states or to see yourself lived by them (by collective enthusiasm, by dominant historical situations, by the spirit of the times, or by the objective spirit of your career, as well as by the ideas of everyone), so that the general, with the determinations that emerge from it, now takes precedence over any

individual meaning and acquires a kind of autonomy.

But is he your general? He is more like a phantom subsistence. "I was not myself," everyone feels, under this bad dream. Ultimately, what are these general meanings, fleeting in their own way, compared to the reality of individuals? We are not like ants, existing endlessly only through the anthill and its laws. General meanings pass, as human dominions pass, and we remain; or even if they are vaster and stronger than the individual, they ultimately prove to be more phantom-like than he is. Man wants to be and wants to see a world that is. It is painful for him to realise that he and things have entered into the monotony of the general, where every supposedly individual endeavour and affirmation is captured by *statistics*. To detrita is, at the same time, the spiritual illness that man experiences when he realises that he is caught up in statistics.

In reality, the general who pretends that any individual endeavour is a general *case* only crushes individual situations and destinies because he himself is lacking something, failing to achieve fulfilment as an individual. Even in the objective situations of reality, the individual can sometimes be absent. Processes, instructions and determinations can unfold in an organised manner within reality, without anchoring themselves in anything individual. Returning to the biological example, it is easy to imagine — and scientists have certainly given names to such situations — that in the beginning, or even today, something of the order of life was achieved without achieving organisation into species; or perhaps something of the order of species, if not the species itself, has been achieved in each case, without reaching individual specimens. This is also a way of *being*, consisting of determinations that have reached the general, but are not able to give the individual. This means that a form of all-

tita, when his manifestations tend towards individualisation but fail to achieve it.

Perhaps the determinations of matter are organised to a much greater extent in the general sense than in the individual sense, thus remaining deficient, as seems to be the case in the vast cosmos. But such unfulfillments certainly reappear or are reflected in man, in his theorising or in his attempts at creation. People's lives can be organised in general ways that are not individualised in any way (like heroic natures that do not have the opportunity to perform acts of heroism), just as, on another level, humans can construct, from the determinations of reality and thought, theoretical visions that have a certain consistency of a general nature, but are not anchored in anything. In terms of creation, there may even be certain organised visions that do not lead to any work. In the Middle Ages, some myths and general themes provided an admirable creative matrix that could have led to great dramatic works; everything was ready to achieve what are known, in literary terms, as "mysteries," starting with the most varied determinations (Christian legends) and ending with their general meaning; but the substance of the mysteries did not find, for one historical reason or another, its individual reality — the creator and the work — although it is claimed that when "everything is ready," these must also appear.

In one respect, in artistic creation, but also in other types of human creation, the predisposition to totemism is clearly visible. Any creation is, at first, an attempt to raise spiritual states and external determinations to a meaning; to connect it with a general meaning, so that states and determinations can then be concentrated, in an organised manner, in an embodiment. The difficulty for a creator at the outset is to conceive or "see" general meanings that

can subsume a wealth of determinations (to see a "landscape" in every corner of nature, for example). It was probably difficult for nature to gather various manifestations of life into a biological variety and then raise the varieties, as we mentioned, to species. But isn't it now a new difficulty to implant species in individuals?

It was just as difficult for the novelist Balzac to see a Human Comedy in the characters and events of French society at the beginning of the 19th century. But once he managed to grasp this general meaning and felt, with splendid candour, that he was on the verge of becoming a genius, as he told his sister, Balzac himself realised that genius does not consist in intuiting the empty general, but rather in implanting it in individual realities and situations. But what if the individual resists? This is what happened to Balzac himself, fired by the general meaning of the Human Comedy, he felt compelled to give an account of the entire French community and to implant this meaning in the individual reality of the peasant world of his time; He then wrote his peasant novels, which *were not as successful*. He had everything at his disposal in terms of the general, but a

He lacked "tode ti". With his artistic sensibility so assured, he must have suffered from his lack of success and been afflicted by a form of todetitis. And indeed, isn't todetitis, that is, the struggle to achieve individuality (the right embodiment), precisely the disease of artists? Artists are, in their own way, political visionaries: they need an individual embodiment of their thoughts, and they almost never succeed in obtaining it, because they are under the curse of having to incorporate ideas into the plasma of human society, which is so uncertain and restless, not at all like stone, sound or word, as with artists themselves. The artist's suffering is therefore still alive in them, both when they are utopians and when they are realists. The utopia of the Platonic state,

the political utopias of the Renaissance, the constitutions that Rousseau crafts for various small states, are all spiritual torments experienced by man. If there is, perhaps, a gratuitous delight in making theoretical constructions, how much spiritual misery, on the other hand, in the impossibility of building them in practice. Utopians may remain in the milder forms of totemism, while realistic visionaries enter the demonia of Dostoevsky's "Possessed" or the political furor of the irreconcilable and unconsolated reformers who fill the pages of history.

Entire states can rise to the generality of an idea that they are unable to realise either internally or externally. Thus, in the absence of a historical identity, the North American continent rose from the outset, through a simple *Constitution*, to the general; it gave itself a historical meaning, an idea, which for two centuries it has not been able to truly embody in its vast community, nor to pass on to other communities ("the American way of life"). In contrast, in other historical communities, such as imperial Rome or present-day France, the general meaning, that is, the idea of civilisation and culture, succeeds so well, both internally and externally, that everyone feels at home there, everything becomes cosmopolitan (though not universal, in a deeper human sense). And meaning thus dissolves, through the loss of the individual and of any creative historical support. The Roman Empire did indeed decay through cosmopolitanism, just as what might be called the French spiritual empire seems to be dissolving. The general transformed into mere generality (universal consumer values, a civilisation suitable for everyone, a culture based on pleasure, however refined) undermines and disintegrates its own historical being.

Peoples can therefore lose themselves in the "idea", just as individuals lose themselves, without being able to find their way back to their individuality

. An overly assertive *theoretical* consciousness can devastate important historical communities, just as it can devastate cultures. The tendency of modern culture towards positivism and accuracy, like the tendency of contemporary art towards abstract art forms, are in line with a certain historical maturity that has been reached and which, in today's world, takes two contrasting forms: the theoretical lucidity of a state that does not yet exist, as was the case with the North American state, and the refined lucidity of historically oversaturated nations. (How significant that the French Revolution, nearing its historical *end*, was in solidarity with the American Revolution, which had begun at a historical *junction*). But both historically and artistically, the deficiency is that of the individual.

History, like art, nature, like the individual, can thus remain under the care of the individual, offering those who contemplate things the spectacle of a more subtle nothingness than that of disintegration, to which the vicissitudes of the general led within the framework of catholicism. If the general did not obtain it, then individual reality disintegrated, lost in its transience and nothingness; but if the individual did not obtain it, the general remained free and truly gave a void of suspension to things. Perhaps the "vital soup" at the origin of life, which some biologists talk about, floated on the waters for a long time, without individual beings being possible. This means that a general substance such as life had been achieved, as may have been achieved in other cosmic areas, without its substantial *realities* being achieved. In the same way, man can see how the determinations of life are admirably organised in concepts, ideals or at least in dreams; on the other hand, he can grasp how the chaotic manifestations of the world could be shared, in their depths, by the general nature of history and its laws, which give them foundation and

security; but both may lack the condensation of the cloud into real rain. Everything remains nameless, and late wisdom sees how the agitation of the world and its creative turmoil remain in a void of suspension.

If theoretical minds were content to contemplate the incessant unfolding of things in the general from which they no longer descend, or if they gave free rein to the exercise of an intelligence that knows only the possible, then they would certainly avoid the disease of todetism (although they would fall into another, as we shall see with the contemplative spirit), delighting in the infinite possibilities of the infinite. *of the possible*, then they would certainly avoid the disease of todetism (although they would fall into another, as we shall see with the contemplative spirit), delighting in the qualitative infinity of the nuances and delimitations of the general, instead of the quantitative infinity of individuals and real states. Like beauty, which "you never tire of looking at," theoretical truth can take on any number of characters and aspects without their accumulation overwhelming the eye and the mind. But most of the time, theoretical natures are not satisfied with *the void* of reality, but bring into play the wealth of possibilities of the general, precisely in order to achieve its inscription in reality. The individual is here, in todetita, only in deficiency, not yet denied, as will be the case in todetia. It will take all the refinement of culture for man, emerging from the crisis of theoretical consciousness, to pass into another, that of contemplative consciousness. With a theoretical consciousness alone, man strives to see not only how much resistance there is in reality, but also how he himself, with the perspective of the general in which he has placed himself, raises new forms of chance and necessity, different from those seen by the man of science, in particular a Monod, under the spiritual illness of catholite.

For it is not only chance that causes certain free determinations, such as a few chemical processes, to become embedded in the generality of life and ultimately in a biological code.

The opposite chance may also arise — it must be said, with so many others — as a ready-made code, a species of example, in which, therefore, as a species, the determinations have become caught up in a generality, failing to find their corresponding individual nature. Is this not precisely what happens in the realm of life? Anyone, without being a biologist, can observe that, under certain fortuitous changes (climatic, geological, ecological), new species of creatures suddenly appear, lacking not the code and therefore the general, but the particular condition of individualisation. Biologists might be obliged to say — if they want to philosophise a little, like Monod and others — how those species existed without individual specimens and *how vast* such a domain of general realities that do not have the status of individual realities can be. Similarly, historians should identify, in some way, if not the presence, then at least the real probability, at a certain historical moment, of those general human natures that are ready to burst forth into reality at the moment of a revolution or historical catastrophe.

From this perspective, of a hazard that concerns the general rather than the individual, the whole world, which appears as a necessity and which we study as such, becomes perfectly contingent. A few degrees of heat more or less, one revolution more or less, and the nature of the Earth, like its history, would be completely different.

One might say: it is the old story of "what if"... But no, it is *the question* of "what if?" It is the question that modern science and technology have ended up asking, which — it has been said — no longer focuses exclusively on "why?", but brings into play "why not?". Why not *this* theoretical vision, these objects, this changed nature? And this is, ultimately, all the turmoil, to the point of madness, of theoretical consciousness — directly recorded by

anyone, in the politician — who also thinks in terms of "what if" (not "what would *have been*"), or who brings into play "why not this way", instead of lingering on "why" (or precisely on its extension, why). If everything that is real is contingent, then it means that not only does chance become necessity, as some scientists would have it, but also necessity (the general, the theory) can become chance, or rather the lot of the real.

In any case, contrary to the usual view of chance and necessity, it must be admitted that another view is conceivable and that both chance and necessity have meaning for *all* ontological terms, not only for the individual but also for the general and the determined. Remaining now with the hazard of the individual, which is projected into generality, and the new hazard of the general (genetic codes, ideal personalities, or laws, theories, structures) that passes into the reality of individual existences, this means that it acts, outside the hazard that structures and shapes, one that fixes and "realises" the pre-structured. And correlated with this new type of hazard, another type of necessity should also be considered, which no longer resembles the blind necessity of the first case, but rather a self-controlled one.

It is the necessity felt by theoretical nature. The oscillation between chance and necessity causes the scandal of this nature and its malady. How can you leave unrealised the general that you have seen in its perfection, richness and goodness? And if it is a matter of necessity, how can it be realised only by chance?

On a moral level, this intolerable situation, of seeing the law and commandments being carried out randomly, is what causes indignation in the heart of the obedient and righteous brother upon the return of the prodigal son from the world. The latter did nothing but "what he liked", while he did "what he had to do". Being master of the general meanings, of the law of the family and of the city, he felt at all times

, compared to the other, the superiority of doing both what he should and what he liked, because he found satisfaction precisely in the fulfilment of his duty, that is, in subordinating everything he did to the general good. If he also has a sense of freedom, it is that of judging, in the spirit and within the horizon of the law. With his free judgement, but not without ultimate criteria, he was able to assess the extent to which his actions and those of others were in line with the great prescribed rules. The sacrilege of the prodigal son seems to him to be that of having taken his freedom from the law itself. In this sense, the brother feels that the prodigal son no longer deserves to be condemned; punishment comes on its own, and the first punishment that befell the prodigal son was homelessness (as later with Faust: "Ich bin der Unbehauste...").

Perhaps, given his scruples, even he, his brother, was not always in perfect order. But things are completely different for him; even if he could sometimes tell himself that he had made a mistake, he still feels, in his declared dissatisfaction, a hidden satisfaction, one of a superior nature, like that of an artist who remains above his work, or, on another level, like that of a demiurge who knows of possible worlds better than the one he has created. But how can one accept that a life of disorder, like that of the son, can lead, under the simple forgiveness of the father, to order? He who, like the brother, knows the general and the law, even before seeing them in individual embodiments, can no longer admit that chance and arbitrariness also bring order to things. He can only suffer at the idea that order has not completely removed chance. He understands perfectly well that the prodigal son should not be condemned. But should he even be rewarded for his return?

Theoretical natures of all times, but especially modern ones, favoured as they are by knowledge *obtained* after wandering through nature and laboratories like prodigal sons of culture.

(for they did not understand how to remain faithful to the religious and philosophical wisdom of their homeland, but instead ventured out into the wider world), they nevertheless ended up acquiring something of the moralising and reforming spirit of their morose brother who had remained at home. Like him, they dislike everything about the wider world, which they have travelled far and wide. Logicians and linguists dislike natural languages, sociologists dislike history, ideologues dislike civil society, geneticists do not always like real genetic codes and think about changing both wheat varieties and human varieties, while cosmonauts may ultimately dislike even the Earth. For all of them, reason becomes "rationalisation", just as the general has always tried to bring into being realities that match his perfection. Under the general meanings accredited by the knowledge we have managed to obtain, today's world is one of laboratories, retorts, transplants, or artificial satellites and human colonisation of space; it is one of planning, directing and shaping human destinies.

Then todetita erupts. Always active among the spiritual mal-adiis tried by man — as springing in the past from the consciousness of *incorruptibility* and supreme perfection, in the modern version, from the more subdued but unspeakably more rigid constancy of the need for rigour and *accuracy*, and in the version of the ordinary man under the consciousness of *the ideal* — active in the enlightened man under the consciousness of the *theoretical* nature within him, which holds laws to be incorporated into the world, todetita exalts man, causing him to shake reality. Does he make the world better? Does he make himself better? With the unfulfilled or half-fulfilled achievements where his drive has led him and continues to lead him, he is often surprised to see *the inadequacy* around him and *the ghostly nature* of everything he does, or to see himself surrendered *to statistics*, together

with things.

But he stands out from the statistics in the name of the general he rose to and whom, with his human pride, he takes the liberty *to change* if the general proves unworthy of reality. Those who have reached the rank of general, and thus tasted what is *not*, can no longer easily come to terms with what is, no matter how many difficulties they face. And everything shows that the European man, who has suffered and created so much under the sign of catholicity, is preparing to suffer and create under that of todetity.

Horetita

"Horetita" from horos, "determination" in ancient Greek; it refers to the disruption of the determinations that things and humans give themselves, a disruption that can lead to their precipitation, but also to their slowing down, until extinction. It is a disease accompanying phenomena of will in humans, while catholita was more related to feeling and todetita to intelligence and knowledge.

Horetitis affects, in terms of will, either the very impatient or, on the contrary, the very patient and the masses of the patient in the world. If the disruption of manifestations is caused primarily by will, with its pluses and minuses, it can accelerate or decelerate their course. Even the rhythm of historical manifestations is subject to change by human will, with the stimulated and slowed down development that it can bring. That is why horetitis will appear, more than the first two diseases, on a historical scale. But both in humans and in history, it can take either an acute or a chronic form.

1. *Acute horetitis*. If you think about human horetitis — not yet that of history or, perhaps more, that of nature — the first to come to mind are the great impatient ones, such as Don Quixote, whom I mentioned, Faust on his own level, some real figures from the history

culture, Nietzsche for example, and in any case the prophet he created in his own image and likeness, Zarathustra. If you think of gods, Luceafărul comes to mind, imagined by the fairy tale and then by our poet. All of them suffer from the spiritual illness of being unable to manifest themselves in accordance with their will.

Let us begin with Eminescu's poem, in which, just as impressive as Cătălina's catholite disease — her aspiration towards the universe and the feeling of exile as wandering in light ("descend and illuminate my life") — is, combined with *totetita*, Luceafăr's horetite disease. However, while the girl's illness does not rise to a tragic form, but only enhances her human being, beautifying her earthly love, in Luceafăr suffering has a tragic character. For there is also a tragedy of general natures, like Luceafăr, as if a double tragedy: beyond that of not being able to obtain (except "with difficulty") an individual embodiment, just as Luceafărul, the new tragic figure, comes with difficulty from his world, after obtaining his individual embodiment, of not being able to obtain and determine the horetite's suffering.

One might say that there can be no talk of the general's tragedy, since tragedy represents a *human* experience of limits; it would only apply to individuals or well-individualised historical communities. But the general has a fully human version, namely the "genius", which incorporates him, to speak with good romanticism and with Eminescu. *At least* in the version of genius, a tragedy can appear, which is no longer that of the person, but of the general nature embodied in him. An example of this is given by Luceafărul, in which Eminescu saw the drama and the inability of genius "to make others happy and to make himself happy".

Indeed, as a general nature, Luceafărul cannot be identified...

well codified in general terms and attested to individually, like species of saurians, but without the individual specimens being able *to determine* how to truly survive. It is a failed genesis — but it is a genesis nonetheless.

This is what several types of creators show, beyond Don Quixote but somewhat under his sign. Man clearly sees that order does not come about by itself, through the simple accumulation of facts in a catholic manner; he also sees, at times, that it does not come about through submission to the great general rules which, in the end, may very well survive by crushing individual destinies (todetita) instead of fulfilling them. Then the man of great stature, becoming aware of the necessary presence of law and general order in everything that tends to come into being, actively *takes on* this meaning, assuming the role of bearer and implementer of the law. "I am, because I have made a law incarnate in myself; I have given myself a sense of generality, or I have given it to a domain of reality that is under my power." Just as a medieval knight dons armour, adopting a righteous ideal on his own and setting out into the world with a sense of purpose, you now set out armed towards self-realisation. But again, just like him, you can remain a simple "wandering" knight, that is, without determination and certain deeds, if you commit the act of violence of embodying the law in any way. There is a *measure* of generals who, however phantom-like and evanescent they may be, also require, almost like living organisms, a gestation period, an adaptation to the precariousness of the reality in which they are embedded, and a favourable moment for their incorporation. Man does not achieve his own being, nor does he bring order to the world, with the mere armour of the general, but only with determinations commensurate with it.

The suffering of the horetite, here in its acute form, is not caused by the lack of

determinations, but rather their nature of being pseudo-determinations, just like Don Quixote's cardboard helmet, which he tries on to see if it is good, finds that it is not, but decrees it good, setting off with it to action and battle. Everywhere in Part I of the book, where everything that happens is marked by Don Quixote's self-deception, and then in Part II, where things are marked by deception by others (the duke and duchess), determinations are disordered. But because determinations *are*, even if crooked and grotesque, horetita ends up showing, like other spiritual illnesses, its good side.

Nietzsche also suffered acutely from such an illness. We could have illustrated the horetita of philosophical consciousness with Fichte, but we choose Nietzsche. Can we really say, with the last correction, that his spiritual adventure is a bit like Don Quixote? In any case, *it's* a typical form of horetitis, sparked by impatience, just like the heroes we've talked about so far. What is Don Quixote-like in Nietzsche is the overly concise nature of his message — or the idea and pathos of the Dionysian, the theme of the superman, akin to Goethe's demonia and inferior to it as a vision, the theme of the innocence of becoming and eternal return, clearly borrowed from Goethe as well — a message in the name of which he allows himself to deny and overturn, illusory, almost everything; his exaltation as a reformer is also quixotic, in the spiritual void of a refined age which, after its crushing indifference at first, welcomed and applauded his invective, instead of feeling shaken by it.

But his insights into cultural and moral phenomena are extraordinary, sometimes, as are his formulations, so that the spiritual illness acquired by Nietzsche has a grandeur other than the indirect one of Don Quixote. Only that everything becomes a form of singularity—

He gives, work by work, all kinds of theoretical determinations which, with their thoughts pulverised into aphorisms, have also remained in the dust of libraries and consciences, even if they have made and continue to make some of them tremble. His general nature, with its reforming genius, should have had other manifestations than his works. From each of his pages and thoughts, he expected a resounding echo, but with *Ecce Homo*, he collapsed into the indeterminacy of spiritual night.

It is deeply significant for Nietzsche's spiritual illness that *nothing happens to Zarathustra*, the hero in whom he idealised himself, when he descends from the mountains. In this case, he has no deeds and cannot give himself adequate and organised determinations, entering into a terrible form of horetitis. Behind the words, some of which are truly extraordinary, there is a total, almost unbelievable deficiency. Zarathustra descends, after ten years of retreat in the mountains, as the embodiment of a vast general nature, preaching into the void and wandering aimlessly. He has nothing *he needs*. He meets an old man who has not heard that "God is dead," comes across a crowd of people, is lucky enough that the tightrope walker falls, so that he can carry his corpse on his back, sees the court jester and the gravediggers, then falls asleep, wakes up, sees an eagle with a snake coiled around its neck, roams countries and peoples, makes disciples, leaves them, returns, meets the girl dancing in the forest, a hunchback, the guardian of great fatigue, two kings, and finally he steps over a man and starts running, but meets no one else.

Few descriptions of the horetite, at a high level, are as suggestive in the annals of culture as the dramatic scenario in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," or, if you prefer, the lack of a real scenario. It is likely that not only the prophet of the superman, but

their own supermen risk this happening to them, if they were to appear in the world.

Let us move on, with Nietzsche, from personalities exalted by their prophetic spirit to history and communities that are sometimes also caught up in exaltation. As happens to their prophet, so it happens to the same thing happens to "supermen" on a historical scale: they cannot find their rightful place. The same Germanic tribes about whom Nietzsche said the most disturbing things, ending with: "Die Deutschen sind nichts, sie werden etwas" (The Germans are nothing, they will become something), offer strange examples of horetitis on a historical scale.

It could thus be said that the Vikings, who founded so many settlements in northern Europe, descended to Sicily with a closed historical meaning, for which they could not find the right determinants, thus falling victim to horetitis. In any case, under the turmoil of something akin to horetite, the Germanic tribes and then the religious orders set out to establish settlements in the East. They carried with them, at least the latter, a general meaning, beyond the religious idea of the time: an idea of civilisation, destined to lead to the burg and the bourgeoisie in their space of origin, as well as in the colonised one. But their idea, which was hastening its realisation through isolated groups, planted in the midst of other peoples, could not find *the determinants* through which to harmonise with the ethnic space and historical context where the foundations were being laid. They established cities everywhere, even in our space, but after centuries, the descendants of the knights colonised in the East paid with the disintegration of the communities they had created, the primacy they had given to the idea and the hasty realisation of the idea. If they favoured the history of others, the Germanic communities there did not make history, but merely persisted and survived. Something of the misery of Sparta reappears, on a smaller scale, almost anonymously, in the fate of these brave doers in

goal.

For Sparta may be the typical example of the general's impatience and the consequent failure of his determinations. The general meanings imposed on the community by a constitution, which was certainly not Lycurgus' alone, were able to shape the community in which they were embodied for centuries. But when the general clashes directly with the individual, the determinations suffer. This is what happened to the Spartan people, who made history but had no history and did not create enough in terms of culture, losing in a sense even their Hellenic consciousness. A historian who would describe Sparta (when he is not downright hostile to it, like Toynbee) cannot obtain a very stable "biography" of its community, with its pairs of anonymous kings and its succession of events reduced to the monotony of a few ideas about education and the state. They are not determined, or they are distorted. Horetita became a state disease with Sparta.

Thus, in some peoples, as in the case of several great figures, whether real or ideal, clear forms of horetitis appeared under the sign of the general's impatience. The manifestations of such a spiritual illness were also clear: blindness to reality ("You have been blind all your life," says Care to Faust at the end), the substitution of natural determinations with pseudo-determinations, belonging to the realm of the possible, with Faust, to the imaginary and artificial with Don Quixote, to the hypertrophy of the will with Nietzsche, to empty and hollow prophecy with Zarathustra; then *vain creations*, in the case of superiorly determined peoples, *the Spartan spirit*, austerity as a norm of life, *improvisation*, ahistoricity in the midst of history.

Only that the same spirit of the general who could adopt, with the natures of "supermen" and with peoples who want to be superior, the style of impatience, can also be patience itself: it can be not to rush

destinies in blatantly disordered manifestations, but to let them see for themselves, under the massiveness of the general that they carry, the disorder. It is another form of horetitis, the chronic one, let us say.

2. *Chronic horetitis*. For the chronic nature of this spiritual illness — and only one of the determinations, with their unfolding over time, can be chronic — the most profound background is provided by chronicity itself: time. Like perfect space, absolute time seemed to us above to be lacking something individual, a "tode ti," both offering a cosmic image of todetity. But when we descend from their absolute idea to their image in reality, time and space are recorded as intertwined with the individual and suggest (like Lucefărul) not so much the lack of the individual as the extinction of determinations. For in reality, space and time are precisely the principles of "actualisation"; in them, through a hic et nunc, things and processes are individualised. Everything happens in space and time. But nothing happens to them. They express great indifference to everything that is determination, the empty horizon and empty rhythm, like the expansion of a wave that remains the same in its monotonous spread.

Against this backdrop of nothingness, with its pure unfolding, forms of living, in spirit, touched by chronic horetita, are inscribed. "Nothing happens" means: nothing significant, nothing necessary and nothing fruitful happens, even if the life of the spirit, in its generosity, can make some meanings blossom for man out of the nothingness of Don Quixote's determinations.

Nothing happens in the life of angels, for example. However they are conceived, even with the daemons of the ancient vision, they appear and subsist under the sign of chronic horetitis. It is so general

embodied in their individual being so that it can no longer acquire the determinations proper to the individual and remains — as happened in some medieval visions — general from the outset, each angel being a species. Man is given to rise to the general meaning, while the angel is imagined as being fixed in it; at most, it has a gentle sway in the bosom of the general, just as the ancient daimon had as an intermediary between the lower and upper worlds, or as the Christian angel has, as a "herald," as its name suggests, from one world to another. It has no determinations, not even of place and time, for it is everywhere and ageless. Moreover, this is how Romanian folklore imagines Heaven, found after the Last Judgement: all people will be of the same age and there will be no settlement, no love, no word, but "it will all be one day".

Human beings have been given the opportunity to attain this state in a version that has often been discussed, in late and refined religiosity, such as that of Romanticism: in the version of the "beautiful soul". Many things can happen to such a noble soul, detached from the corruption of the world, or it can make its own determinations, but all are transfigured by it in such a way that they cease to have any renewing significance, because they are pre-signified, each time. In the angelic condition in which he has settled here, the general envelops all manifestations like a good spirit, passing them into the same glory and light. Everything is "a day", as in the folkloric vision of paradise. The germinative night of determinations has given way to the day. But in this way, the day has turned, in turn, into a gentle night, as you sometimes feel happens in "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul," from Goethe's work. In spiritual medicine, it is simply a form of chronic horetitis.

Let us descend one step lower, to the level of more common spiritual experience, and we will encounter, in the chosen case of those who have imposed a higher order on themselves, the symptoms of this type of morbidity. Once encountered and understood, the order of the general is difficult to avoid, as happened to Augustine with Manichaeism at first, and then with Christianity. Under the action of this order, life becomes different. The question is whether it does not become so much so "other," so that sometimes he does something inappropriate, both to himself and to the order he invokes.

It is like a new age of man, after the wanderings of early youth, now that his actions become responsibly committed. But responsibility is not only towards oneself, but also towards the accepted general. Man's actions must now determine even the general meaning itself. What would the general, or the great orders, identified in a more mature age, be if they did not lead to the responsibility of their realisation? And thus, as the bearer of the law, man sets out on all kinds of quests, without the blindness of Don Quixote, but firm nonetheless. He only needs the right life goals, just as Augustine sought, alone or with his friends, in his retreat at Cassiciacum, a new meaning to life, in line with the religious model he had encountered and adopted. And the whole problem of this hour, in which the general is directly involved in individual destinies, will be not to allow the determinations that will follow to be distorted by the adversities of the world and by his own uncertainties.

But they can also be distorted by one's own certainties. It happens to man, then, as it did to Augustine: withdrawn from the adversities of the world and in control of himself, like the "beautiful soul", he renders insignificant a life that is too heavily signified. Augustine's experience with his friends, like so many "retreats" in the name of an idea, like so many

phalansteries and ideal communities, often end up leading to the untruth of one's own truth. Why? Precisely because they cannot give man true and complete determination; because those ideas

They "do not fit" into real life, coming from too high above, or, on the contrary, remaining below it. The victory of ideas in people risks disrupting and damaging the reality of their lives. As for the idea that has become an "ideal," it has always been an aggression against reality, which, once defeated, drags the victorious ideal down with it into its ashes.

There is a saying whose truth has often been felt:

"the sadness after victory". This saying is very telling because it expresses the almost inevitable emergence of a spiritual illness, horetita itself. Victory should open up a wealth of new determinations, which should also triumph over old determinations. But for this, another victory would be necessary, for which the victor was not prepared and for which he cannot be: on the one hand, it is the victory over that inertia that causes the old determinations ("the man of always") to prolong their life in the very triumph of the one who defeated them; on the other hand, it would have to be a victory over the brutality and summariness of the new truth, not yet experienced in reality and coming upon it with all the crudeness of the general. "The sadness after victory" expresses the vague fear that the world will remain the same, or that anything that tries to change it will transform it into a non-world. What resolutions can be made to ensure that they are commensurate with the general in whose name the battle was fought and won? The next day, everything begins to look sad.

It must have been terribly oppressive — to move on to another historical figure — under which Louis XIV must have lived. When a man, even a king, says, "I am the state," then he

He takes over the general in his individual destiny and claims to give, for the surrounding world and himself, the appropriate determinations. Perhaps in the early years of his reign, still intoxicated by his youth, by some military victories and by his self-investiture, he actually imagined — however disordered his private life was — that he was building something, with every word, that he was bringing order with every gesture, just as the king in Faust II was told that he was building palaces with every step he took throughout his kingdom, suddenly enriched with unbacked banknotes. But the experience of his mature years must have given him the feeling that not everything he did could be significant, and that not every royal gesture was memorable and edifying, although *it should have been so*, since he was the general authority. The poor king of France must have trapped himself in a trap; for either he was truly statuesque, or he had to mystify all the time. Perhaps the boredom that settled in Versailles after 1680, and which many contemporaries mention, was due less to the king's ageing, or to the austere Madame de Maintenon and the influence of the Catholic Church, than to the spiritual illness of horetitis from which the Sovereign was beginning to suffer. For it was impossible that he had not been clearly tempted by horetitis, in the face of so many uncertain, artificial, vain determinations, some of which were not sincerely believed even by those who accepted them as valid, others which the sovereign himself, as the general's agent, would have realised would not be accredited by time. And what a strange game of conflicting horoscopes must have taken place at one point in that "classical" France, when the determinations of the king's party clashed with the empty ones of the heir's party (who was to die before him), each chain of events and actions ready to determine, in a way, and to compel the French people, their history and the history of Europe, but at the same time ready to break apart, breaking the chain with

ring, if the chance of death and life took one or the other of those who, at that moment, embodied the "general" out of the game

We can move seamlessly from this horetita of kings to the common one of heroes of love, for example, blessed by life, victorious over adversity, and for whom the happiness of entering into the general order of marriage lies ahead. Few creators have had the cruelty, combined with artistic imprudence, to delve into the details of the type of horetita that too often befalls such married heroes. Only Tolstoy takes the risk of describing, in an epilogue to *War and Peace*, a slightly overweight Natasha, annoyingly tyrannical towards Pierre and lacking in grace in her attachment to her children; but even he does not succeed, artistically speaking, in his description. Perhaps he did not realise that instead of prolonging happiness, he was beginning to describe an illness.

Perhaps more expressive of the disease than this all-too-common spiritual experience of life would be the situation that opens up for Pygmalion after the creation of Galatea, so happy in itself and for him. The gods gave her their blessing, bringing her to life and granting her life. But what happens *after* that? What natural and lively developments, enriching for Pygmalion, can still arise? It is not a question of the banal routine of a simple marriage. Instead, what is at stake is something of the spiritual illness of the artist who devoted himself to a *single* work and believed that he could resolve his destiny in it.

Indeed, we love what we can shape; we love the creation of our hands. But what a curious love this is. Now that you have begun creation, you know well that you love the being or thing you shape only because you love the idea you have put into it, the general idea. Only, you do not love the general as you did before, in

like all people because it comes to take over your decisions and actions — the need to play, the need to dream, the need to act — but you love it upside down, because it is *not* ready-made, nor sure of itself, because he, the general, asks you to incorporate him into things so that he too can determine himself, bend to reality and, perhaps, finally define himself. You therefore love what *is being done* rather than what is. First, as a human being, you loved free determinations ("let's float, let's dream"), then you could love the general in which determinations are captured; a third love now carries you towards the general's *works* within reality, within the individual. You love the people and things in which the general's action is exercised. You thus oscillate between real beings and their background of ideality, until you realise that, in this way, you are distorting real beings through the meanings you imbue them with, and at the same time distorting meanings through the singular embodiments you give them. For now, Galatea would be the one to retain for herself all the artist's ideality. But what content of determinations can a *single* work carry with it in order to fulfil an artist's consciousness? It would be a falsehood of thought and a mutilation of it. No creator can place the creation obtained above creativity. If he is a true artist, Pygmalion asks the gods to bring Galatea back to marble.

Pygmalion is doomed to suffer, since he was foolish enough to believe so much in one of his works. A single creation cannot offer him endless determination, but he buried his vision in a single creation. A living Galatea would have no grace, for she would be overwhelmed by her general nature. It is a curse of creation, like an impasse of being, that sometimes crushes the individual through the general meaning it embodies. Perhaps that is why, in their hour of glory, religions fail to

produce great works of art (rather than architecture, where the general does not express itself directly): their burden of generality weighs too heavily on the destinies and realities in which they are incorporated. But again, this is precisely why the religions of the past were able to produce great artistic creations whenever faith *weakened*, as in the case of the Greeks after the 5th century or during the Renaissance; their general meanings then became bearable for individual realities (this is clearly seen in the religious painting of the secular Renaissance), leaving them free to express themselves, even offering them a content of manifestation through the generality they embodied. Bach could not have appeared in a time of tyrannical religiosity. Artists need a twilight generality.

From angels to artists, ordinary people to kings, everyone can suffer from chronic horetitis when the overall impact is too great. But it also happens to peoples, even those other than those we saw suffering from acute horetitis. Thus, it can be said that for the Arab peoples, Islam represented a blockage of their historical being, no longer allowing them, after a beginning that seemed brilliant and could eclipse the European world with the Moors, to make the right decisions for a full historical life. For the Turkish tribes, on the other hand, who perhaps did not have great creative vocations from the outset, Islam left them with nothing but the empty capacity to conquer and rule, without any civilisation or culture of their own.

If in its acute form, horetitis accuses a brilliant self-blindness, hasty decisions, the substitution of real things with others that are only possible, imaginary, artificial, of false fullness, and on a historical level manifests empty creativity, stubborn persistence, a Spartan spirit, anistoricism, now with chronic horetitis they have brought about the emergence of deterministic

stationary or already signified and unproductive manifestations, a slight melancholy, the sadness after victory, acedia, self-doubt, active resignation, or the feeling of boredom and mutilation by the absolute. One cannot leave here as a human being, and yet one cannot remain here. With each spiritual illness identified, man encounters his wall and weeps at it, like the people of Israel. Or he tries to move on, with the wall and all.

Ahoretia

Now the maladies of lucidity begin. Moments of lucidity had appeared before: man could know that something was wrong either with the general, or with the individual, or with the determinations. But he did not become ill by rejecting some of them. Now he confronts them one by one and believes, sometimes rightly, in the positive aspect of rejection, imagining that it enhances the spirit, just as the loss of an electric charge gives rise to positive ions in the material world. Lucidity — which is ultimately also constitutive of man — has thus become a source of disruption in his life.

Ahoretia refers to the refusal, or renunciation, whether subtle or categorical, to have horoi, determinations. The illustration provided by Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*, represented the exasperated form of ahoretia, the categorical and total refusal of determinations. Another example, similar to this, was the hippie experience, also an expression of exasperation (but a low one). But if ahoretia seems somewhat strange in the *open-minded* European civilisation, it proves to be at home in Indian thought and spirituality, where the corresponding literary monument is no longer a simple dramatic work, nor

an eccentric and youthful experience like hippiedom, but an extraordinary epic, standing at the heart of that culture, like the Bhagavad Gita, where the spiritual experience of rejecting determinism no longer took the form of eccentricity, but that of a superior lucid tendency to withdraw from the world, enshrined there on a *historical scale*.

The hero of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna, is the soldier who refuses to fight, one might say. "What good is sovereignty, O Govinda, what good are things or [even] life?" he asks. The god shows him that he must fight, for that is what the law requires, but he also adds that action is inferior to the Yoga of knowledge. Then why fight? Arjuna insists. To which the God replies that all that is required of him is to be detached from the fight and not to desire its fruits. You must see "non-action" in action. But "you are bound by the action born of your nature, O son of Kunti; what, because of the disturbance of the mind, you do not wish to do, you will do alone" ⁽²⁾.

Under this mental disorder of not acting, or not wanting to give yourself worldly determinations, seems to lie any superior consciousness in the Indian world. And what is still strange in their culture, at least to the outside observer, is that there the gods give themselves all kinds of determinations, in an unprecedented proliferation, like in a jungle, while humans refuse them. One could say that the Indian gods, with so many faces, manifestations and names that they can no longer be controlled even by the imagination, suffer from horetitis, while humans suffer from ahoretia.

Indeed, compared to the variety of embodiments and means that the heavenly world brings into play, the human world tends to extinguish or control and dominate any physical action and any reaction

² *Bhagavad Gita*, in vol. *Indian Philosophy in Texts*, Scientific Publishing House, 1971, trans. Sergiu Al. George.

spontaneous spirit. Nowhere else but in the Indian world could a means of *action* such as "passive resistance" be put into play. The miracle of ahoretia, like that of any spiritual mala-dii, is that it achieved the positive even in the extreme form of the negative, or effective action through total passivity. And again, compared to the gods who never cease to incarnate themselves and rejoice in their reincarnation, with their polisomatia, the Indian man is taught that the chain of reincarnations is a curse and that our self, which desires only peace in the bosom of the vast, becomes

"the rails gone mad" under his incessant incarnation. Nowhere better than in the dual Indian vision is the contrast between horetita and ahoretie revealed. We could have perfectly illustrated horetita (the acute one) with the unleashing of determinations on Indian deities, if ahore-tia had not been even more characteristic of that world, in the case of historical society and the individual. But the contrast between man's ontological refusal in reality and the ontological insatiability, also in reality, of the god probably also says something about this Indian world of all contrasts. Perhaps its general, Brahma, is so vast — unlike Jehovah and Allah — that man and society mean nothing to him, while the gods mean everything.

However, it is quite another thing to *want* to have determinations as in horeticism and *not* to obtain the appropriate ones, as opposed to their *refusal*. The ahoretic refuses determinations in the name of the general, into which the individual must integrate completely, melting into it "like a statue of salt," as Indian thought would say. When the general was projected directly onto the individual, through whom he "realised" himself, the following appeared

: the precipitation of determinations and blindness, in the case of acute horetitis, sadness after victory, in the case of chronic horetitis. Now, in the case of

ahoretiei, when *the individual* is realised through the general, lucidity rather than blindness, the joy of defeat rather than the sadness of victory appear. This is what happened with the Stoics, the only ones alongside the ascetics in European culture who can be directly compared to the Indian world.

Stoicism directly connects individual reason with universal reason. "You came into being as part of a whole. You will be absorbed into the being that produced you," says Emperor Marcus Aurelius, after the slave Epictetus said, "Remember that you are an actor in a drama that the author has written according to his will." The Stoic therefore has no need for the mediation of determinations in order to rise to the general, in whose name he actually rejects them. The former also said:

"Man has a great power at his disposal, that of doing nothing but agreeing with God." Or: "Remove everything else from yourself and care only about these few things." Or again: "No glance, however fleeting, at anything other than right reason." You have nothing to do but consent to the outside world.

— even if you are a beggar — and triumph within, rising, with the general's understanding, above everything that happens in the world and to you. You must learn indifference. "If you embrace your child or your wife," Epictetus reflects in the cruelty of indifference, "tell yourself that you are embracing a human being, so that if they die, you will remain unperturbed." As for yourself as a human being, "consider yourself a dying being; despise your body," and do so that "the part of your soul that commands and dominates you remains unmoved by any bodily movement"; and as for the world, "do not be surprised by anything, do not be startled by anything," says Marcus Aurelius. He who has risen to the understanding of the whole does not even need to say many words: a few aphorisms suffice. But these aphorisms are not the explosive ones of a later Nietzsche, but the reflections

of wisdom, which does not want to change the world, but only to enter into its deeper order. "You are but an image, which in no way represents reality," says Epictetus. In such a final arrangement of thought, not even the determinations of culture and overly deep philosophising are worth giving yourself: "If I have not wasted my time," confesses Emperor Marcus Aurelius, "studying writers, solving syllogisms or researching the mysteries of the heavens, I owe it to the gods." Ahoretia is almost total in the case of the Stoics.

The gods, or this time the God of a confident religion, would lead to the extraordinary form of asceticism practised by Eastern Christian ascetics. No worldly determinations are at stake now. The Stoics still retained a form of refuge in *the midst* of the world and fulfilled the role assigned to them by the Playwright. Now, with the ascetics, the refusal is also external, asceticism becoming absolute, and if there are still conscious determinations inside, even real struggles with the turmoil of one's own mind or with the temptations of the Other, everything that happens in the soul aims at a form of fulfilment, which ultimately leads to the total abolition of determinations, through merging with general nature and through ecstasy. We will not dwell on ecstatic natures, which are the end of the road for ascetics and are fully inscribed in the register of asceticism.

"There was light and clarity in my heart, but I could see neither colour nor form," says a 17th-century Eastern mystic, showing that even the most ordinary determinations, the colours and shapes of things, must disappear in the glory of ecstasy. However, through ecstasies, we can move from exceptional worlds, such as the Indian world, from exceptional doctrines, such as the Stoic one, and extreme religious manifestations, such as ascetic ones, to ordinary people

, who also falls, more than one might initially think, into forms of idolatry similar to those mentioned above.

One could say that an equivalent of ecstatic rapture exists even in nature, thus finding in reality an ontological background for extreme awe. A situation of the order of "rapture" must occur, in both the inorganic and the organic. Such a process as the instantaneous one, which the human being experiences with its ecstatic loss in something general (as in aesthetic ecstasy, for example), represents the direct absorption of the individual by a more general nature. You can therefore imagine, following in the footsteps of scientists, not only substances that tear away and attract the particles of others into their organisation, electrons for example; not only cosmic bodies that capture other bodies in their orbit, as it is said that the Earth captured the Moon, but also substances or bodies in which others are completely integrated, with the extinction of their specific determinations, and are thus simply absorbed. Ultimately, any "assimilation" achieved (eating, about which Indian thought speaks so profoundly) integrates into a reality with a more certain generality individual natures, which may be necessary for it to open up, only it, to new determinations, in the event that it too does not remain, like inorganic nature, in the lethargy of its generality. With such integrations, reality authorises fruitful revolutionary processes, instead of slow transformations, through the gradual accumulation of determinations.

This good rush towards being (or often being) is nevertheless found especially in humans, for example in the leaps made by knowledge towards truth, whenever "inductive" approaches (which no longer seek logical justification in advance, but simply occur) send thought towards the general, on the model of what could be called an ontological integral. But in humans, even more significantly, on this

line, than the approach of knowledge, there is another: that of love.

When forced to say something about their "rapture," ecstasies can only speak in terms of love. There may be, in fact, several kinds of love (we would say six kinds, along the lines of spiritual illnesses), but in all of them, what is truly loved ultimately proves to be the general. "All true love is love of God," said Max Scheler, and in a secular sense he seems to have been perfectly right: we love only the universal, if only at the lowest level, as has been said, that we do not love the beautiful being for itself but in the interest of the species, of the universal. But when lucidity intervenes, as is the case in the spiritual illness we are now investigating, when we are aware that we love the general itself, in the beloved individual being or reality, then, even if we do not enter into the contemplation of ecstasy, we are overcome with awe. What do our individual determinations, *our* love as such, really mean in the face of the general? And if the general urges us to give ourselves new determinations, in accordance *with him*, they will quickly fall into the monotony of stoic, ascetic, or angelic determinations, that is, they will be marked by horror. For, unlike angelic natures, which are rightfully in the established order, we will have entered into order through an act of lucidity which, with the voluntary extinction of free determinations, effectively means a form of asceticism for man.

Love itself, in any form, has something ascetic and almost ascetic about it: it is a rejection of the world in favour of a single creature, in whose happiness there will be less and less room for new determinations, down to the most banal form of worldly asceticism

: boredom. Even superior boredom, the so-called metaphysical kind, seems to be nothing more than a love that is too well satisfied: the love of empty lucidity

, as in the clarity of which the ecstatic Oriental spoke, and in which we no longer see colours or creatures, just as the great disillusioned one of metaphysical boredom no longer perceives the meanings and miracles of the world.

If love can create, on the usual human register, fertile ground, even an example for the disease of asceticism, the same must happen with its spectrum on the cultural register, with lyric poetry, ultimately with poetry itself. In particular, the two archetypal modes brought into play by asceticism can be found in poetry: asceticism and ecstasy. Poetry is, first of all, asceticism in the literal sense, an "exercise" of the mind and heart, but it is also asceticism in the broader sense, namely asceticism of the word, through the renunciations to which it is subjected. It is the renunciation of the immediate communicative function of the word, let us say of Mr. Jourdain's prose; but it is also the renunciation of the higher communicative function, through argument and logical justification, the renunciation of the function of rational knowledge of the word, of the logos; to its function of storytelling, of epic, since we are in lyric poetry; renunciation of its function of persuasion over people and — at least in modern poetry — of magical mastery over reality. With so many renunciations, which are for the word like a detachment from the world and its determinations, poetry wants to make the word a naked victory in contemplation. The word itself — like Saint Simeon naked on a stone pillar — beyond any determinations of speech, with its pure exercise and semantic openness, in the syntax of the context, towards a purer semantics, of the idea, or emotion, or value, to whose ecstasy it wants to send, *this* seems to be the word of lyric poetry and, with it, its substance. In the ecstasy to which it leads, how many admirable achievements there can be! But it is ecstasy, if only because the emotion of the word

The poetic mood is so close to the emotion of silence, which philosophical contemplation sometimes reaches.

In presenting typical cases of ahoretie, we have moved from as-cezã and ecstasy to love, and from love to poetry. Would the transition from poetry to mathematics seem less justified? But not only has the connection been made repeatedly; not only can mathematics have something "contemplative" about it, as can be seen in mathematicians such as Euler, with his equation summarising the world, or, closer to us, in Wittgenstein, or even Russell; but if we look at things from the perspective of ahoretia, then mathematics presents itself to us. Without invoking the great examples of mathematical eternity — one of them destined to reconcile the passage of mathematics with religious endeavours, so opposed to them on other planes — namely the example given by Plato, when he says that God, eternity par excellence, gives himself a kind of determination, that are not truly such (for they would depart from his purity and equality), namely by doing geometry; without resorting to such illustrations, we will say that mathematics must be invoked here more than any other human endeavour, precisely in order to highlight the presence and action of holiness *in the modern world*.

Isn't mathematics a true asceticism of knowledge? In a broader sense of asceticism (which strikingly recovers the original meaning of "exercise", evident in mathematics), it is an asceticism of the knowing mind, just as poetry was an asceticism of the speaking mind. With it, the mind refuses to know any domain of reality, voluntarily detaches itself from all the determinations of the real and goes into the wilderness, becoming a kind of "stylist" itself, like Saint Simeon, suspended as it is on the narrow column of a few postulates and axioms.

The mathematical purity of the mathematician — who not only initially renounces any determinations of reality, but prides himself on not finding any in his work, according to Russell's saying that the mathematician does not know what he is talking about and whether he is talking about anything — would have been a scandal for human culture and would have appeared to be an empty game, since it does not seem to serve any purpose, like other "withdrawals from the world" (for Pascal, himself a mathematical genius, mathematics is still a game, rather than a serious activity, according to what he writes to Desargues), if the purity of mathematical exercise had not resulted, unlike asceticism, which claimed to be in the service of the abandoned world, in an unexpected and fantastic rediscovery of the world. This is one of the most surprising lessons of the spirit, with its maladies, regarding the virtues of refusal and asceticism in particular. From all this asceticism of the knowing mind, with mathematics, more than a victory of knowledge emerged; it has resulted, through technique, in a creative demiurgy which, like the victory of knowledge, makes you believe that Plato was right to say that God geometrises, but this time in a different sense than that he would find in this way a means of not becoming bored.

And yet, something of the initial horror remained even in the two unexpected successes of mathematics, knowledge and technique. Let us not dwell on the first aspect, purely theoretical, of the survival of a "refusal" in terms of real determinations, even in the success of mathematicians in knowing and explaining them (through the sciences to which they apply themselves); because, indeed, reducing all determinations to the mathematical expressions through which their laws are formulated means transferring them from reality to a screen where everything becomes spectral; or it means making them similar to "something else", assimilating

and abolishing them as such, which is exactly what ahoretia wants. Let us emphasise instead — because this aspect directly affects human practical life — the ahoretia that is preserved in mathematics, or reappears in the light with the universe of manufactured objects, a universe that is monotonous even when it seems to be a jungle of demiurgy

; but above all, let us show that, thanks to this direct and indirect offspring of mathematics, namely the technical world, that of industrialism and the machine, historical life imposes *new* responsibilities on man, some of rational control, rationalisation and predetermination, which seem to some to end up rediscovering something of the theological problem of predestination (so solidary with himself is man in everything he does, whether sacred or profane) and in any case seem to reactivate ahoretia from now on.

The European man, training the man of the planet behind him, is on the verge of changing catholita (his historical disease, which arose in the search for a satisfactory general), on the one hand into todetism, that is, the struggle to find a suitable individual, with its extension into horetism, the difficulty of giving it adequate determinations, and on the other hand, given his lucidity, into ahoretism. After all, the European man is probably the only one who has taken upon himself *all* the illnesses of the spirit (for we shall see that the last two belong to him). Now, however, he takes upon himself first and foremost ahoretia, which we thought was characteristic of the Indian world. Only, it is *another* variant of asceticism, insofar as the general principle by which the European spirit is measured is other than Brahma.

With a less expansive generalisation, with a kind of reasoning that often no longer even seeks philosophical justification, but simply proclaims itself to be 'rational order', sometimes without even a name, people in modern times reject freer determinations, both of nature

as well as of his own being or society. He can no longer — anywhere in the world now — not plan, not organise, not predetermine and not interfere with free determinations, in perfect horetic aspiration. The world is emptied of surprises, as with the Stoics, just as knowledge tends to be emptied of novelty, or comes — like banal philosophy — to explain perfectly, in the face of each novelty, how it was meant to be. In any case, radical novelty no longer exists. We await it from a possible encounter with extraterrestrials.

Nowadays, you no longer discover or encounter anything surprising through direct contact; at most, you do so indirectly. When Maxim Gorky travelled from Nizhny Novgorod to Crimea, covering thousands of kilometres, he would have seen and learned something new in every village he passed through. Now, travellers are no longer offered anything new in the villages and towns of the world, and this is not only in the East, where the phenomenon of homogenisation, in line with the integration of society (classes are tending to disappear), is evident, but increasingly in every other part of the world. People are bustling about and moving around like never before, but they no longer truly travel. The traveller who brought with him novelty and confronted others with it is disappearing from our world. Just like the man in the desert, we stand still, with our extraordinary mobility. However, the man of the desert is precisely the one who *no longer travels*.

Because we have descended so far, from the man of extreme ascetic and ecstatic experiences to our ordinary lives in the historical moment in which we find ourselves, it may not seem inappropriate to invoke an *individual* destiny of ahoretic. After all, an illness, even a spiritual one, exists through the sick. If all kinds of things about the symptoms and syndrome of an illness can be learned from treatises, there is still much to be learned from the observation sheet of each patient

But the latter presented himself to the author to be examined. He is the author himself.

Describing the spiritual illness of poverty in a detached manner, he had the surprise of seeing, at one point, that he was marking and framing his own destiny. Why hide it, if it can serve, at least to some extent, a theoretical investigation? We are all fragments of theory, after all, insects in the insectarium of humanity, and if sometimes the insect tries to become an entomologist, as here, it can only serve the knowledge of the insectarium better, before falling back into it.

We are therefore describing a case of ahoretia in the objective record that would be made by a specialist doctor, let's say a "nooiatru".

Clinical record

The patient states that he read Kant at the age of 18 and felt captivated, for life, by speculative thinking. (This is the well-known phenomenon of rapture, which is almost always at the origin of hysteria. Only sometimes is it replaced by empty refusal, in degraded obsession. The rapture-based form is the positive one, despite its procession of negations. It is significant that the patient refers to Kant, a man who never travelled, literally).

From the outset, this changed his life, giving him a premature but, as he later realised, false maturity. It was a maturity based on attitude, not content. Although steeped in culture, he rejected, in the name of speculation, entire fields of culture, such as the arts, and naturally rejected anything that was practical application, field research or action. He did not take full part in the lives of others, not fully explaining how he could sometimes impose on them, with

his non-participation and even ignorance in their areas of action. (The patient seems unaware of the "power of negativity"). He felt from that time on a tendency towards excess in his human nature, and when he read someone's confession that they preferred excess in life, he told himself that he definitely preferred the opposite. (A typical characteristic of asceticism, which does not reside in "human nature", as the analysed subject believes, but in the act of lucidity, even if juvenile, which leads to self-denial).

When asked if he had not been tempted by the usual feelings of attraction and love experienced by young people, he replied that in this respect he felt like everyone else; but he could not hide the fact that he had discovered with interest, on the negative side, how much power of attraction is conferred by the refusal — often simulated, of course — to allow yourself to be attracted. He even developed a theory of Don Juanism through non-conquest, just as he developed a kind of theory of non-action and, in practice, non-possession, which, to his good fortune — he admits, given the historical situation in which he was to live — he had a vocation for. He also developed a theory on the five meanings of non-A. (Here I stopped him, satisfied with this proliferation of the negative, significant for the austerity of his life).

He went on to confess that he felt this way because negativity was gaining "virtue," and he was beginning to be overcome by pride; but he understood from an early age the limits of empty virtue. First, it risks being something "for others" if it is based on a simple virtuous attitude; as such, it is too closely linked to refusals, which does not show true virtue; finally, he saw that, in his case, virtue is more virtuosity, and then he began to suspect it as such. (It falls appropriately, with virtuosity, on the character of asceticism at this worldly level, of being an exercise and nothing more, more

chosen by the devout who were entrenched in their illness). Since he felt a certain hypocrisy in his friends sometimes telling him that he had something Jesuit about him, when they weren't calling him "diabolical," he tried to make up for his moral uncertainty with a virtue that seemed authentic to him: that of "secretarial work." By this, the patient means the somewhat organised mobilisation of others, through their effective use with the help of an idea that you bring up for discussion, or an imperceptible programming in meetings with others, even without going so far as to organise groups (literary or ideological) of which you are the secretary-demiurge. He liked this condition of secretary, that is, of a man who segregates and secretes himself, acting somewhat from the shadows, but in fact from the heart of things, in order to see others unleash themselves. He went so far as to risk his own defeat in a discussion in order to better mobilise others (what minor forms the stoic joy of defeat can take) and then remain on the sidelines, apparently invalidated but the unknown principal agent. (Unexpectedly significant: *you* do not give *yourself* determination, but encourage others to give it to you. It is a "transfer of action", to be remembered in the case of horoscope, with its double game of passivity and inhibited activity). Along these lines, he achieved a state of indifference (typical of the disease!) that made him say that you must love the alternative in its entirety, with both possibilities at once: "If I succeed in sin, it is good, I have pleasure; if I do not succeed, it is good, I have virtue."

All this took place beneath the false calm of early youth. Weren't you attracted to ecstatic, fixating experiences, I asked him? He admits that he shunned them as too tempting, being held back by speculative ecstasy, which he knew he could only achieve after years of "practice" (of course, in this sense, he liked

at first Plato's Parmenides); but the seduction of music would remain with him for some time, seeing in music an immeasurable "exercise" of feeling and settling on Bach, in whom, even beyond *Kunst der Fuge*, he sees the absolute exercise. In a later reflection, all culture seemed to him to be like this: "Don Quixote is an exercise, theatre and Shakespeare in their own way another, Goethe, all philosophising, still an exercise." (I stopped him again, retaining only the perspective of the ahoretic on the phenomenon of culture). From poetry, he retained more the word, in its purity, feeling from a young age that a word can be caressed or pitied like a living being. He lamented from that time on the fate of the word "party" in the Romanian language, a word so refined, fallen into the hands of revelers. (He may be linguistically correct, but in terms of life, a party, in the good sense, represents something full, while the meanings he regrets, as an ascetic, remain suspended above life).

He does not know exactly why he revered mathematics so much. He studied it very little, it is true, he could not bring himself to see it through to the end, for fear of being consumed by something other than speculative thought, but he always retained his reverence for it, with the devotion of a repudiated man, returning to it two or three times in vain in his later years. Perhaps he liked the fact that they represent a noble form of non-knowledge, like speculation, while all other sciences have the "primitive" appetite (the horror of the ahoretic) to know something specific, falling into the mutilation and one-sidedness that are now so severely punished. But, as he insists, he does not fully understand what has always fascinated him about mathematics, giving him their "despair". (As if it were not self-evident that, suffering from his spiritual malady, it was inevitable that he would revere this supreme form of doing nothing, which is mathematics in its purest form).

The fact is that from the age of 25 he voluntarily withdrew from any employment. Apart from a few study trips (non-traveller trips!) and writing, he did nothing. He states this decisively, while acknowledging that at one point he was favoured by circumstances to remain inactive: "For 30 years I did nothing." (This is a characteristic way of trivialising his own life, refusing to *see* any determination in it. I had to insist. Did he really do nothing, in the sense of direct participation? No act of public life? He confessed to one exception, acknowledging that he *did* undertake one act of participation; but he chose to do so at a moment when "there was nothing left to do". He liked the defeated in life, he confessed again. He understood how to support an action when everything was compromised. (Of course, that was what an ahoretic was destined to do, a man capable of going to war after the war was over, and even on the side of the defeated).

But what about the war itself, which fell in his prime? Here he perked up a little. The war was an extraordinary experience for him. He knew beforehand that, despite its horror, war attracted some people. It gave them the opportunity to bring out of their secret box an alter ego that ordinary life left unfulfilled: a man of example who knows how to command, an entrepreneur, even a hero. Then, war attracted them because, in a society where they lived too much under false responsibilities, war placed them in perfect and good irresponsibility, limiting them to a single action. He, on the other hand, was interested in war for something else: as *inaction* (pure and simple!). Not only does it take you out of any sustained activity, in your private and even public life; not only does it throw you into a kind of nothingness, where you just have to survive and live, but in itself, war appeared to him as an immensity of

Inaction: nine-tenths of people do not fight (and he was one of them). Everyone is waiting for a climactic moment, which, when it happens, is beyond anyone's control, and otherwise nothing really happens. "All quiet on the western front" is a title perfectly suited to the state of war (after him). He was delighted to learn from others about the "inaction" on the front lines, as well as the fact that many people did essential reading right on the front. War seems to him to be a great school of *non-event* in every sense, until the final event, which came upon us. (This is the vision of the apocalyptic about the apocalypse).

Then came the "strange interlude," especially when you were in a bad position in the game. But after that, this can be used as an advantage, because it throws you to the sidelines, as they say in sports. Marginal life seemed to him a suitable condition for his active passivity, and he admires everything that happens on the sidelines, from people's experiences in extreme situations to the condition of being an "outsider," which he recorded with satisfaction in the lives of the Transylvanian outsiders on the border of the Carpathians, with their different status and fulfilment than that of the ordinary citizen of the state. In his case, however, as in others, marginality was not recognised and accepted as positive at the time, but suspected and threatened as such. Under the threat of punishment, he lived for years with a secret pleasure (from the pleasures of the heretic!). At that time, he was not burdened by any responsibility, unlike those who were actively involved, and the patient states that, during that strange interlude, he felt that every free day was a gift.

"A little persecution doesn't hurt in life," he says.

Moreover, it is precisely this period of "waiting" (waiting for something to happen to him!) that he talks about as the most important moment in his life.

animated by his life. He lived, according to him, for five years under the fever of "the power of the negative," which he now deepened in Hegel, but especially under Goethe's extraordinary fervour for life. He even claims to have had an unusual contact with Goethe — in the readings he carried out over the years, from the author and the most notable commentators — one of coexistence and direct participation. He feasted and rejoiced with Goethe, he says, got engaged several times and broke off his engagements with him, ran a small estate, then fled to Italy, returned and immersed himself in pseudo-scientific research, then in the world of theatre; debated all the problems of culture with his great friend and with Schiller, grew tired of life and resumed, with his late loves, its insatiability, fraternised with Faust and especially with Mephisto, after which he sketched a farewell to the world and said with Goethe: "Es ist gut". (The feeling of the ahoreetic that he lives and gives his determinations if he sees another living; experience of "life by delegation").

When confinement came, after more than 10 years of *active* waiting (he says), he was almost tired of the intensity of life lived (or rather not lived) and, to a certain extent, he wanted some time for reflection, to regenerate himself. If he had not had the bitter experience that everything we do and do not do, even our isolation, has a *social* character and affects others in some way, making them pay for us this entry into one of the few great solitudes of modern man, which is seclusion, it would have seemed delightful to him, since things were happening at a time when everything was reduced to an "exercise" and a demonstration, to calm spirits and definitively set things on the path they had taken. Here, within four walls, with one, twenty people, or alone, one could regain a little spiritual vigour. Here, above all, you can regain the awareness that you are

a human *subject*, while the outside world had transformed you, even or especially with its good situations, into a true object of its own. Naturally, your subjectivity is very fragile, and only in such circumstances do you see your insignificance and worthlessness as a human being or spirit, with a memory that throws all its impure alluvium over the threshold of consciousness, with an imagination that quickly goes into a tailspin, and with a mind that knows how to dominate neither the processes of consciousness nor the problems you pose to yourself. Nevertheless, small as you are — *ein kleiner Mann ist auch ein Mann*, he quotes Goethe — you now become a true subject and begin to see how others outside your walls, the doctor as well as the cook, or the watchman with countless eyes fixed on you, are themselves a kind of human objects, who serve and preserve you, and ultimately become a kind of ally.

After all, if you know how to position yourself well in life (that is, to retreat well, according to Ahoretic), everyone and everything becomes your ally, as a little boy once told him that "to give you the rest" means, the child believed, that you don't have enough, and the other gives you the rest. Only then did he feel the truth of her words, which are valid for the entire culture, where you do not know enough and the knowledge of the world gives you the rest, but it is also valid for an ideal society, where no one has enough, but good governance and brotherhood among people ensure that they are given the rest. Even in conditions of enmity, he claims, if things do not lead to that inhuman solution of "contradiction" which is cancellation

— a primitive condition, whose barbarity is preserved in culture solely by modern logic, which states that A and non-A simply cancel each other out — then one of the parties integrates, rather than destroys, the other. And since "you never know who gives and who receives," you never know who integrates the other and who is integrated,

as in Hegel's chapter on the slave and the master. It is never known who comes with his coin and who gives the change. (The idyllic view of the ascetic on adversity and the ugliness of the world).

When he emerged from this experience, it seemed to him that he did not have enough and that everyone outside was coming to give him the rest. He then remembered a saying by Talleyrand, which he changed to suit his own thinking: "Qui n'a pas vecu *apres* la revolution n'a pas connu la douceur de vivre" (Those who did not live after the revolution did not know the sweetness of life). Everything seemed incredibly good and fruitful to him, in line with his hopes and a little above them. The technical and scientific revolution had taken place in the world, without yet revealing its threats. It brought miraculous promises, both for society and for the individual: control, now naturally organised rather than tyrannical, over man's economic restlessness, a happy and finally secure rationalisation of society, a kind of programming of it, with forecasts that would reduce the virulence and imbalance of the "new", even programming of the individual, starting with forms of eugenics and ending with endowing him with increased spiritual capacities, if only with a better memory; a slow homogenisation, which would not suppress diversity but blunt its sharpness; the bearable spectacle of the world, finally — as in ancient theatre, where the spectator knew the myth behind the tragedy in advance and came only to see *how* it was dramatised — that is, of a world in which there is no longer any need to travel because you are everywhere in it. (The patient thus renders the image of the world to come in the mind of an ahoretic, with its scent of optimism).

Years had passed in which he had done nothing, and now he had grown old. But at this very moment there was something to be done! (Note what follows, for it is highly characteristic of the mentality of the ahoretic). After so much non-travelling, he could say that he had arrived.

Somewhere. After all, you wait your whole life for something miraculous to happen to you, and nothing happens. But a stray note by Creangă — "it seems that it has already come, since it has not come" — seemed terribly appropriate to him for the end of people's lives, and only a few (the wise) are able to appreciate such things. Life is a preparation for ageing, he says. He considers one of humanity's great regrettable and vain sayings to be that "life is a preparation for death", a saying unfortunately invoked by people of the stature of Socrates, Pascal, or to a certain extent Heidegger. But it is absurd, unless you think, like Plato or Orpheus, that you will "return" from death to life. Preparation for a state without content and without horizon? For a threshold at best? For nothingness, at worst? Life is instead a preparation for the moment when, finally, man can make something *of himself* and can truly be in action: for ageing.

(Any further commentary is superfluous: the facts speak for themselves. At most, one can emphasise that what is at stake is the revenge of old age on life, through the transformation of its negativity into the positivity of life).

If life is not a *crescendo*, then it remains a mere matter of biology. How splendid is ageing — not old age itself, if it must mean decrepitude —, with that clock when the secondary impulses of life fade away, one by one, and when the essence of your being remains; when you see that everything has tended towards this point of accumulation of your life, in which your entire life condenses and precipitates. You have now emerged from under the tutelage of the species, of society, as well as of your vain endeavours or ambitions, and you are finally a human being, a free one, a human subject, and not a manipulated being.

by everyone else. You no longer live under vain hopes — that something will happen, that the world will turn 180°, that some kind of investment or happiness will come your way — you no longer live under "ce sale espoir" as a French writer once said. You can no longer wait, postpone, hope for anything. But that being the case, it is the only age when you no longer live *in suspense*.

Every person is in a state of suspense — and to a certain extent, this is a good thing, so as not to make immature assertions about oneself. But how can we, in our younger years, remain in suspense, open and prepared, without becoming mutilated beings? All early wisdom is here, while late wisdom, on the contrary, represents the liberation of your creative forces. Those who age fully — the few, but essential to the world — must be a kind of "supernova" of humanity: to shine brightly, then die in an explosion.

After all, all active people work for such people, to support them. And how, *a third* of humanity

— for there will soon be so many who have entered the fairy tale of ageing — the third most learned by years, the most tested and enlightened by life, to represent the *decrepit* part of humanity? But it is an offence to man, to the spirit, to the great creator, or to nature. Should nothing grow in us throughout our lives, and should human growth be limited to teeth, cells, and the skeleton? But *now*, finally, everything that has accumulated over the years can truly bear fruit. If it is true that, in terms of scientific creation, the first part of life can be more fruitful, because you need an acuity, an attention and an energy of spirit that are as close to animality as they are to spirit (how much good animality does a mathematician or physicist need to make their discoveries?), in

In exchange for the world of values and humanistic culture, the second part of life is the truly creative one. Not only for men but also for women, the second part of life, with its liberation from nature, creates great opportunities for the spirit. What would humanity be without its wisdom? What is it today without this wisdom? For perhaps that is why there is so much uncertainty in today's achievements, because humanity has not had enough opportunity in the past to age well. People died too young.

Something unexpected is being offered to humanity, a maturation through the years that will give the world *meaning*, not just knowledge, as the world has given too young until now; or that will give meaning to this very knowledge, which has come with its enchantment but also with its perhaps premature explosion over a world that is still young. We are at a time when all explosions can occur; but if we know how to find a happy implosion in ageing, man and spirit will rejoice in the world.

After presenting the concept, both in general terms and, exceptionally, in relation to an individual case, its summary description is simple: it is a disease born of spiritual or intellectual *rapture*, leading to a sudden *enlightenment* or lucidity of consciousness, which causes the subject to forbid participation, *to dominate their determinations*, to see the positive in *non-action* and the negative, accepting *defeat*, assimilating it and entering into *indifference*, loving everything that detaches itself from the world as such, from *asceticism* and *poetry* to *mathematics* and the spectacle *of the technical-scientific revolution*, placing life and history under the order *of reason*, which abolishes *the new* and proclaims the fruitfulness *of non-travel*. Aho-retia, as a refusal of determinations, finds its measure in the hour *of senectus*, when none of the blind determinations of the world can sustain the spirit anymore.

Atodetia

Plato suffered from todetitis when he strove to find a specific city—that is, an individual reality—to which he could apply his general idea of the state. On the other hand, he would have suffered from atodetitis (causing others to suffer as well) if he had actually applied his idea of the state. For in this, if it had been implemented, individual reality, which was now the simple citizen, would have been disregarded (according to *The Republic*, every young person would have belonged to everyone, not to his family, and no one would have had the right to leave the city until the age of 50), so that any convinced supporter of that conception would have had to reject *one* of the terms of being, the individual, believing that only in this way could he achieve, in the ideal city, the being of history.

With todetita, described above, man tended to achieve the individual, without always succeeding; with atodetia, on the other hand (from the same Greek "tode ti" = this particular thing), man consciously rejects it. The latter represents, like aohoretia, a disease of *lucidity*. Lucidity is all the more at stake in her case, as she clearly invokes knowledge, however low and rudimentary it may be. That is why atodetia comes to the fore at the hour of maturity

of peoples and individuals (which may be very early, historically), taking the form of cultivation, modelling, nuance, ceremony, culture and, ultimately, commentary. Entire peoples, like individuals, could be a simple commentary on a religion, an ethic, or simply an "idea."

On a higher level, what would life be without commentary? On the other hand — for some peoples in the past and perhaps even today — what would social life be without ceremony? And indeed, what would society in general be without the controlled mastery of individual realities? And all this takes place under the sign of a knowledge that may or may not take the individual into account, but which can become so consistent with itself that it rejects the individual. Omniscience.

The knowledge we are talking about does not take the classical form of culture from the very beginning, but rather that of cultivating man through the "sacred" and religiosity. In this respect, the late maturity of peoples and individuals appears early in history, in the form of knowledge, or beliefs of all kinds, organised into practices, if not yet institutionalised. While most believers submit to ceremony, a few at the forefront *know*, or believe they truly know, so that, if in ahoretism, with the refusal of the determined, the ascetic or the ecstatic was characteristic, in atodetism, on the other hand, the refusal of only the individual is characteristic of the priest (the holder of truths). Even in our perfectly secular civilisation, the man of culture exercises, or should exercise, a sacerdoțiu, just as in the typical atodetia of China of old (in contrast to the typical ahoretia of India), the knower of order and ceremony was to maintain a priestly character.

Under such endemic all-encompassing ignorance, peoples lived until the affirmation of *the person*, that is, of the individual in the version

hero (and perhaps philosopher/sophist) of ancient Greece, and later in the version of the Christian person and finally of the free person in modern European culture. Most tribes have accepted history as one of the boundaries that give them a general (sometimes only tribal) meaning. Such a general meaning is, as I suggested, the one given, at a higher level, by the great religions. With the sacrifice of the individual, entire human groups found themselves in the service of a religious idea, bringing new nuances and versions to it, rather than fulfilling their human examples through it. Thus, the Islamic idea is nuanced in the various versions of the Arab world, then passing into the version of the Ottoman tribes, where it proved too broad and sterile fanaticism. In turn, even Christianity, in which the idea of the human person and their salvation as a person nevertheless appeared, gave itself its well-known massive limitations (Greek East, Latin West), only to be nuanced, through the Protestant idea, into countless sects, some of which had a real capacity for historical affirmation. And in Asia, the Buddhist idea secured the adherence of several ethnic communities, defining and redefining itself through them. How could there not be historians who see the past world from the perspective of a few "ideas" (as Spengler, the historian par excellence, does, who no longer sees the historical individual but the analogical, or sees the individual only at the level of eight great cultures), if past religions offer such a spectacle in which the actual hero is the general?

But a more subtle historical experience, also marked by omniscience, is lived by communities that have risen to the level of refined culture. Perhaps the Moors were, at one point, in such a situation. In the more distant past, Egypt and China had effectively *stagnated* in the refinement and nuance of a content of general meanings.

already achieved. Today, the same China where the guiding principle prevails, beyond the individual, presents a splendid example of the positive conversion of the phenomenon of all-knowingness, under which it had stagnated for too long. Even at this moment in the 20th century, France itself, the same France that has gone through the positive experiences of several spiritual movements, is exemplarily experimenting with the nuancing, through spirit and intelligence, of European ideas created or at least synthesised by it, at the risk of historical stagnation (unlike the atodetia now active, of China), of the kind that appears in any overly refined society, a risk that doubles, in the case of France, that of cosmopolitanisation. Perhaps, in the great Western country, the beautiful hour of historical twilight has come, when all general meanings are subtly delimited, until their own disappearance. But if it is said that in a culture such as the French one, the individual is not rejected — as in Asian worlds — but on the contrary, affirmed to the extreme, we will respond that the conscious exacerbation of the individual (the affirmation of each person with all freedoms, to the point of the vanity of any affirmation and histrionics: everyone does "trois petits tours et puis s'en vont") is equivalent to its conscious rejection. There is another form of atodetia there. When it matters so much, the individual no longer matters. One might think, based on the above, that atodetia would only appear on a historical scale, namely through the annihilation of the individual in the interest of the community and the state. Ultimately, every state and every regime prefers itself to the individual, ending up being atodetia itself, that is, the rejection of the individual. (Hence today's Western protest by so many young and old against the often well-camouflaged oppression of state forms, but hence also the profound Marxist idea of the final disappearance of the state.)

However, atodity does not appear only in the supra-individual common

This spiritual illness may be, even more than the others, one of the peoples (since it rejects the individual), but certainly, as it represents a constitutional illness of man in terms of his being and its precariousness, it must also return to man as an individual being.

However, because it is an illness that springs primarily from knowledge (and its possible excesses), it appears in the individual especially at the level of culture. For by favouring knowledge — which is broadly speaking that of the general, as we must admit with Aristotle — culture ends up being a familiarisation with the general (laws, theories, ideas) of all kinds, to such an extent that it can lead not only to the temporary forgetting of the individual and the need to-rediscover it, as in *to detrita*, but often, on the contrary, to a deliberate abandonment of everything that is individual, in the belief that only the general and the nuances brought about by determinations are of interest to knowledge and even reality. Culture leads to a "musical feeling of existence," as has sometimes been said, and to a suspension, again musical (from "muses," after all, the goddesses of all culture), over all individual realities.

Just as *acatholia* will be a disease of civilisation, the *atodetia* we now see is one of culture. If in society it takes on oppressive and even tyrannical forms, in humans, and particularly in cultured humans, it will perhaps be the most beautiful and superior creative disease of the spirit, proving — if proof were needed — that what we are forced to call "diseases" are, in the order of the spirit, true sources of life for it. Few human senses can be nobler than the pursuit of the general, and if in other diseases the general is brought into play indirectly,

Now he is known and contemplated for himself, cultivated with a love that extends to an interest in everything that may happen to him. For even the general has passions, in his pure becoming. It is enough to deliberately reject any contamination of him with the individual in order to see it.

Of course, knowledge can turn back on life (through technology in particular, in European culture, through human wisdom, in Eastern culture), but its full joy is to remain suspended. There is a pure love — at its end an "amor dei intellectualis", as Spinoza wanted — which can take the humblest forms, without ceasing to be subjugating in the name of the general. It is worth living life to see how Goethe lived, said one of his English biographers, so it is worth rejecting your individuality under the spell of someone else's general. It is worth living to record the boundaries, nuances and vicissitudes of general meanings, whether it is an archetypal nature ("on dit Goethe comme on dit Orphee", said Valery), or the great instances of culture, society, thought, transfigured nature or the gods.

What has truth itself become in culture? Not something that reflects individual reality, but — as we see today in the culture of the highly refined — something that demands to be cultivated: for its own sake. And thus cultivated, truth ceases to be the end of the road and the certainty achieved. It is precisely its constant pretence that delights us through culture. Lessing's statement that between truth and the search for it he would choose the search seems to us today to be rigidly guilty (*either search or truth*) and even a little ridiculous in its solemnity. It is not the search *and* the truth that are at stake, but the truth itself that is sought further, delimited and better determined all the time, integrating the old truths, which it places in the minority. It has come to pass, at the hour

this superior culture we live in, to a kind of education of truths (as has been said of the education of nature). The world of generalities, which seemed to be one of stable truths, has been transformed for contemporary human reason into a fascinating ideal world, a laboratory world, in which the scientist not only enjoys the exception that proves the rule, but also desires the exception that *invalidates* the rule, striving to disprove his laws in order to expand them. A simple insect appearing in a spaceship would be an endless source of enrichment for the known laws of life. But the insect as such, with its poor individual reality, would not be of interest.

Just as humans nuance and revise truths, reality can also be seen as bringing into play regularities, patterns, and laws that are constantly being specified; but in doing so, they adapt and change, or at least nuance and redefine themselves. The evolution of species, for example, takes place through their education and transformation, thus through the delimitation of the general into new modalities, which are interesting in themselves, not through the individual specimens they would obtain. With or beyond Darwin, evolutionism offers reason an opportunity for pure delight insofar as not only life situations can be infinite, but also species (freed from the initial rigidity of being given exactly as they are by the creator) do not remain at the rigidity of a dead end, but evolve further themselves, being practically infinite. Culture brings this primacy of the possible over the real, making reason see — not just assume, as in Leibniz's conception of possible worlds — the richness with which the real is laden. Here we can clearly distinguish between the possible and possibility, possibilities and potentialities. For only the individual has possibilities, which now no longer matter; in the foreground

The general's possibilities remain.

Many things happen to general beings, however unchanged they may seem to the ordinary eye, at least within a limited period of time. Knowledge does not tend to elevate only to law, but it can also be a recognition of the vicissitudes of law, or its verification, up to that extreme situation Hegel was talking about when he said that a general nature (the divine, in his example) only really proves to be true when it can be confirmed by everything that can disprove it (by incarnating in a historical man, he said, at the most miserable moment in the history of that people).

It is now easy to reveal that this spiritual delight, with its complete renunciation of the individual and focus solely on the vicissitudes of the general, occurs particularly in the consciousness of those who philosophise. We have cited the case of Spinoza, with his unique substance, in the margins of which there is room only for intellectual love, but we can cite Kant's case with more suggestive justifications. Athetic in life, that is, devoid of determinations, Kant is all-encompassing in philosophy, at the highest and most creative level. He refuses — unlike a later Hegel, who will constantly seek to capture the historical individual — any recourse to individual realities (even to examples, as has been noted), invoking only the general and its determinations within reality. With his "Critiques," Kant provides a system of philosophy with an emphasis on *phenomena*, that is, on determinations, both of the external world and of man. He employs one of the most brilliant modes of philosophising, in which — in contrast to the banal generalisation of philosophical common sense — the general alone is what gives itself determinations and delimits itself.

Indeed, criticism reduces the individual to the matter and diversity offered by the thing itself, which is unknown; therefore, the individual is decisively rejected.

But the general from which criticism departs is no longer, as in Spinoza, a single, tyrannical substance, but a suggestive general *order*, that of a priori forms. With

only 14 forms, two of sensibility (time and space) and 12 of intellect, the categories, Kant rediscovers, describes and even justifies the entire phenomenality of the world. It is an admirable genetic code that thought now proposes in order to systematically understand all physical and human determinations, or, as Kant says with a well-known but often banally understood phrase, the determinations of "the starry sky above me and the moral world within me." With this general

who gives his certain determinations, Kant offered for a long time the style of philosophy itself, and the fact that his doctrine made Hegel possible, so that he in turn favoured the vision of materialist dialectics, speaks for itself. But Kant ultimately lacked the individual. Kierkegaard's opposition to Hegel on the subject of the absence or deformation of the individual should rather be directed at Kant, whose omniscience is categorical. Anyone who is fascinated by Kant for a moment eventually realises that they have no access to concrete reality, particularly human reality ("ethical formalism" has been said of Kant's doctrine), nor to human history.

The philosopher himself realised that even physical reality eluded him, trying in vain, in the pages of that vast "Opus postumum" — now published in its entirety but read by almost no one — to make the transition from the general and principles to the real. Dominant for decades, and even revived after the Hegelian interlude between 1830 and 1860, criticism was abandoned at the beginning of the 20th century, on the one hand in the name of a more physical reality

individualised (geometric spaces *other* than Euclidean, physics other than Newton's, one of individual fields in the broad sense), on the other hand in the name of an individualism that was dominant and even strident in the second half of the 19th century, continuing until 1914. The loss (or conscious rejection of the individual) in criticism was one of the reasons that could re-actualise Goethe in the philosophy of culture, then empiricism, defeated however by Kant, as it later led, in the homeland of empiricism, to that Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy, based on a nominalism that authentic philosophical thinking has always repudiated. Characteristically, through Kant, the all-knowing is characterised by the fact that it leads the mind towards *critical* and dissociative thinking, while the all-seeing led to ecstatic and at the same time mathematical thinking, as we have shown. The mind that rejects the individual no longer seeks the law (Kant, unlike Bacon, Descartes or Leibniz, does not dream of or propose new sciences) but only *the exercise* of the law, in the knowledge of nature and man. In a sense, it is now a question of the primacy of knowledge over achievement (only Marxism retains the primacy of achievement), but not of a knowledge that finds the laws of nature, but rather one that institutes them, or collaborates critically in their institution. In any case, it is a knowledge belonging to late maturity — just as Hegel likened philosophy to the owl's vision at dusk — a maturity that would seem to characterise the philosophical spirit, but which represents, as we shall soon see, a more broadly human level.

Indeed, even minds unaccustomed to philosophy and devoted to the concrete or the individual, such as Goethe, or minds caught up in Christian fervour, such as Augustine, may, at some point in their lives, be tempted by the omniscience of late maturity. In such a case, the mind, in its struggle to overcome the limitations of the finite, may be tempted to abandon the finite and the finite, and to embrace the infinite and the infinite.

Without a clock, man no longer wants to be a doer; the general no longer calls on him for achievement, but for knowledge as if it were disinterested. He seeks to see all kinds of possible delimitations and nuances of the general, just as Augustine nuances and deepens, redefining his Christian message, up to those strange final "Retractions," in which the Christian author revises, at the end of his life, in the name of the Christian dogmas obtained by the church, his own doctrine, that is, he amends himself in the name of the general, and, in a sense, crushes his own individuality. It is an age of culture that people of superior intellect sometimes reach, as Goethe did, modestly at first, around the age of 50, learning from the pharmacist Bucholz in his small town of Weimar as much as he needed to know about the natural sciences, in order to then suggest their renewal (with the theme

"the original phenomenon", for example, which was nothing more than a generality, an "idea", as Schiller called it) or preferring to give scientific lectures to the ladies of the court, instead of being prime minister of the duchy again. How can one still desire pure and simple action in these years of lucidity, when one has seen all the crookedness of the world, as well as one's own? General meanings have not found their creators in you, nor among those you would have liked to make happy. Instead, they contain the richness of possibility, which only thought can grasp and culture can render. One cannot truly live without commentary on life and reality. If it is true that it is facts that interest you most in your mature years and not ideas themselves, as Schiller, Goethe's idealist, the realist, confessed, it is perhaps precisely because at the age of lucidity you are able to read *more theories* into raw facts, seeing in each fact a modulation of the general.

In this age of cultural awareness, you are no longer concerned with sub-

nouns and verbs, as well as adverbs. It could be said — and we will show below — that in the classical French century, the 17th century, it was not the subject and the heroes that were of interest, nor the action, but rather the modality, or the adverb. The distinguished, nobly heroic and psychologically varied behaviour of the tragic hero was of far greater interest at that time than the heroes and deeds, which were borrowed unashamedly by French tragedy from ancient tragedy and myths. (Even in our own time, Giraudoux seemed at one point to be a conqueror for the simple subtle commentary he made on ancient themes.) Now commentary is at the forefront, and maturity consists in modulating borrowed creation with wise subtlety, not in creating new myths.

In times of maturity (slightly weary), the creator of any plan feels the need to do justice to the general, the given and the recognised, cleansing it specifically of any connection with the individual. The latter can be completely forgotten, as happens in the *literary* genre, still not accepted didactically but attested in fact, which we are tempted, with the following justifications, to call "musical". The general is present in the form of an idea, an affective disposition, or an intellectual vision, and its determinations, limitations, and nuances are free. To create in this hypostasis means to explore all the facets of general meanings, being able to vary a theme endlessly. (Perhaps this is not the case in ancient tragedy, where, although the themes were limited, something creative and, in any case, a lively sense of relevance and direct participation by the audience, who were insiders in the respective situations, meant that the act of culture was not one of empty, almost Alexandrian culture, as it is today). Not only music, therefore, but also literature and even painting can remain in the precariousness of the determinations of a genre-

In general, philosophical creation is often reduced to the organised unfolding of the boundaries of a general idea, as is the case in any form of *baroque* or even in its classical form, where no individual reality usually comes to fix it.

We have illustrated with Tolstoy the extreme aspect of omniscience in literature: the total rejection of the hero and the individual. In fact, we ultimately had to invoke his *theories* and his principle of omniscience (the act of lucidity that leads him to reduce even Napoleon to a "differential"), rather than the real situations in *War and Peace*, where several heroes, both main and secondary, manage to achieve individual reality through the artistic genius of the author, who nevertheless wanted to crush them all. The best illustration, however, is not to be found in an author, and one who contradicts his theoretical message through his genius, but in an entire cultural orientation which, with the somewhat sterile refinement of its maturity, emphasises modality and adverbs, authorising an enchanting endless modulation of the general through the particular. For determinations, which could lead, when they belonged to the individual, to a bad infinity (yet another manifestation and yet another), unfold in a good infinity, a controlled one, when they are manifestations of the general. They now come to express its different faces, its polyvalence; and just as you never tire of looking at beauty in its various versions, so everywhere in the world of values and culture, therefore within the manifestations of the spirit, a good infinity can appear, since the spirit can add itself to itself as much as it wants, allowing, unlike the realities of the lower domains, endless accumulations. There is no excess of truth, beauty or goodness.

Along these lines of superior culture and free nationhood, under the sure control of the general (sometimes known, sometimes unknown, as happens in social life), there is not only the theme of necessity, which is perhaps deeply linked to the general, but also that of *freedom*, which seems linked to the individual, without ultimately being so. Necessity is usually misunderstood because of the rigid oppositions in which it is placed. (In general, dualisms, necessary for teaching purposes, falsify spiritual life, which in fact does not remain frozen in oppositions and dualisms). Necessity has been opposed to possibility, as it has been more insistently opposed to contingency, but in a sense it could also be opposed to reality (as mere existence in fact, not in law, as necessity would suggest) and in any case it has been opposed to impossibility. However, nothing better illustrates its uncertain status than the inability to define it by any of its contradictions. In fact, none of the above oppositions of necessity are truly contradictory (necessity encompasses possibility, as has been said, and the same is true of the others); instead, another modality, not usually included in the logical table of modalities, will have a contradictory meaning, without this time being a rigid one: freedom.

Freedom is not usually talked about as a means "logic" (only necessity, possibility, contingency and reality are mentioned), for the simple reason that the term freedom seems to have been hijacked by its meaning as a human value. But freedom also belongs to things, in a sense, not only to humans; there are degrees of freedom in things — it could be said, albeit timidly — and there is a margin in the exercise of generalities that can only be called freedom. For freedom does not belong to the individual and the individual, nor even to determinations as such. The so-called freedom of the individual to give himself any determination

Nations do not represent true freedom, but rather an empty possibility; and the freedom of determinations not to be subsumed under a general (freedoms, in the plural) deserves even less the name of freedom, as it is merely the chaos of pure diversity. Freedom belongs to the general and consists of the boundaries that it can give itself or that can be given to it. Only when you have settled into the general are you or can you be free.

The fact that freedom belongs to the general can bring us back to man. Since Hegel, it has been rightly said that man only acquires his freedom as a "understood necessity". But what can this mean, if not that only when he knows the general — and not as a mere individual exercising his determinations in an anarchic manner — only then does he become truly free? And what does it mean to be free *under* necessity, under the law and not outside it, except that the law itself can be modelled and that the general does not represent something rigid, in any case unchangeable, monolithic, fixed, as in the classical mode of necessity, but is one that is susceptible to softening and acquiring various determinations?

Freedom means the inflection of the general, and in humans it is *the consciousness* of its inflection, once the general has been attained. The usual necessity made the general a seal placed on determinations, and the seal could logically be transferred from one determination to another (as in the syllogism of modality where necessity passes from premise to conclusion, in Aristotle's examples). From a logical point of view, however, freedom constitutes a *field* of determinations.

; and perhaps only a theory of logical fields, rather than logical forms, as is customary, at least in classical logic, would be able to bring into play the modality of freedom, which logicians have not needed to invoke until now because their general was frozen, like Linnaeus' species.

However, freedom brings certain risks, perhaps for nature, and certainly for humans. The boundaries of the general can collide with each other; the freedom of one conscience can conflict with that of another, and the respective culture, as a theatre of these freedoms that have the security of the general but no longer have that of fixing the general in an individual situation, can be a theatre in the true sense, a spectacle, a debate. The prodigal son's brother knows full well that he is doing the right thing in the name of the general (the family spirit) that he has respected and within which he has given himself all kinds of true freedoms, not illusory ones like the prodigal son. But their father takes the liberty of giving another interpretation to the same general, the family spirit, bringing forgiveness to the son instead of punishment, even celebrating the son by slaughtering the fat calf. And then the brother withdraws and becomes hardened, disappointed by his father's interpretation of the law. Perhaps only now will the son, having returned home and re-entered the order of the law, know how to give himself a higher form of freedom. Who knows if he will not become an artist, a poet or at least a memoirist, with grace and freedom, now invoking and understanding — better than the other, whose life experience had been limited to that law — the unexpected boundaries and nuances it can take on. Perhaps, then, it is only the son, once he returns, who becomes a contemplator and commentator, filled with a good all-knowingness.

Let us imagine that the prodigal son became a biologist and, at some point, outlined, just like Jacques Monod today, a kind of philosophy of biology. He would not write a work such as *Chance and Necessity*, for he knows of many more chances and many more necessities, as well as the different faces of the general. Speaking of Life, he would take into account the fact that this Life with a capital letter is also firmly defined, not being a mere chance transformation.

mat in necessity, as our contemporary said. Ultimately, beyond the transition to another species in the course of their evolution, one can imagine, if not actually see, how a single species modulates and practises variations on the same theme. If the different variants of a species seem to have satisfactory explanations through the *external* conditions to which the species has been subjected, or through who knows what evolutionary circumstances, one can also imagine a margin of variation in the biological general itself, one that expresses its *internal* tension and degree of freedom, even when it does not break the mould to transition into another general. After all, since we have moved away from the fixity of species, it is natural to move away from the fixity *of a single* species as well. In this sense, we imagine that the study of nature could be carried out (as it has sometimes been) on units larger than individual specimens, some of which we today call "ecological," but which are no longer necessarily given species, but rather ecological or otherwise modulated species.

This time, however, it is precisely the individual that is missing (not the general, i.e. Life, as in Monod and others), causing chance to bear upon him. And it is clear that chance would no longer express, as in the first case, a banal happy coincidence of external circumstances, but would betray an internal aptitude of the general to give itself those variations that may impose themselves within reality. Such an "internal" chance would be one open to individualisation. In any case, it is not only the combination of circumstances that can be called chance (or necessity), as trivial thinking would have it; chance is also found in *the combination of tendencies* of precedents and the intimacy of things.

However, if the prodigal son, having returned and rejoined the general order, did not pursue the philosophy of biology or science in general, but rather the philosophy of

pure and simple philosophy, or humanistic culture with a philosophical horizon, perhaps even art, but one that is self-aware and laden with reflection, as art is today, then it would happen to lose itself in the modulations and vicissitudes of the general until the total rejection of any individual. Left alone to contemplate, detached from all that is real, the general could become increasingly rarefied, becoming completely "abstract" and causing a certain art to have the courage to call itself abstract. The general would then lose, in the refinement of cultured thought, any modelling capacity, having, with the individual realities beneath him, not the living relationship of intimate choice to its embodiment (as in the generously understood Platonic Idea) but the relationship of the external law to its individual exemplar, one that is perfectly repeatable and indifferent as such, just as in mathematics. The individual has fallen back into statistics.

There is no doubt that such a deliberate disregard, through culture and lucidity, of the individual can lead to a new form of nothingness (for nothingness, as a feeling of emptiness, comes in many forms, six forms, we might say, just as there are many kinds of chance and necessity). This time it would be a nothingness of knowledge and culture, therefore truly one of man. Perhaps things also have the subtlety to give their general states certain nuances and delimitations that are not objectified in anything, simple dispositions, intentions and suggestions for realisation, which retreat into their ether. But man certainly possesses this subtlety, which has led him to culture. He started from the need for knowledge, on the one hand, and contemplation, on the other, both of which are fruitful when they turn to human reality and enhance his being, placing him better in the world. A good primacy of the possible over the real then finds its place in the human world, enriching it with all its resources.

of the possible of *the real*; things fall into their general order, finding their isotopes and natural variants. — But in place of a possible of the real, sometimes the empty possible creeps in, or even worse, the "impossible possible," as the medievalists said, which is doomed to remain a possibility and never become reality in any way or at any time. And *all* the delimitations of the general, even the latter, can tempt knowledge and contemplation, causing both to leave behind the individual's demand — here as human reality — to fix in a real situation, or at least to objectify artistically, the extraordinary vicissitudes of the general. Cultural fatigue, that The "taedium" that the ancients had sensed expresses very little of the bitter experience of the man of culture at that moment; what he experiences, in this demonia of determinations and delimitations without anchorage in the individual, is *the nothingness* of culture, as some Westerners feel today. It is a somewhat white nothingness, we might say; not black, but white. It may remind you of the astonishing page about white and its terror in Melville's novel *Moby Dick*, with the white whale, which spoke of "this huge white shroud that envelops all things". He adds: "Is it because white is less a colour than an absence of colour, being at the same time the mixture of all colours?"

Perhaps every spiritual illness has a colour characteristic of it. Atodetia, in any case, has white. Our culture has become like a blank page. When we think of the laws we have come to know everywhere, with their never-hoped-for richness (who would have expected us to know the depths of the Universe? and even of man, with his unconscious and subconscious?), it may occur to us that everything has become like Newton's disc, with infinitely more colours than the seven. And yet,

When we spin the disc to get a sense of the whole, we find ourselves in the same situation as with Newton's disc: everything becomes white again.

From the perspective of the past, what is happening today would be catastrophic: the more we explore and discover, the more our ignorance grows, rather than diminishes. What have we gained in terms of knowledge and action? Only the fact that we have opened up new horizons of knowledge and action. — Then an ancient sceptic might feel vindicated by everything that is happening to us with the atom, the cell, life, the anthropology or psychology of man, languages, the spirit, history. But no one will fight him this time.

It is obvious to us, on the contrary, that all the complications that arise, in our knowledge and even in our actions, have a largely beneficial effect; that we hope to create new complications and impasses, with other perspectives of knowledge, just as physics and technology today, which are still in the early stages of understanding and manipulating the atom and its particles, nevertheless hope to make use of neutrinos, which are lighter and perhaps more illuminating for the rest than electrons. And who can still be sceptical about the inexplicable universe of the cell, with its approximately 100,000 substances and its nucleic acids — or the inexplicable human being, seemingly more enigmatic than ever? For it is true that scientific culture on the one hand and humanistic culture on the other have *not* kept their promise of definitive answers. But they have done something more significant than that: they have shown how little *an inventory of definitive answers* would have meant.

Is there anything negative about this? Is there anything positive in the result that modern man's omniscience has led to, in the guise of culture? What is positive is that culture has been freed from its responsibility towards the individual (freed in the past from politics, from application, from responsibility in

immediately, even human modelling) has provided extraordinary opportunities for investigation, which could indirectly lead to surprising, albeit neurotic, reflections on reality. On the negative side, however, beyond the risks to humans, society and even Earth that these unexpected deviations from reality bring, is the fact that the accumulation of knowledge, even if empty, has not been accompanied by an accumulation of *meaning*. Culture gives rise to broad general orientations, ideas, techniques of knowledge and even spiritual techniques, which, in their generality, give rise to all kinds of determinations, are modulated and refined as much as possible, but may say nothing or leave room for nothing to be said. Through knowledge, scientific or artistic mastery, man rises to them, captures them and even increases the boundaries within culture, without being able to remove them from their vague generality. There are beneficial general meanings, their adaptation to reality is prepared by all the pedagogies of the world, but culture may very well remain, and too often does remain, effectively suspended above individual consciousnesses, being repeated with each generation, like harvests, sometimes better, sometimes worse. From the taming of human animality to his proper metaphysical place in the world, through his moral education and openness to an expanded self — *how much* of all this does culture achieve, which has nevertheless become man's older sister of nature?

After several centuries of culture and its techniques prevailing over natural man and natural society (which was balanced by a simple system of beliefs at its core, as was the case until the dawn of the modern world), the outcome could be worrying, and at times could even give rise to a tragic sense of culture. And if this thought still seems too theoretical or too brief, then we will put forward the subtle but obvious case of *music* in modern culture, of

that art which, in its simplicity, had nevertheless fully educated the ancients, while with its polyphonic richness and refinement it allowed even the people who had cultivated it most and best to fall back into a state of cruel nature. At least with music, the tragedy of generals, however varied, of being able to remain like a spirit floating above the waters and being felt by a cultural consciousness, in their noble desertion, gives today's man a warning about what is beneficial and what could be harmful in the spiritual disease of omniscience.

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Commenting on the music of the psalms, a medieval scholar said, "The One above does not love music for its own sake. He has no need of song, just as He has no need of sacrifices; if He accepts song... it is out of mercy for human weakness." (Combarieu, vol. I, p. 196).

It is good — regardless of religious meanings — for musicians and music lovers to sometimes think about a saying like this and wonder if somewhere, especially in modern music, traces of human weakness can be seen. The extraordinary mastery achieved by music, together with all its magic, cannot hide a certain precariousness, but rather brings it into even more disturbing relief. An art of beauty in motion — as has been said — alongside poetry and dance, while architecture and the visual arts are arts of motionless beauty, it conjures up before us beauties that it then withdraws into the unknown and the unspeakable. It does not even have, like poetry, a verbal meaning that can be preserved as meaning in thought. It brings with it a noble generality, but one of states of the soul, not of states of mind; and, after modulating it endlessly, it resolves itself into the unfulfillment of generality itself, without being able to anchor itself anywhere. It lacks condensation around something individual. It is a splendid embodiment of the ontological precariousness characteristic of culture.

and refined humanity. It has general, ineffable determinations, but it has no individuality.

Once upon a time, although poor in means, music had a better connection with reality. When it was only melodic and monodic, music had magical powers, healed people, uplifted them or made others believe that it could build walls, tame beasts, souls and even gods. Since it became polyphonic, it has focused on itself, producing extraordinary structures and constructions, but it no longer moves anyone. Our music, "which has its origins in a brilliant creation of the Middle Ages, counterpoint" (Combarieu, p. 259) and which no longer makes it simple ornamental constructions or "sound architectures", as in the beginning, but has become a true musical discourse, it still has something of Saint Francis's pointless sermons to birds and beasts. It conveys something, but it is not clear what; it seems to shape souls, but it is not clear how or whether for the better, and, accompanying the dance further — and now behind this dance of images that is the cinematic spectacle — it nevertheless rejects any functional and auxiliary meaning, asserting its absolute independence through an aristocratic gratuitousness and perfect rigour, when it does not like to become initiatory. But even so, it is acceptable to all listeners, for it encourages their total lack of spiritual responsibility and flatters their elementary critical spirit at the level of the lowest judgement and discrimination, based on: I like it — I don't like it.

Surprisingly, it could be said that only the vulgar form of modern music, jazz — which is, in fact, an emanation of a primitive soul — rediscovers the full meaning of music. But this happens at the lower end of the spectrum. Perhaps at the other end, where music today tends to transcend sounds and notes, taking as its material

real noises, with concrete music, or fabricated noises and sounds, with electronic music, even here there will be a good rediscovery of music, insofar as the listener to the noises and sounds of the wider world may one day arrive at something akin to the harmony of the celestial spheres, as Pythagoras spoke of. Or, to put it more plausibly, perhaps by managing to move from the register of sound waves to that of electromagnetic waves, music or its scholarly extension will dominate communication between people and cosmic objects, will be able to control, guide and truly modulate once again, this time at a higher level, transforming into reality the magical action that the illusionist claimed at the beginning. Perhaps music is exactly like mathematical logic

; it created in a vacuum until it found its application in mechanisms, while music would apply to organisms and the spirit. Who knows in what vast individual this indistinct generality of music, not yet crowned with anything, will one day be captured?

Until then, for moderns, music is like a soul exiled from the body, telling it from exile how beautiful the union of souls with the body is.

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In a soul without a body, omniscience can end as a rejection of the individual, if this rejection loses its way back to reality. In summary, we have seen how spiritual illness appears early on in history, in the "soul" of communities, a soul that can very well reject individual consciousnesses, as long as they have not yet risen to the consciousness of the person. The individual who has not become self-aware then effectively expresses himself through the general, instead of being crushed by it, as will happen later. It is a world of *knowledge*, or at least of belief in something general, and as such

priesthood in the name of this general, just as it is one of appropriate ceremonial regulation. It was possible to stagnate historically under such a priesthood, but today some Asian peoples are re-entering history precisely under its sign and that of omniscience. The spiritual disease at stake is therefore one of *culture*, which can be ferment or, on the contrary, the expression of refined decadence, both in peoples and in individuals.

On an individual level, the disease represents preoccupation with *the general* as well as exclusive interest in it, going as far as educating truths or pursuing the vicissitudes of the general. Since general beings are not given, interest falls on *the possible*, not the real, omniscience being characteristic of a major type of philosophical thinking, with a *critical* and *dissociative* spirit. It is no less active in almost any authentic man of culture, in the hour of maturity, when intellectual delight and *theoretical* considerations take precedence over action, so when *the commentary* on life becomes more interesting than life itself, the modality and the adverb more valuable than the thematic substance and the verb. In this sense, an *infinite number of nuances* become possible, as does a full sense of *freedom*, as opposed to the vain freedoms of the individual lacking a general meaning.

But freedom, which belongs only to the general and leads to his inflection, carries risks. It enriches the general's understanding with a more nuanced view of *necessity*, chance, and law, but invokes a law that can only admit a *statistical* individual, or even fail to objectify itself in anything real, remaining in the realm of the possible. A *void* of knowledge and delight is then the ultimate result, and the feeling of this void could be experienced by the contemporary world, moving from the glorification of culture as a paradise of generals to *the tragic meaning* of cultural experience.

of culture. Nothing better than *the music* of the contemporary world, both in its creation and in its lax and perfectly irresponsible reception, shows better the traces of omniscience on the human soul.

Acatolia

While omniscience was the typical disease of culture, acatolia (the rejection of the general) is that of *civilisation*. As such, it characterises our time — in its European version, decisive for the rest of the world — with such poignancy that, although it is a disease as constitutive of man as the others, it deserves to be examined last, as it gives, in the balance of our time, the culminating feature.

We find it much more fruitful — dare we say — to study civilisation under the sign of acatolia, rather than as Spengler did in *The Decline of the West*, as a phenomenon of fatigue and the end of the road for any "culture". In doing so, the German thinker could only see *the negative side* of civilisation. But the general's conscious refusal, as in the case of the other two refusals (of aoretia and atodetia), is far from being a phenomenon of fatigue and one that can be passed off as merely a human failing, as decline and the beginning of the end. Spengler was thus unable to understand, as far as we can see, either the fullness, we might say romantic, of the technical-scientific revolution, or the great exasperations of intelligence rebelling against the general (as in Camus's "l'Homme revolte"), or the huge explosions, informational or demographic, and for information, the meaning

good, not the kind of "curiosity" he refers to; nor the sporting renewal, we might say, of our world, nor its astonishing reference to the limits of thought — which has nothing to do with decadence — leading us to the threshold of the most intense catastrophes humanity has ever experienced, but also to the great innovative problems facing man, just as he was ultimately unable to see, in civilisation as a phenomenon of decadence, its extraordinary promises for man and for self-discovery, precisely through the self-denial (as Hegel would say) of the spirit!

We live under the sign of civilisation, that is, in its *element*, which has become the fifth after the four great elements of the world: earth, water, air, and fire. In particular, we live in the element of *cold* fire, electricity and electronic flows, which have led to a different type of machinery than that of hot fire, from the first machinery. One step further back, and this civilisation may be, at least materially, one of solar energy flow, which we are about to capture (and with photosynthesis we would capture it totally for humans, beyond "nature"), meaning that in a sense we live under the sign of light, as Louis de Broglie (and perhaps to a lesser extent the Books of Moses) said that everything began with light.

But the spirit also departed from *the light* some two centuries ago, with the Enlightenment. Because reason is too rich and envelops the spirit too much, along with the foundations of the heart, in order to be solely luminous, modern man has brought empty intelligence into play, in order to be able to practise total enlightenment. The Enlightenment appeared as a rejection of all generalities, especially those that were already established (God's in the first place) and, with its fundamental acatholia, it would have been said that it was not destined by definition to find any generality. But surely, as part of reason, intelligence would have rediscovered the spirit.

in its fullness, if it were left to exercise itself truly freely, as it desired. In this case, intelligence could not desire, for itself and for man, only *knowledge*, and only positive knowledge at that, but would have ended up seeking *meaning* as well. Intelligence rejoices, it is true, in scepticism, but only for a moment; then it recovers and, trampling on the death of the spirit, it must struggle towards the light, since it was born under its sign.

However, the intelligence of the Enlightenment was not exercised freely to the end. It was overshadowed by something else, namely empiricism, utilitarianism, technological advances and several major material achievements (which led to consumer society), thus failing, at least for the time being, to fulfil its great vocation in the historical being of man and in being itself. That splendid Enlightenment slogan

"Enlighten yourself and you will be" (which appeared modestly even in the Romanian illusory version) could be transformed into "enlighten yourself, but you will endanger your being," which the Western world is experiencing today with surprise, before fear. Even Enlightenment acatholia, which rejected all generalisations, could not, like any spiritual illness, remain in its disorder for too long, so positive was it at first. But, as I mentioned, it met and merged with another acatholia, that of the Anglo-Saxon world, more tenacious than its own, perhaps more chronic; and thus it became bastardised.

Indeed, this part of the Germanic tribes of the north, the Anglo-Saxon world, seems to suffer from chronic acatholia. The northern world was curious: in the centuries from 800 to 1200, when it revealed its myths, it did not produce a truly great religion, nor epics of the rank of the Greek or Indian ones, nor even or less than any historical states (the English state being rather made by the French, as has been said), which we reveal about

The Vikings, but it gave rise to two vocations that were unmatched anywhere else in the world: the philosophical and musical vocation of the Germans, alongside the empirical-practical and technical craftsmanship of the English, with the invention of the machine, the latter vocation ultimately changing the face of the world. In any case, the acatholia of the English world is aggressively formulated in "nominalism", that is, in the doctrine that everything of a general nature represents a single name. The Illuminist intelligence would not have said only that; but it was intimidated and did not say more.

However, before examining the limitations of this acatholism, in which both sides, European Enlightenment and Anglo-Saxon nominalism, put their best foot forward (it was impossible for the great Enlightenment thinker Voltaire not to admire the English spirit excessively), let us look at its major achievements. As for the fact that the Anglo-Saxon world is one of acatholism, with something that can be both good and bad about this condition, it seems to us as obvious as the fact that India is under the sign of horoscope, which makes it permanently above and below history, or China under that of omniscience, which kept it for centuries in the rejection of history, only to now precipitate it, again, into a history ripe for omniscience, that is, for the rejection of the individual.

The successes of modern acatholism are such that, limiting ourselves to the English type (with the sometimes excessive and distorting version of the American world), we could say that after the Second World War, when England lost an empire, the English spirit conquered the world instead. It conquered at least the Western world and the part of the Earth under its influence. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon values have prevailed there — and some of them, as we shall see, exert an attraction elsewhere, especially on young people.

to an unexpected extent, which could make the English proud of something other than their outward, Victorian pride (simple attire, haughtiness, exaggerated self-respect, profane rituals and tuxedos) of the recent past. Not to mention the English language (with all its American deformations), which is also part of the spirit, and indeed a dominant one, imposing itself everywhere in a part of the world, including Western Europe, with its simplicity or even grammatical simplism and its incredible lexical indifference, which has led it to appropriate the gold of other languages, in particular Latin-French, just as in the age of piracy the English, some of them prominent, appropriated Spanish gold; an essentially "masculine" and sober language, as the Danish linguist Jespersen said of it, which for that very reason loses all depth of the feminine, loses all contact with its origins and remains condemned to allow absolutely no access to philosophical thought, but which, on the other hand, perhaps precisely because of its precision (since it deals only with the sentence and the full logos) and its wealth of borrowings, as well as its extraordinary possible combinations — achieves great poetry in spirit, alongside scientific language, just as it achieves song, the right name, the slogan, humour and the ideal title, being ultimately a splendid and perfectly organised chirping of man. Let us think, beyond language, about the values of contemporary society and civilisation, almost all of which are of Anglo-Saxon origin, starting from the very bottom, with games, sports, dancing, the type of party (5 o'clock tea becoming "five o'clock"), through fabrics, clothing, salons, social behaviour, then through Parliament, the system of individual freedoms, myth-making, in culture, through the primacy of society over the hero, which leads to newspapers, magazines and, in any case, the novel (which appeared in 18th-century England), to detective novels on the one hand, science fiction on the other

On the other hand, in order to reach the realm of culture, through the primacy of empiricism, which was far more effective than French positivism, and especially through experimentation and physicalism — where great European physicists such as Planck, Einstein, de Broglie, Bohr, and Heisenberg were able to change the image of the world, but the English, with Faraday and Maxwell, changed the world — to arrive at the machine and then electricity, which are certainly creations or discoveries of the Anglo-Saxon spirit, and to today's cybernetics, or in a broader cultural sense, to arrive at the cult of accuracy in place of truth and to this mathematical logic whose Anglo-Saxon origin no one can dispute and which threatens to fertilise but also to devastate, starting with linguistics, almost all the specialities of humanistic culture. Let us think, focusing on the overwhelming part of the Anglo-Saxon spirit, in today's technical and scientific innovations — which are destined to change even human nature, for the first time in known history — and then we will understand that the acatholia of this Anglo-Saxon spirit has meant and means something in the world.

Ultimately, if we focus on today's technical and scientific innovation, made possible by European acatholia in general and English acatholia in particular, it is clear that such innovation was possible precisely because acatholia became predominant in the European world at a certain point in time. It has been noted that the Egyptians could also have achieved more advanced techniques, at least in terms of sailing, but they were not sufficiently acatholised to break out of their historical context; the Greeks, for their part, did not suffer from acatholia, at least in their heyday, so they left experimentation and technology — which they would have been fully capable of — to the realm of the mundane, of ordinary craftsmanship; the Indians, who could also have achieved technological advancement, especially with their mathematical inventiveness

, suffered too much from asceticism to be interested in worldly technical achievements and "domination of nature". (How beautiful, in this sense, is the legend of the Indian king who asked for skins to be spread over the whole earth so as not to hurt his feet, while a wise man showed him that it was enough to put skins on his feet in the form of shoes — which makes a subtle modern thinker say: it is easier and wiser to adapt man to nature than to adapt nature to man, as technology sometimes wants to do.) And what cultural historian doubts that in China, the empire that burned its ships in the 15th and 16th centuries, so as not to be tempted to set sail on the open ocean, and where so many technical inventions had appeared, a vast technological world could have been born? But Europe was shaken by the fevers of acatholism, doubling the nature of the good Lord with the technical creations of man.

It is, however, a miracle, which philosophical thinking should — unlike Heidegger and so many others, sometimes even scientists — see in its goodness, before condemning hommo-technicus, who, poor thing, begins to condemn and frighten himself, as Norbert Wiener did. For it can already be said: why should we be so frightened by the risks of our civilisation, which is one of cold fire? Doesn't the civilisation of hot fire also involve equally great risks, at least on its own scale? When man discovered fire, there must have been enough wise men to say: any child can set fire to forests in a time of drought, and to cities made of dry materials. Perhaps the great fire of London — after which the city was finally systematised — was started by a child, while Nero is sometimes said to have set Rome on fire not so much out of madness as out of certain urban planning concepts. The risks of our civilisation

are those of any civilisation.

All of these, starting with technical and scientific innovation, are merely *consequences* of acatholia. It is good to examine the disease itself, in order to then see what its limits and risks are for humans, namely the *spiritual* limits and risks, beyond the accidental ones.

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Like any disease of the spirit, acatholia is identifiable in humans, in their ages and occupations, just as it appears on another scale, in societies and peoples. The general's refusal was a provocative gesture to Don Juan, through which we illustrated acatholia from the outset; however, as a refusal, it is also a dignified, sometimes subtle and positive, other times resigned attempt by man to be and to make things happen *without exceptional investments*. An expression of lucidity and late maturity, acatholia appears, either as a cultural phenomenon or as a simple phenomenon of spiritual life, as a renunciation of uncontrollable general meanings and a rediscovery of responsibility towards the real individual meanings of knowledge (positivism), within the person and the content of historical society. What is of interest now, beyond any general meanings, is the application of determinations and manifestations of one kind or another to real situations. Left free, the manifestations of the world and of man represent their own chaos. They need a fixation and a truth. The truth of the clouds in the sky is rain. *It is* everything that is here and now. The ultimate criterion of being and therefore of order, from this perspective, is the individual.

If we can leave aside the austerity of theoretical formulations for a moment, then we could say that the situation that arises in a detective novel must also exist in reality: everything that happens is organised around a *single* guilt. We must therefore cap-

The individual must be held accountable. That in the absence of a general meaning, this affirmation of the individual has a kind of ontological absurdity in it? But either we no longer feel it, as in the experience of the ordinary man who is content with *hic et nunc*, or we proclaim it openly, with British humour, or with gratuitousness (Andre Gide) and contemporary absurdity. It is the nonsense of empty history, pure and simple historical chance, just as nature and a large part of history are insignificant in themselves; it is the blind condensation and concentration in situations of reality that are so many extinctions of it. One could say that it is non-existence here, but in a sense it could have been *the essence of history*; and in this case it was its accuracy. Ernest Renan truly found, following in his footsteps to Jerusalem, Jesus of Nazareth. (Admittedly, only the one from Nazareth, not Jesus Christ).

In fact, there have been times and places in the past without general access, and history then meant, as with the Phoenicians, and particularly with the Carthaginians, a focus on individual realities — cities or communities based on interest — and historical determinations lacking any general meaning. Perhaps *trading* peoples are like that; in any case, the Venetians were certainly so (what "idea" did they have?), just as today, with the primacy of organised economics and good administration, the Dutch, Swedes and Swiss tend to become so, and perhaps the English too, at the end of a more complete historical experience. Significantly, for all these peoples, written history becomes a chronicle, that is, a record of local and parochial events in their nakedness. It is, in fact, on a literary level, the age of memoirs, newspapers and tape recordings. But in the absence of a general meaning, the joy of the biographical in the first version of history, as conceived by Goethe, no longer appears. It is only

objectivity or positivism of the minutes.

These minutes, with their varied material but without the historical perspective of a society's life, accumulate in such a way that, with their explosion of information, they seem to abolish the history written and constituted in works. Where the general is missing, there is indeed no place for history in the higher sense, just as the absence of a legal code leads, for the English people, to mere legal practice. Perhaps the whole of Western Europe is preparing to enter into the historical experience that we might call "particularisation", with its focus on the individual.

But the same disregard for the individual without interest in the general, described above as historical experience, can be found in human consciousness in general. Man does not delay in revelling in the boundaries he can set or that general meanings can have. There is knowledge in this delight, but it is not practical wisdom for life, rather a form of escapism. The age of lucidity comes when man asks himself what he leaves to the world and what has value or not in this world, not about possible worlds. Now he leaves aside general meanings, trying to see how much each thing means, or rather how much wealth of determinations could be condensed in each given individual situation. Goethe writes his "Dichtung und Wahrheit" (Poetry and Truth), and later, but at the same age, he can say that, looking back on his past life, all he feels is wonder. Wisdom of life means consent to life. After wanting to change everything, in deed or at least in thought (which operated on the generals), you now accept the world as it is. For somewhere it is good, otherwise it would not be, it would not be told and it would not last. When a thinker like Hegel jumped right in, with his extraordinary maturity ul-

At this age, when man reaches the end of his life, he agrees with everything, saying, "Everything that is real is rational." But he had a sense of vast and superior generality for the rational, whereas the man of today says this only with the gentleness of crude wisdom.

Everything is in order now. Rejoice in seeing the facts laden with all the honey of the world, without seeking general meanings in them. Just as you recount life with life, memory with memory, and event with event, so too are things arranged, to which any attempt at general justification would show an inappropriate or even excessive and absurd face. "Wie es auch sei das Leben, es ist gut," said Goethe on behalf of all those who have reached the age of non-Catholic lucidity.

At such an age, we tell ourselves that we are too often unfair to our immediate life. Throughout my life, I had loved something "ideal" in it, rather than its reality, I loved a kind of known or unknown general, which reality would carry with it. But piety towards gods is often impiety towards people and things. In later years, after learning so many forms of piety, wisdom or a certain resignation can make us rediscover the immediate *with piety*. I had not seen either its beauty or its goodness in time. There is more truth in the world around us than in your philosophy, Horace — we would say now, overcome by a sense of awe together with Shakespeare. And so, we leave the generals in their heaven, and we love all the richness of determinations embodied in human beings and particular realities.

The joy of doing justice to immediate reality is fully matched by one of the modes of human creation as an artist, a mode that modern technology has come to favour more and more.

Acatolia has found, with modern man, its own means and art. Indeed, to create may mean not only to achieve the projection of the individual into something general, but beyond anything general, the condensation of a world of manifestations or even phantoms into individual destinies and embodiments that can be fixed. Given that sight is the main fixing sense (all the others seem to have a tendency towards diffusion) and the one that truly seems to define in man the virtue of outlining everything, from idea (also linked to sight in the Greeks) to the real image, this type of creation will be that of *the visual*. Everything can be translated into image, as if the creative act consisted of placing or transposing a world onto the screen. Thus, in a world of acatolia, the new arts of the screen appear, first and foremost cinematography, with its desire to fix everything in the individual, even the freest imagination, but also with its misery of not having the ultimate artistic equilibrium — which is also the ontological one — of general meanings.

For why should these determinations, free as they are from any general meaning, be fixed on some individual realities rather than others? It is like a form of unsettled settlement, this fixing in simple images. The manifestations that needed to be fixed actually end up in the instability of particular cases (as in the modern novel, for that matter), which must proliferate infinitely in order to respond with something of the order of quantity, the fatal lack of meaning. Where there is not even an echo of general meaning, everything succumbs to the bad infinity of particular cases. The joy of doing justice to reality is transformed — like our meaningless lives — into a sense of belonging.

In the immediate present, however, there did not seem to be nothingness. "Let us cultivate our garden," Voltaire always said, rediscovering the joy

of the particular and of immersing oneself in it. Every time, positivism — as misnamed positivism as "negative" electricity, which is in fact positive — had, at least at first, the illusion of a good conversion to the individual and his idiom. But it is as if we were interested in the "dialects" of being, without rising to its "languages". A kind of general logos nevertheless proves to be active, open to the universal, in all the languages of the earth, just as in the "codes of being." But its refusal causes us to sink into closures that only close and limitations that only limit. Perhaps all things in the world do this, in their own time, tired of the tension of the general that had demanded too much of them. They bury themselves in themselves, entering into a fatal implosion. With this world of dead stars, where no form of the general is active anymore, the nothingness of extinction makes its way into the bosom of reality; a vast nothingness, or the frustrating experience of nothingness.

When the feeling of nothingness is not at stake, what remains is that of a universal *contingency* for our realities and lives. And the contingent is by no means an expression of the positive (at most a "positivist" one), as is the possible, with which it is too often confused. The contingent proves to be, in a sense, the exact opposite of the possible, which is always susceptible to new determinations, while the contingent *closes*, concentrating determinations on an individual situation. As a chance possibility, the contingent will not be the same as the possible chance: the contingency of a situation represents precisely the extinction of its possibility. Everything was chance.

There is, along these lines, another type of hazard different from the one invoked by Jacques Monod, which meant the accidental establishment of an order that then became a necessity. We could

Thus, he wondered whether the general could be forgotten within nature itself, or whether nature did not contain within it a freedom from the general, an acatholia, which would lead to its own dissolution as a *natural order*. Biologists themselves have wondered whether species have a well-defined reality, and doctors whether it would be better to speak of patients rather than diseases, or of individual specimens rather than classes. Chance would then show a new face, bearing on the generalities this time; it would consist in their possible appearance for a moment. A nature that permanently transgresses everything that tends to acquire and preserve the form of generality, thus defeating all patterns and focusing only on its unrepeatable specimens, could be conceived, at least as a working hypothesis. After all, if we extend "nature" to include humans, one could

say, that today we have reached such a concentration of everything that is nature upon the human community (that is, man, taking in all of nature) understood as a vast individual within life, so that nature no longer cares about the rest, allowing entire species that seemed indispensable to its balance to die out one by one. Nature itself would then end up with what Schopenhauer considered to be a privilege and a sign of strength for man: the capacity for suicide. The fact is that through man, nature is being destroyed, just as man can destroy himself through certain excesses of civilisation, brought about precisely by acatholia. Nature itself has become "civilised" by rising to the level of man and surrendering itself to him. It has emerged from its jungle state, allowing the most honourable creature it could have created, man, to dispose of it.

And with his acatholia — which is no longer metaphorical, as it may be considered in nature — man effectively disposes of it. This is surprising at first. If the general refusal

should bring you back to immediate reality, to piety towards it, and make you mind your own business, then the acatholic man, the one after the Renaissance, for example, should have found himself a Rousseauist in nature, with nature, but not against it. One might even say, at first glance, that modern man is not acatholic, since he has sought in nature its scientific laws, and therefore the general. But here we will respond: he no longer invoked nature as a general entity in its own right and did not pursue the laws of this whole, but rather the free laws as so many local systems of relations.

; and laws as relations (the idea of function, which replaced that of substance in antiquity, as Cassirer said in "Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff") are no longer concrete generalities, but abstract generalities, a kind of determination that applies to the individual. Relationships have as their "general" only the abstract one of their form, which can be symbolised mathematically. Mathematics (together with experimentation, i.e. distorted nature) are what have determined the Western world, and not ontology, i.e. the problem of being. So, in the end, what remained of nature and of piety towards the individual?

There remained so little piety that, as in a perfect acathos, where only determinations and the individual survive, the modern world had to *invent* its own universe of individuals, namely the technical one, to duplicate the universe of natural individuals. Not only does the technical universe not claim to be a being (as the absolute realities of the mythical or religious belief systems of the past could do), but, although it is also essentially a form of demiurgy, it is based on sciences which, like mathematics, mathematical physics and mathematical logic, openly reject any questioning of being.

a form of demiurgy, it is based on sciences which, like mathematics, mathematical physics and mathematical logic, openly reject any question of being, treating reality at most as a "ma-

And indeed, how could a few empty determinations (an extra wing that you give yourself with a faster plane, or an extra device, like a machine that calculates everything but nothing specific) claim to have the status of a being? The universe that technical civilisation has brought about is, at first glance — if it appears in a society that does not have a good foundation in ideas — exactly like the universe of the beginning that a pre-Socratic philosopher spoke of, in which hands, feet, human torsos and fragments of things floated chaotically in the universal element.

What man must do in such a world that no longer "holds," one that no longer contains the truth, even if only presumed, of the general, is clear: he must find certainty through accuracy. Now accuracy replaces truth. The certainty of the part cures the uncertainty of the whole. Just as it is characteristic of the dominant contemporary sciences that they no longer bring axioms into play but simple postulates, or that their axioms are well-chosen postulates, leading to well-established deductions, it is also characteristic that accuracy, precision, the need to say that this is this and nothing else, are imposed. I have said and done everything that needed to be said and done. It is the world of analytical philosophy, mathematical logic, cybernetics, just as it is the world of detective novels or engineering for its own sake, economic and social, the world of consumer society.

This time, it can be clearly seen, namely in the individual, what the world of acatholism is in itself, with its manifestations as clinical. The disorders of the acatholic become virtues: order in the immediate world (in the room, in ideas, in speech, in society), precision in everything you do, self-control, dignity towards others and towards oneself, civility, *politeness*. How extraordinary is that page from Chinese thought, where the "fall" under which the acatholic lives appears.

"He who loses the Tao remains with virtue; he who loses virtue remains with love for people; he who loses love for people remains with justice; he who loses justice remains with politeness."

There is no mention of Tao, of any ultimate general, in the man of acatholicism, since this is precisely what he rejects; but neither does he retain full virtue, for this too would have to be based on an ethical conception. He could still have love for people, but this is based on a general order of the heart, on an *ordo amoris*, and the acatholic does not accept the general even in the form of a simple order that pre-exists him. Then is justice left to him? But — as can be seen in English law — it can only be a good *practice*, enshrined in tradition, a justice based on precedent, thus relying on cases rather than principles. What, then, must be done for the world, or society, to hold together? We must invoke respect for man by man, personal and interpersonal dignity, fair play, civilisation, politeness. And with simple "politeness," society is still possible, sometimes even acquiring an unexpected and splendid consistency! Even the wrongdoer must awaken a sense of respect and fair play: English police officers do not carry weapons, so that even a thief will not use weapons if he retains a shred of humanity. One of the most admirable "societies" in history was able to emerge on the basis of simple politeness, active in individual consciences like so many atoms of society. For society is here only the sum of individuals, nothing reverting to the whole.

Such an individual, endowed with self-respect and respect for others, ultimately becomes, in the *consummate* experience of that exemplary family in the Bible, the brother of the prodigal son. Disappointed that his law was not his father's law, or that his father, the giver of

The law defeats the law itself in his eyes, the brother maintains his obedience, maintains his sense of duty, but now forgets the law. He becomes acatholic, he who had tried harder than anyone else, the general. He is no longer interested in truth, but only in accuracy. But he can do so to excess. This is what will happen with pietism (this sect of brothers of the prodigal son) in terms of religious experience; this is what positivism will do in terms of knowledge (with those positivists, a kind of brothers themselves to the prodigal sons of the audacity of scientific and philosophical knowledge). Now comes into play submission to the object and limits (positivism speaks clearly about the limits of knowledge), on the political level, freedom with its responsibility, or rather freedoms, with the need to lead to a state understood as a "coexistence of freedoms"; on the economic level, liberalism (*laissez faire laissez passer*) makes its appearance, but with the measure that does not lead to anarchy; on the moral and social level, a kind of mutual respect as "let me let you", that is, I will leave you alone too; Culturally, the primacy of accuracy and the invocation of the supreme court of control, which wants to verify even the accuracy of mathematics, in this case mathematical logic. The brother of the prodigal son, who began by reading Cicero, ends up doing mathematical logic. As for action, it is pragmatic and in no way linked to principles or ideologies.

: *wait and see*. Principles cannot produce anything good, the law means nothing more than laws, just as freedom means nothing more than individual freedoms. "God is dead." All that remains for us is to be civilised and precise.

It is only natural that such a civilised and precise man should appear in the Anglo-Saxon world (including the United States), as I have pointed out (their creators emerging from among the non-conformists). But we can sense him, if not identify him, in

many other areas of Europe today, and we identify it particularly in the Spanish world, where it seems to have a noble past. When its chosen examples do not fall under the genius of another disorder, such as Don Juan or Don Quixote, the superior man in the vast Spanish world is rather subject to the disorder of maximum personal and proud *dignity*. In particular, for the man of culture, dignity means the ultimate security of thought. Filled with acatholia himself, and therefore leaning with splendid accuracy on *this* world, he gives an account of it with that precision of thought which leaves no room for ideas, with his exact X-ray. We find an example of this kind in Martinez Estrada (it is enough to see his face on the covers of his books to realise the complex of certainty within him), with his famous "Radiography of the Pampa", a book full of captivating thoughts (about the gaucho, about the tango, about the knife, and so many other things), but one in which no *idea* appears, if we are to call the thought turned over on itself an idea. Here, the determinations are indeed concentrated on an individual situation or reality, and they do so *without reserve*; but precisely for this reason they can no longer — and do not want to — refer to the idea. Those who do not invoke the general refuse the idea. Accuracy is enough for them.

In a world of precision, the arts can undergo any number of innovations and distortions, in the sense of abstract art and the "new" novel, spectroscopic in the sense of electronic music, or verbal literature; but they are all somehow uncomfortable — at least in their past creations — to the non-Catholic, with the exception of *cinema*.

It is true that there is room, outside the art of the screen and the spectral or spectroscopic, for a kind of art of accurate diagnosis; not only the art of "this is that", of the kind found in

"Radiography of the pampas", but also of his kind: that's all there is to it. In the latter case, following the line of *classical* acatholia, we arrive at comedy (sometimes at something deeper than comedy), while today's acatholia arrives at nonsense and absurdity. For all these are a kind of diagnosis of the world's crookedness. The comic author, with his inherent acatholia, that is, his way of "having nothing sacred", whether it was Aristophanes, Molière or our own Caragiale, has always denounced the crookedness and stupidity of the world, perhaps too often spending his genius and intelligence on denouncing the stupidity of others. In doing so, the comic genre could not offer much — nor could many creators — and, no matter how highly we regard Molière, for example, we must admit that denouncing the wrongdoings *of others* is narrow-minded and unproductive, if it does not end up captivating the spectator, but only makes him laugh at the other. In this sense, deeper than comedy, along the lines of acatholia, we find the deep sense of the ridiculous, for example that brought into play by Cervantes, who, by making us laugh at Don Quixote with his acute horetita, also makes us aware, perhaps unwittingly, that it is not only his folly but also ours. And even better than classical comedy are creations, this time mainly contemporary, based on nonsense and absurdity: they denounce not the absurdity or derision of others, but those that may concern spectators and readers, or man as such. With Voltaire, things remained at the level of demystification and satire, however successful; with Anatole France (so modest today), things were reduced to the exercise of intelligence, erudite and graceful, to say that "this is nothing but this". But with the nonsense and absurdity of an Ionesco, something deeper can be achieved or has already been achieved: acatholia reaches its limit, denouncing the very threshold to which it leads, with the general's refusal, in

case to meaninglessness and absurdity. And this concerns everyone, because there is a touch of acatholia in each of us.

And yet, just as music seemed characteristic of everything to us, now it is not the expediciencies of traditional arts but the new art of cinematography that will seem to us to measure and colour (the greyness) of acatholia. Born under the sign of precariousness (ontological, after all) of not having detached itself from something general, as all other arts detached themselves from the general of religious or broadly human spirituality, cinematography quickly found an extraordinary artistic *function*, without being able to become a true art. In fact, it suddenly fulfilled *two* functions: that of rediscovering the meaning of popular art — as it was noted that before the Renaissance, even in antiquity, theatre was popular, unaware of class distinctions — and the function of serving, on the other hand, as an artistic *experiment* for the creator who can no longer remain within the traditional arts. In both cases, cinema responds to the needs of a world in which acatholia prevails. Today, the masses no longer seek teaching and meaning, instinctively rejecting the general, "enlightened" as they are, which were previously offered by the great works and educational books of humanity, but they demand, in the absence of general meanings to command art, simple "escapism" through spectacle; and it is certain that, along these lines and under the increasingly accentuated acatholia of our technical civilisation, cinema will retain its popularity. But already this semi-art is generously available to the creator for artistic experiments, where the richness of thoughts and images steadily fills the void left by the loss of the "idea." It may be that in the near future, cinema will see the most interesting attempts to give artistic status to the spiritual demands imposed by the acatholia of civilisation.

technical and scientific knowledge. And who knows if, by immersing itself in the individual, in man and earth, the Western spirit will not nevertheless rediscover, albeit overturned, the heavens?

Until then, we live in a world where the most widespread artistic agent, cinema, does not produce art, the most numerous objects and realities, technical creations, have no ontological investment, and the most reliable local knowledge, which modern man cannot do without, historical and social knowledge, has no laws. Something is faltering in the world of acatholia, with all its precision. It remains for man, especially the European man, to rediscover, through the contribution of other worlds — Eastern, South American, or perhaps still infra-European — his own spiritual wealth, through other maladies, in order to regain, beyond the spirit of accuracy, a few paths to truth, and to truly rediscover themselves as people of the spirit, rather than its lab technicians.

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And this time it is easy to summarise the main aspects of the disease at stake. The disease of *civilisation*, acatholia invoked, in its European version, *empty intelligence* and enlightenment, along with *practical* intelligence, along with Anglo-Saxon empiricism and nominalism, leading to an unexpected world of technology and machinery, but also, on a higher level, to a whole system of values, the Anglo-Saxon ones, which have largely imposed themselves on the modern world. It is true that, at its core, this spiritual experience is the ancient one of the *trading* peoples, just as its reflection on reality is the ancient starting point of all wisdom *in the immediate*; it is also true that it risks a feeling of nothingness by immersing itself in *the blind plurality* of individual cases, minutes and statistics (what a significant and sad eulogy to Balzac, that he competed

civil status, i.e. statistics, while ancient heroes competed with gods! But in the new chaos left by the general's refusal, the need for certainty in the form of accuracy arose, leading to splendid local scientific achievements and granting a miraculous and perhaps unprecedented primacy to *mathematics*, or at least to mathematical logic, in the human and social spheres. just as on a human and social level, the same new acatholia leads to personal dignity and the cementing of society through the simple bond of self-respect and respect for others. The arts, of course, may suffer in such a world of acatholia, for they usually feed on the substance of the general. But the *screen* arts, and cinema in particular, remain, despite their apparent and perhaps only initial misery, to keep open the Book of the World, in the history of the spirit, just as the technical and scientific revolution has reopened the Book of Man as a psycho-somatic being.

The sixth plague could still be the sixth promise of the Earth, over which the precariousness of being exercises, in the human version, its fee-ria.

The temperance of time and the Romanian spirit

Not so much the care and fear of the
beginning As the care and danger of
the end...

(from an old writing)

From ontological maladies that have become maladies of the spirit, as well as from their symptoms and manifestations, encountered everywhere, we can now simply move on to the Romanian spirit, with its unsettledness, settledness and utterances.

All the maladies of the spirit have been reactivated, under the stimulated and thus *planetary* becoming into which history has entered. Even if in some parts of the world, still highly influential, such as the Western European and especially American world, one disease seemed to us to be predominant, in particular acatholia, nevertheless the historical conjuncture in which we find ourselves, the temper of the times, as we might say in our old language, brings all diseases into play together. And indeed, Europeans have been and continue to be haunted by all of them, perhaps more so than people in other parts of the world, and as participants in

the destiny of Europe, the Romanian spirit will also be tested. However, certain maladies prevail in it, and that is precisely why it could be useful — not only for self-knowledge but also for the possible contribution we could make, with greater affirmation in the world, to its order — to shed as much light as we can on our unique nature.

Before confronting our spirit with the humanity of the earth, animated as it is by constitutional illnesses, let us remember how much positivity is manifested in these inevitable human instabilities. We have deduced them from the precariousness of being, that is, "from above", not in the way it is usually done, especially today (with Freudianism, for example) from somewhere in the depths of man, in a reductionist manner. But if we were to regret and seek the balance of being, instead of its precariousness, we would be entitled to ask ourselves: is the balance of being possible, and if so, is it truly creative? What is it that measures man: the attained and well-balanced being, or creation?

Let us say once again, however, that there is no choice between truth and the search for it, between being and becoming, but that truth is itself a further search, just as being is for man an urge to shape and create, such creativity being the full and, in any case, historical measure of man. Even if, in the realm of the spirit, something akin to fulfilled being has been achieved on a few occasions, it has only been on an individual level and with a self-reconciliation that, as in the Indian world, has been ahistorical.

On the other hand, the maladies of the spirit seemed to us not only constitutional to historical man but also beneficial (they being truly "maladies" only in their aggressive or forced forms, as in the case of fakirism, asceticism, or in today's Western European excesses); and from

For now, we can say that, insofar as everything in man must be *in* being rather than *in* it — as man seems to be only under an illusion or exception — it means that a path, a Tao, a good opening "towards", which would express it precisely in our vocabulary, "in-to", confers the right measure or at least the right name for spiritual life, while at the same time expressing the positive meaning and creative fate of everything we have seen fit to call illness. In this sense the "maladivity" of the Romanian spirit should not be understood as an invalidation of it, as was not the case for other worlds either. ; we will even say at the end that, in a way, with our "being in", someone could see that we bring and propose to the wider world a *seventh* disease, which is our fruitful contribution to the temperance of the times.

Thus, having *all* the diseases of the spirit, that is, all the great orientations of man, the Romanian spirit seems more animated by some and more sensitised by others, in other words, it places different emphases on human orientations. Let us begin with the last disease described, *acatholia*. Without repudiating it or seeing itself as inferior to the achievements of civilisation brought about by modern acatholia — a civilisation that we have steadfastly accompanied with our inventiveness, in what is possible, if not always in reality.

— the Romanian spirit is not, however, predisposed to other forms of this spiritual disease. It fully accepts its results, but does not willingly subscribe to the spirit in which some of them were obtained, in particular it does not subscribe to the rejection of any general meaning for civilisation. And indeed, it is questionable whether the general rejection, and especially the insistence on this rejection, as seems to be the case in much of the Western world, does not risk turning what has been achieved into spiritual failure. After all, the dangers of *this* acatholism are

highlighted precisely by the agents of acatholic civilisation.

Romanians say of someone: "There is nothing holy in him." Anyone can sense that this is not meant in a religious sense, even if it may have been at first. In saying this, anyone thinks of piety, truth or moderation — that much-invoked moderation of our spirit — which we must apply to everything we do. But in this way, even without clearly recognising it, we invoke something more general, a meaning and purpose that must be inherent in the work of man and in man himself, with the life he gives himself. About Don Juan, the non-Catholic whom we considered representative of a form of illness, we can simply say that "there is nothing holy about him," and with this statement we express in our own way our final thought about him. In turn, the excessive creations of new technology, so many surplus products that have emerged in a consumer society, and indeed consumer society itself in its entirety, may fall under our judgement: it can call itself a consumer society (as if a society, a human community, could be only that!) precisely because it vaguely acknowledges that it "has nothing sacred", just as its goods are sometimes devoid of any justification, not being related to a real need that would give them the character of something "sacred" in the life of man and society.

We could then take each trait from among those displayed in acatholia — as we could do with all other diseases, for that matter — and thus obtain, through a more rigorous comparison, several traits characteristic of the Romanian spirit. But we doubt that, with the picture of diseases and their clinical presentation, we have obtained a scientific basis so rigorous that we can reveal, in a spirit of accuracy, what belongs and what cannot belong to the Romanian spirit. And indeed, it has seemed to us

that the drive for accuracy and reliable diagnosis is itself a symptom of acatholia, favourable in some respects but perhaps harmful when it tends to take the place of openness to the truth. We are interested in the truth about ourselves, and therefore the confrontation we

we are about to undertake will be somewhat freer, content to remain a mere *suggestion* of truth.

What is worth remembering from this first case of acatholia — which does not seem to fully reflect the Romanian spirit — is that this spiritual illness nevertheless affects us, as Romanians, in various ways. If comedy, as a literary genre, is seen as an expression of acatholia, then Caragiale, with all that he represents in terms of the Romanian spirit, must be invoked. There is no doubt that, beyond the literary genre he predominantly adopted, Caragiale himself was haunted by acatholia: to at least some, he seemed to have nothing sacred in him. Without discussing here the literary genre and its spiritual limits in art — which I mentioned above, showing that the deep sense of the ridiculous or even the contemporary absurd could be considered more affirmatively spiritual than the comic — and without discussing Caragiale's human nature, about whose presence and function in our culture something bad and a lot of good could be said, we must admit that we are all sometimes tempted by something unorthodox, not only in the form of scepticism, which is spiritually fruitful when it is only a step, but also in a more effervescent form, related to the sovereign exercise of intelligence, namely mockery. Too many things, states and destinies have been mocked in the past in our public life, if only it had been the Revolution of 1848. From the positive side of acatholism, we have the good exercise of intelligence and the joy of enlightenment; on the other hand, on the economic level, we have lacked...

how the qualities (fortunately, and the flaws) of commercial peoples, as on a moral level we have lacked too much in the past, sometimes, self-respect, the sense of immediate responsibility — even if we had that of ultimate responsibility —, the sense of accuracy in behaviour, of precision in what we produce and do. On a spiritual level, it remains to be seen whether we will be able to get caught up in the momentum of the technical and scientific revolution that is about to change the world.

We are therefore immune to what may be bad in acatholia, but not totally detached from some of its more or less mediocre manifestations. Not being directly caught up in its fervour and creativity, we can still make a contribution — perhaps a more valuable one — to its eventual success in history, by means of one or another of the maladies that afflict us.

We will then move on to the other spiritual maladies, trying to see which ones are our own and which ones are more a result of contamination. Before we tackle the other five, we will recall that in all of them, unlike acatholia, *the general* is active and consciously active (with the exception of the first form of catholita). This is of great significance, for only the general gives things their true measure, while in its absence, in acatholia, there were only substitutes for human balance. But the active presence of the general is also significant for another reason: since around 1800, our world has shifted its centre *from the real to the possible*. Since then, the possible has taken precedence over the real, with certain risks (which Goethe described in advance in Faust II) but also with great benefits. We can now say that the Romanian spirit is comfortable with the possible — one might even say that it was more comfortable with the possible in the past than with the real — and the general's action in the midst of disease makes the primacy of the possible

good prospects for historical success. Except that acatholie plays *the possible void* (creations and products without a specific destination, a society that is apparently balanced but fundamentally unbalanced, demonism and explosiveness on all levels), and in this sense we can console ourselves with our receptivity to such a spiritual orientation.

How much of the other five maladies do we have? We will say outright what does not seem to apply to us, precisely like acatholism: we do not seem to suffer, except again partially, from atodetia, nor from horetita; while the other three orientations apply to us fully.

Atodetia, first and foremost, meant the rejection of the individual, whereas we have, according to unanimous recognition, an authentic and unwavering sense of the concrete, which means that we do not practise anywhere, not even in knowledge and culture, an empty cult of the general. From our past form of religiosity, in which the divine was always intertwined with the earthly, entering, according to our folklore, into all human contacts, events and sometimes vicissitudes (including birth, for the divine was also born in a way: another, according to our folk legends), from there to our way of creating culture, even at the level of speculative philosophy, where thought has always been interested in and focused on the real world, as in Blaga's "Sophianism", our way of knowing and contemplating the general has not been in the absence of individual reality.

It is true that we too, due to our all-knowing nature, have a sharp critical and dissociative spirit, as well as a tendency to quickly focus on commenting on life rather than on life itself, and sometimes to come up with somewhat empty theories, like any intelligent nation; but the possibility we cherish is not devoid of reflection on the concrete ("what could be," not "what should be *in principle*"), the infinity of nuances

which we invoke is not only that of the general but especially that of the real, and as for society and man, we have too strong a taste for individuality and personal affirmation to easily consent to statistics. The great success of all-encompassing culture, based on refinement and detachment, does not require us, perhaps not even pure music — except through contamination — but rather an "artistic" feeling, that is, an embodiment of the general in the concrete, accompanies us with its permanent tendency, making even our scientific thinking, perhaps, one that does not remain alien to concrete beauty — not to mention the fact that many scientists in our country have "literaturised" — or, if not, one that is alien to the rest of the real world, at the risk, however, of ending up with encyclopaedism on the one hand and essayism on the other. Without the individual, the concrete, or at least its reflection on reality, the world would seem dull to us. Romanians do not know much about boredom, let alone the tragedy of cultural experience or its nothingness. In any case, if omniscience can end in a soul without a body, it must be said that the Romanian spirit has always loved the soul with the body.

Secondly, in light of the above, we can also say that we do not suffer particularly from *horetitis*. If *horetitis* is the disease of not being able to find the right determinations, it must be admitted that we as a people (and perhaps the Romanian islanders too) have not had *the rush* of determinations, let alone their impatience, as in the case of the great *horetitis* sufferers, Don Quixote, Faust or entire peoples. Far from being a people *in search of* its identity, trying to assert itself in every way and conquer the outside world, our people has understood instead how *to preserve* its identity, and historically, it was formed not through expansion but through contraction, as our historians have shown, namely by concentrating

on the Carpathian space of Dacia, from the vast content of Eastern Romanity. It is also true that, being foreign to what we have called acute horetitis, the Romanian spirit may have had some manifestations of chronic horetitis, giving itself "stationary" determinations, as our village civilisation was steadfast, or living under a form of self-doubt and sometimes resignation, most often active, though sometimes passive, or finally, being overcome by higher forms of melancholy, from which our word

"Dor" retained something; it is also true that even a certain impatience of the acute type could sometimes overcome us, in the face of the great dangers we lived under, but it was a somewhat gentle impatience and, we would say, one that led to creation. After all, what good impatience must Stephen the Great have felt when he built a church every year, thus trying to give meaning to his reign, not only in the name of faith but also in that of his princely greatness. We too could not be entirely strangers to horetita, especially in modern Romania, when everything came about so suddenly with the formation of our state.

— to ask us to make decisions in history and as free people. But something in us refuses to *rush* towards determinations, and in this sense we will have to invoke once again the well-suited character of moderation, just as we invoked the equally well-established character of our sense of the concrete. Horetita, with its dramatic assertions and catastrophes, as well as its sadness after victory, remains in the lot of others.

As we prepare to move on now to the few suggestions of truth that we believe we can offer in light of the remaining illnesses, it seems appropriate to emphasise that illnesses and, in general, spiritual orientations that *do not* test us, acatholia, atode-

Tia and horetita are all three diseases of *decision-making* and decision-making. The acatholic clearly decides that the general does not exist (it is only a "name"), the atodetic decides that the individual is not taken into account (it is only statistical), and the one inflamed with horetitis decides that he must set out to do the deed even with half an ideal and at any risk. We, on the other hand, are overcome by a hesitation in decision-making, or such a well-considered deliberation on the decision that, despite all the good consequences in general, we sometimes seem to fall into indecision. Someone who would like to criticise us — and there have been plenty of such people — might say, in relation to the maladies that follow and which we are trying to overcome (catholity with the search for the general, todetism with that of the individual, and ahoretia with the refusal of determinations): Romanians do not know what they are looking for, does not know what he finds, and not knowing what to decide, he does not decide at all. Are not all these three failures expressed in his characteristic saying

"dor"?

We will see the positive meaning of this word in the orientations that effectively animate the Romanian spirit, starting with *catholita*. There can be no doubt that our spirit *has* the organ of the general, is at least open to it and, in his words, "has something holy." We have described the disease of catholite, which seemed to us to be truly the first of human diseases and particularly characteristic of European man — influential in the world primarily through catholite, before bringing into play its opposite, acatholite, for the whole Earth — more in its negative aspects. It seemed to us that we had to do so because it was the first disease described and we were obliged to highlight the disorders, admittedly creative, of man, rather than his good balance, which at the limit can also be sterile. But in all

The aspects of the disease, which are more likely to be seen as excessive in order to highlight things better, can be turned into something positive by something beneficial: a certain amount of control. Catholita, placed under spiritual control, then becomes truly positive, not only through the indirect creativity to which it leads and which we mentioned, but also through its direct virtues: it is mal-adia, or this time better, man's orientation towards what neither nature nor the immediate meanings of life can give him, towards their more general order and secondary purpose. With a just and human measure, the loss in action and the excess of action, which we see in those who are passionate about the search for the general, are tamed and become an act of worthiness, but one that also seeks its worthiness; an act open to its better-articulated meaning. Catholita would not thus describe the feverish state of those who, at any cost and consciously or not, seek the general, but also those who pursue it with the open submission of action in view of it. The Romanian spirit could thus be tested by the disease at play. It did not act with exasperation, but neither did it remain in the sedentariness of what was given to it, but — if pastoralism nevertheless prevailed over agrarianism in our world, as has been said — just as shepherds, like navigators of the dry land, set off for other horizons in search of better grass, the deeds of the man from here also sent him steadily towards other horizons, with more orderly meanings.

All the other symptoms we have highlighted in Catholicism: the exuberance of possibility, the obsession with accumulation, blind plurality, pure and simple proliferation, have been able to take on a bright face, with the extraordinary experience of *possibility* that the Romanian spirit has had, as well as with gentle plurality, with that wise polytheism of its natural beliefs, or with the richness of its folkloric creativity.

and with his tolerance towards diversity of beliefs and worlds. While in Catholicism, described as a disease, chance passed directly into blind necessity, the Romanian spirit knows how to make a good marriage between the contingent and the necessary, seeing everything as a necessity that is both nurtured and happened by itself. The feeling of loss of self and exile, which the Catholic might experience, is also mitigated, with a grace that makes the Romanian say: "This world is not mine, nor is the other," but no less so does he feel at home in this world and fabricate stories about the world beyond. As for the exasperation and tragic collision between a subject raised to the general and the general itself (the thresholds of the world), they easily turn into a true "encounter," like that of Moșul in Blaga's "Arca" with Noah himself, and if a tragedy persists in the Romanian popular consciousness (in the cultured one it can be one of contamination), it is a *diffuse* tragedy, which in this way manages to turn the unbearable into the bearable. As for any catholic sufferer, the world should have meaning. But the Romanian spirit does not fall into despair at not finding it. "It will be," he tells himself, and he continues to search for it.

We do not wish to romanticise one of the most active and decisive experiences in human history. But if we must find an explanation for *the attenuation* that the Romanian spirit brought to several major impulses of life awakened by Catholicism, we will invoke the experience of possibility that the Romanian people knew or happened to accumulate, an experience that makes them avoid the pitfalls of the century when necessary and travel further on the waters of possibility.

Something does indeed float further, like on water, with our spirit. In a sense, it is like a river that does not always reach its destination.

to the great waters, but it seems as if they never cease to search for them. It is perhaps significant that the most profound and symbolic legends of our culture are those about rivers, not those about cities, villages, or legends related to the consideration of the soil and the names of places. In a collection ("Romanian Geographical Legends", Ed. for Tourism, 1974), the Legend of the Buzău River was republished, which seems to us to be in line with the above. The legend tells of a young man named Buzău, with golden hair but known as Buzău, meaning "closed-hearted, troubled, misunderstood", who goes in search of a beautiful woman whose husband, the Danube dragon, keeps her locked up in a crystal palace. Our hero arrives, it is true, at the Siret, but without a single hair on his head, for he had torn them out, as his beloved had asked him to do. He collapses there, in the waters of the Siret, and the entire journey he has travelled turns into a river, with waves like his hair. Here, too, there is a primacy of the possible over the real: the river does not reach the great waters, but together with the waters into which it has poured, it seeks them further on.

Perhaps the same primacy of the possible — a special kind, not entirely comparable to the modern primacy of the possible, which is laboratory-based — can be found in the Romanian version of the second spiritual illness that particularly afflicts us, namely *todetită*. A disease arising from the need to find an individual suitable for the general and for its determinations, it has been reactivated in the contemporary world through the confident mastery of a body of knowledge, which thus leads to a kind of incorruptible laws that are difficult to apply to reality. But the world of the Romanian spirit is helped by *todetită* not so much on theoretical lines as on the lines of the ideal or values in which this spirit believes, without always being able to find their embodiment. If in Romanian-style *catholita* the word "dor" expresses a healthy and fruitful aspiration

longing for something still unclear but higher than the immediate realities of man, now, in *totetita*, the same word, understood as longing for something specific, for someone, even if idealised, comes to express the aspiration towards reality or achievement and concreteness. There is longing even in the consciousness of an artist who does not quite achieve embodiment, just as there is a feeling of longing even in the aspiration for fulfilment through action, a kind of restlessness, or settling of the mind through an appropriate response.

Along the lines described above, our spirit perceives a constant inadequacy between what is and what could be (what was meant to be, but was not to be), but without allowing, as in the illness described, reality to appear ghostly, but rather fantastical and magical. "Those who have not tasted the sweetness of what is," translated Udriște Năsturel in "The Life of Varlaam and Ioasaf," "cannot understand the nature of what is not." And in a reversal here, "what is" represents true and ideal life, as opposed to "what is not," which means "the false wealth and honour of this world," that is, the so-called real world with its transience and "its unstable things," as he puts it. Again, there is no need to necessarily see religiosity in this disposition of our spirit not to accept the real as good in itself and not worthy of desire as such. And there is no longer any need to read, in the symptoms of the illness that afflicts us, a tendency towards irreconcilability destined to lead us out of the world, as in Năsturel's text, but rather the more active meaning of irreconcilability with a reality in which the possible, with its riches, appears as perfection, but one with incessant transgressions, and this time too.

In this sense, how beautiful is the evolution of the Latin word "ens", meaning being, which in our language became "ins", individual: it is a vivid expression of our totality, understood as the need for

to send the being, from its ethereal generality, to reality and personhood. But in general, all the exploration that the Romanian spirit does to the being through language is deeply meaningful, as if seeking to give life and concreteness to the most abstract generality. It is almost dramatic, for those who have an interest and philosophical understanding of their language, to see the struggle of our past language to find suitable equivalents for the various philosophical nuances obtained in the great speculation of thought. In Samuel Micu's impressive "Philosophical Writings" there is even an attempt to translate the ens through "îns", with the meaning of being, but not in the sense of *general* being, just as terms such as: *îns* and *neîns*, or *estere* ("from *estere* to *putința*") are understood as existence or the term of being itself, as essence, or even the term of nature. *Ens* did not become *ins*, person, but it became a kind of estimate, as Eufrosin Poteca would have said, a kind of real entity ("this world is fulfilled and tomorrow is unfulfilled", or further: "the fulfilment of thought"), which would have an essence as being, an existence as *estere* and a nature as nature. — The exploration of our language in being was steadfast, as was our exploration in the verb to be, with its reduplications that we point out elsewhere: it was not to be, it was to be, it will be, it would be, it is to be, it was to be. And you ask yourself: are we in the realm of the real? Or perhaps, more than others, in that of the possible?

Finally, the whole realm of possibility, stronger in our minds than reality, to which we do not surrender completely, as some Western worlds have done at great risk, is now about to reappear on the horizon of the third spiritual disease that afflicts us, the disease of *poverty*. Certainly, if the disease is again taken, this time less in its exaggerated forms, as it should be

To describe it, in a more discreet version, ahoretia could be the main classic Romanian "maladivitate" (illness). It is an illness of lucidity, and the people, like the man here, seem lucid and awake; it is one that does not blindly reject general meanings, such as acatho-lia, but neither does it reject individual meanings, such as atodetia, thus endangering either the balance in reality or reality itself, but only rejects — to a greater or lesser extent, and where again our "measure" seems to come into play — the determinations, uncontrolled and unfiltered by the wisdom of the mind, that individuals and peoples can give themselves.

With or without the "rapture" that leads to enlightenment, as it appeared in its extreme cases, the disease in question provides the conditions for wise orientation on the one hand, or detachment on the other, or which, as we have seen, could lead to the great experiences of the spirit in the East, or, together with the mathematical and rationalist spirit that it favours, to some great innovations of the European spirit today. It may seem curious that the extreme experiences of Asia and the equally extreme ones of Europe are made possible by the same spiritual illness. But they have something in common, and something decisive for the spirit: a good encounter with *the negative*, or with that negativity from which Hegel made the life of reason.

We felt that we were not exaggerating when we pointed out that, from asceticism and poetry to mathematics and the scientific and technological revolution, the negative aspect of reason was perfectly consistent and active, even if there was a kind of rupture between the European world and the Asian or Indian world in particular. Perhaps, however, it is precisely the gentle form of asceticism that the Romanian spirit is attempting that could *restore* continuity, as it has been said about our country that, ultimately, it could be the pivot of tomorrow's world, with its dual openness to the West and

The distant dawn, the mediation that the world of tomorrow's history will so desperately need. But while the proclamation of such a role, whether historical, spiritual, or both, has no place here, the main features and symptoms of the present find it, allowing us to say that our spirit has been given the experience of the negative, until the assimilation of defeat on one level or another, with the overcoming, in a way not entirely foreign to that superior overcoming (*aufheben*) that Hegel knew how to invoke for his dialectic, or that any living dialectic today implicitly invokes. We were able to find in the Romanian "ba" the living traces of an authentic dialectical spirit, just as we found in the *positive* function of the devil in our folklore, further proof of our ability to put the negative to work.

If in all this we can discern traces of rationality and a sense of rationality, which is not foreign even to the lower "rationalisation" in the common sense — then when this does not become abusive — then we are entitled to say that the full and active forms of asceticism, as an apparent illness of detachment from the world but in reality as a better form of engagement in the world, are to be found among us. And if it is true, as it seemed to us, on somewhat subjective lines, that the great triumph of ascetic natures is achieved in later years and with later wisdom, then again we can say that the form of wisdom that our spirit loves is one of the ascetic type. In any case, in the face of the concrete picture of spiritual maladies, the question remains open as to whether ahoreticism characterises us better than the others or not. However, something seems decisive in supporting the primacy of ahoreticism, namely a word. This time it will not be that of "longing", although it is fully in its place in the good and active world of ahoretia, but rather the pre-

position "intru" (in), which we have invoked on several other occasions and which comes before us again now, offering itself as a key to understanding our spiritual nature.

The vicissitudes of the universal in European culture

The meaning of the expression "to be in" is perhaps best understood from a brief description of the vicissitudes of the universal in European culture, particularly from the Middle Ages to the present day. We would say that in the categories of grammar, which are banal and disregarded today, we can find the appropriate formulations for these vicissitudes through which the universal has passed in European consciousness.

In the Middle Ages, the universal was *a noun*. The so-called "quarrel of the universals" is well known, and everyone knows how easily all general notions were substantivised and personified, not to be reduced to the concrete but only to be represented in their universality. Thus, in "Le roman de la Rose" appear the well-known personifications of Love, Jealousy, Reason, Friendship, etc., but also notions such as Sweet-look and Good-welcome. Everything was thought of in universal terms, but in the manner of a noun.

The Renaissance brought another term into our grammar that is so significant for the spirit: it brought the adjective. Now colour, variety, nuance, richness and, in a word, all the magic of the adjective as an "epitheton", something placed over something else, comes into play. It is the world of Florence, with its fabrics, its shapes and colours and, ultimately, of course, its painting and artistic splendours. The entire Renaissance

birth could be understood as a world of adjectives, where the uniqueness of nouns has disappeared and plurality and accumulation have appeared, leading to the bastardisation of adjectives. For bastards are characteristic of this world (Leonardo da Vinci himself was a bastard) and with bastardisation, which will lead to the Baroque and its exuberance, the adjective expresses, from the beginning to the end of the Renaissance, all its aspiration towards the universal, even in its grammatical role in the well-known human ideal of the "Uomo universale".

Then came the world of 17th-century French classicism, where the universal was no longer expressed as a noun or adjective, but as *an adverb* and with the help of adverbial phrases. This classicism did not claim to be original; it only sought to have manner and style. For its creations of all kinds, primarily for tragedy, it took everything it liked from antiquity, or even from its Spanish and Italian neighbours, but it knew how to treat everything "In a chosen manner," "in a reasoned manner" with Racine's psychological depths, "in a rational manner" with Boileau's critical wisdom, or in the complete sincerity of man about himself, with the French moralists, who did not understand how to create, but only how to embellish with adverbs the classic acts and commitments of man.

If the 18th century brought this refinement and stylisation to completion through adverbs, around 1800 a new grammatical form appeared that took on the responsibilities of the universal: this time it was a known form of the adjective, but without any return to the positive and real world qualified by the adjective. Now *the comparative* appears and, after a while, *the superlative* itself. Indeed, with the new civilisation and economy, with the machine in particular, the "better" appears in the world and the desire to achieve a "better" condition for man everywhere. The characteristic of this world is

that it appears somewhat suspended: it no longer knows (and continues today to be uncertain, in consumer society for example) what is good and right, but it knows perfectly well what is better and better, and in the American version it knows admirably what is very good and very right. These are the values to be sought, and the universal would have taken refuge here; but we can now see clearly how many risks this entails, and some saw it clearly from the very beginning of the pre-eminence, in the world of values, of the comparative.

The newer world, especially the Western world of acatholism, but also the world of the second industrial revolution in general, now seems to emphasise a new grammatical form, beyond nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and beyond comparatives and superlatives. With the electronic technology and communication and control systems brought about by cybernetics, what dominates is the world of *conjunction*. Today, in much of the world, the universal has taken the form of the conjunction — namely, *and, or, if... then* — the conjunctions that govern mathematical logic and, through them, much of the world of tomorrow's automation. Spiritually, it is these same conjunctions that make the connections between people and worlds. But are they still connections? Contacts between people through such conjunctions — and such contacts do indeed exist among people in large human agglomerations, where they are accumulated by "and"s, sticking to each other not only through: and me, and I, or where they are separated by "or"s, that is, either me or you — such contacts seem, with their claim to represent the spirit in its universality, to be a true dissolution of the spirit.

This is where the Romanian contribution comes into play. It appears in the modest form of a grammatical term, namely *the preposition*. Everything that happens to us, and indeed everything that happens in the universe, must have a place and a balance, must be in something, above something, with something, towards something.

universal, must have a place and a balance, must be *in* something, above something, *with* something, *towards* something. But a miracle, dare we say, of the Romanian language makes a single preposition encompass all the others, expressing not only their totality, but even more: it is the preposition "*întru*" (in), which encompasses and makes possible, indeed, with its lack of spatial placement, If the life of the spirit has a meaning, then it is to be "*întru ceva*" (in something), and this could be said with all the other prepositions in their exact spatiality. And with such a preposition, the Romanian spirit could bring the universal down into the world of the preposition. *For* what are all these great achievements of civilisation and contemporary man?

If the life of the spirit has any meaning, then it is to be "in something", and this could be said, modestly but firmly, of the Romanian spirit, of a world whose constitutional maladies, reactivated too violently today, sometimes risk to displace it, in the words of the Indian proverb, into the condition of the maddened self.

BERSERKER
BOOKS

