

# **Alfredo M. Bonanno - The false and the obscene - 2007**

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## **PART ONE. The false**

### **Brief introductory note**

Alfredo M. Bonanno had sent us this book in drafts, after having completed it, taking care of the writing of the theoretical parts, as it is indicated from time to time, but also perfecting little by

little all the references and all the findings that, in a work of this kind, are a very long and certainly not easy undertaking.

Yet in the end he decided not to give it to the printers. Of course he has his good reasons, and he put us aside. These reasons we share and respect, but these texts, directly relating to a part of our revolutionary history, if only as French anarchist comrades, we intend to publish the same, even resorting on the one hand to a friendly loophole, and the other to a real constraint no less friendly.

The quibble is based on the fact that all of Bonanno's books, and therefore also this one, are not, for his exclusive decision, theoretically very well founded, justifiable and understandable, covered by copyright. Therefore anyone, (and therefore also us), can edit them and spread them without limits and without obstacles.

The forcing is based on another element, which perhaps would have made us decide to publish the same even not having, as we said, the previous loophole, and this one consists in the fact that most of the texts are close to our heart: first of all the attack on Sartre (therefore the use of Déjacque) and then the restoration, if only theoretically, of pornography as an instrument of revolutionary struggle to which we hope for an ever wider future use.

That's why we are publishing this book in France and not waiting for Bonanno's decisions, suspended for the moment, to release it in Italy.

Of course we warned Comrade Bonanno of our decision.

Paris, 17 January 2007

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## **Introduction to forgery**

Political analysis has inherent in its development an irremediable flatness. The critical elements of which it is composed are linked to the conditions of functioning of the political process. As everyone knows, the latter does not function without the search for consensus and the realization of all those changes necessary to make it possible.

The function of the ideological imbroglio within this process is the one once provided by religion. Modern man prays less but, according to Hegel's brilliant insight, makes up for this decrease by reading the newspaper.

It is admitted, in principle, that today the recipients of the political message, i.e. the passive subjects solicited to consent, are more informed if not more educated, and that therefore the trick must be more sophisticated or, at least, more articulated. This is doubtful. If a few decades ago the ideological background of consensus was oriented (on the left) towards proletarian internationalism and (on the right) towards the ethical state, today the ideological residues, let's say spiritual, the great values, have flattened out on the vague process of capitalist globalization. This has led to a leveling off of the cultural means employed, reaching miseries never known before, not even by the right wing that was least different from the truncheon. Few cultural attentions are therefore poured into the effort to find consensus, and this produces a trivial ideology that allows to give air to the throat of any political puppet.

This being the case, some believe that the use of provocation could have some interesting effects. But what is a provocation? A saying or doing that breaks with tranquility and good manners. So something that contradicts the stupid loquacity with which we fall asleep every day, inducing us to accept an existence that we consider inadequate to our presumed desires for diversity. One wonders if it is possible to break with stupidity. Distressing question. Each of us guards the sort of private idiotism we consider beyond question, a reservoir of well-constructed opinions that help us get by. But no functionalism has ever saved anyone's life. We go about dying with all our beneficent assumptions without batting an eye, thinking ourselves beautifully equipped to collect all the expressions we collect as single moments of a long illness.

A pie in the face makes you laugh, a sneaky stinger makes you grit your teeth in an equally silly grin. The enemies have grown stronger and we can't find a way to shatter their defensive wall. They have dematerialized the stones with which this wall is built, they have done so while we have been playing around with the most varied suppositions, accept yourself brother with calloused hands, dark skin, uncertain sex, brother that you have all the cards in order, accept and we will be grateful, we will help you in your struggle to make room, to be even more accepted, so that you can, honestly, give us a good kick in the butt, after you have obtained the recognition that you now lack.

We need a new style, a gesture that we haven't yet discovered in its various nuances, to be able to be truly provocative. For the moment, we are still stuck with the old authorization we had built for ourselves. Formally, our culture allows us to grasp the movements of the community that hosts us; when it doesn't, we provide for it as soon as possible. To be ironic is also a way of saving one's life. Possessing a rich color palette does not guarantee that these colors from saying will transfer to living, that would be too good. We have to overcome an ambiguity that lays bare our limits, the poverty we have to deal with every day, the fears and the unbalanced ambitions that fill our heads.

The artificial formulas with which we disposed ourselves to action now reappear as ghosts while their virtual reflections now inhabit university lecture halls, astronomical observatories and Indian temples. The provocation should insist on them, proceed beyond the scope of the enemy, since this territory has extended to the limits of our tents, extending to challenge the identity that we have attached to the true and the just, to the results considered undisputed and to a style that nothing and no one thought could expropriate us and that we now see spreading in the culture of domination.

Could it be inferred from this program that provocation still has spaces of its own, albeit less chaotic than it once did? I don't. I don't know what to answer. The inner compulsion, which we keep unchanged to give order and rule to our revolutionary convictions, when they should be the ones to give the last (poisoned) drink to every order and every rule, could make us produce a further stigmata, a codified reference point, put up with all the provocative canons now absorbed by the ongoing process.

Provocation is a spell that the enchanter puts on, albeit for a few moments, a suspension of the common judgment that we are all required to maintain since we have sworn an oath to the common significance (if only of words), an inappropriate and almost always unpleasant dissolution, a three-card game, a discourse without an object to discuss, an object suggested without an appropriate and persuasive accompanying discourse. The subtraction of the protective shield, which we always see built in front of everything we do, is a provocative solicitation, if only towards ourselves. Can we bear this subtraction? It is difficult to say. As a rule, we need something to illuminate us so that others can see what we are doing in the best light, and then we need something to obscure us so that what we have failed to do does not end up in the limelight. It's a back and forth that takes up

a lot of our time and almost all of our energy. Putting this tried and tested formula into crisis means, in the provocation, denuding ourselves, and every idyll begins with denuding, otherwise it is a scrambling of cluttered stomachs, and ends with revolution, therefore with the very high risk of being what one is. Every cowardice we try to hide when we should highlight it for all to see, being almost always the most intimate sign of our humanity, certainly much more understandable than the trumpeting of the brave who shoots on the barricades.

If I push - and the revolution would be late in coming without some substantial push - I have to take into account the totality of the consequences of my push, first of all on myself. I cannot turn pushing into a technologically advanced profession, therefore hiding behind the deontology of the specialist. There is no boldness too great that is not ridiculous when considered something that the bold one does and from which he distances himself precisely because that is the only way he can do it. In this way it is a ridiculous farce, the struggle is quite different. Fighting is not only the desire to have more, the acquisition becomes illusory if it is not assisted by some technique of identification. The one who acts identifies with the other and must propose to the latter an interpretative model of reality. His action itself does this without realizing it, but proceeding further the proposal must become apparent. This model is almost always an approximation and every approximation, as we know, is partially based on a lie.

Those who act, at the end of the day, albeit in part, construct a perspective that they are only able to partially verify. One could conclude that those who act, at least in part, lie. From these processes of identification come to life not only literature and theater, but also all areas of human experience in which every self is facing a process of transformation. We are faced with those conditions that are characterized by a special modulation of culture, that of the exception. Almost always these conditions, linked to such different perspectives, placed in the future, in which it is not given to know all the details of the proposal in full, are accessed with a kind of suspension of the principle of non-contradiction of ordinary philosophy and logic. Action as lie becomes an antidote against the codified will of power, the detail carefully stacked in the anatomical rooms of control and administration.

The vulgar lie is something else, it is an acquisition merchandise for poor spirits, for usufructuaries of the unknown who want to live on a modest income. Where life always wants more and is never satisfied with what it obtains in its impoverished condition, the lie, the fictions of the project - in the same way as in the theater and in literature - are an expression of joy, of the spirit of "everything and now", of dissipation, of waste. A hýbris that coincides with life itself.

The ethical precept, thou shalt not lie, is fixed in our minds in a twofold way, as an objective duty and as a vital duty. In the first case, the law is a mechanical precept, a dead thought, a compulsion that wants blind submission. This external rigidity proposes an empty necessity of order and structure; in it we can grasp, apparently divergent, arbitrariness and obedience fearful of consequences.

But both the one who refuses for the simple satisfaction of transgressing and the one who obeys for fear of the consequences are subject to the precept and accept its existence. The duty that is thus imposed is foreign to them, it is not part of their life, which is why in every occasion of obedience there is the possible rupture of acceptance, just as in every rebellion there is the possible experience of recovery. That precept is a dead letter, therefore it does not become part of life. If this objective duty, proposed by an abstract norm, is lived concretely, then it becomes part of my life, it no longer requires decisions or evaluations in terms of compliance with the precept or evaluation of the consequences, it simply disappears as a precept.

After all, living a lie is a lack of dignity, one of the fundamental deficiencies that make life impossible, reducing it to a mortifying existential exchange. My dignity lies in my reliability, in my consistency, in the respect I have for the relationship of correspondence that exists between what I say and what I do. As a being endowed with reason, my dignity continues to lie in the stability of my culture and my ideas, as well as in their projection into my daily actions. My dignity is therefore sustained by the respect I have for myself which corresponds, and I cannot help but do so, with the respect I have for others. In this consists my freedom, and this I am willing to defend. From this my decisions and the coherence that animates them derive light. Hence the recognition that I expect others to provide.

But, what if we were to detect a malfunction in this seemingly incontrovertible set of statements? If we were to glimpse the truth putting our dignity at risk? Does it make sense to assert that only through truth do we become free? Or is it only by making ourselves unconditionally available for freedom that we can move toward truth?

By placing ourselves in this perspective many elements of the previous catalog undergo a collapse. Life in the lie is not such, but falls to the role of extreme indigence, to the role of simple existence. The first error to be noted is therefore the one that forcefully inserts dignity in the sphere of existence. Here it is trivialized in the recognition of others, while even my own recognition of my dignity becomes secondary (I could be wrong in such an impoverished condition). If truth is not a guest of existence, but this is by definition the place of lies, I cannot ground my coherence in the rules of cohabitation. The respect I continue to have for others, and the eventual reciprocation, are partial (or accidental) elements, not the central point for evaluating my life. The latter continues to remain an unknown, something towards which I must decide to move, not the element from within which I evaluate and decide.

If in order to attack the enemy I have to renounce the truth, because this is the terrain of the clash, for another reason that only I am able to evaluate, I do not lose my dignity once the proposed falsehood moves in the direction of the attack, becomes an instrument of struggle and not an expedient to benefit my eventual condition of domination. There is a profound difference between the lie of power, produced and marketed to make stronger the possibilities of domination and control, and the lie employed as a means to expand my possibility of attack, to confront the rampant oppressor in front of me, to reduce the damage of repression and thus, ultimately, not to have those tools I have given myself to continue the struggle ripped from my hands.

Truth is not man's ultimate meaning; it is not his purpose in the world. If I were to accept this supreme instance-as some do-I would place myself in full dogmatism. I do not believe it. The unqualified truth, therefore the insertion of my life in what I concretize in the word, without residue and without fear, is love. Only in love can I place this equivalence between truth and life. But the existence of struggle that I lead, in the reality cut in two that hosts us all, cannot be governed by the laws of love. My dignity, therefore, resides in the truth that I link to the relationship based on love, meaning not only affection but also that affinity of which I have spoken so much. If I renounce this equivalence, I lose my dignity, which resides in my being free and positively (constructively) disposed to the relationship of love and affinity, to trust in some others (not all others), in my destination for life (and therefore for truth).

There is a kind of fundamental insincerity that is made indispensable by the power that forces me to lie, and thus obliges me to derogate from the precept of not lying. While life rejects the use of the means of power and deception, existence, a dimension grounded in the political relationship characterized by domination and exploitation, demands specific means of struggle (and sometimes deception) that threaten the realization of truth. Thus, since the exploited finds himself powerless,

or almost powerless, in the face of the exploiter, truth cannot at all times be an instrument for attacking power. The fault of insincerity, in the end, from the ethical point of view, is always of those who set precepts and oblige to respect them without setting the conditions for this respect to be possible. The presence and, at times, the absolutization of the political motive is an indication of existential insincerity. No declaration of acquaintance, of mutual trust and even of affinity, of commonality of interests, of situations or of hatreds, as it may take shape in the daily existence that surrounds us, can be said to be founded on a mutual trust; on the contrary, the latter always proceeds in parallel with distrust and fears of betrayal. At the extreme of this reality, when one is so immersed in the daily routine of existence that he is unable to raise his eyes to the sky of life, he becomes a chronic liar, that is, he even lies to himself.

Philosophy cannot lie. This is an assertion that many agree with, many who do not really know what philosophical analysis is or even what reflecting is. The deception of oneself as a consolation, a very common expedient, is also forbidden. Absolute radicalism nullifies every lie only on paper. In fact, the mechanism that produces the lie as consolation is much more subtle and difficult to expose. If I lie, I can't justify myself, I can't find a justification that manages to convince me while maintaining my self-respect. This statement is unfounded. The opposite is constant practice. I can choose not to lie, but I cannot turn this assertion into a universal law, except to sacralize a behavior that I am not sure I can guarantee to myself. The Kantian argument *About the supposed right to lie for the sake of humanity* is a lawyer's argument and only highlights the logical impossibility of necessary lying once the universality of the law is admitted.

In fact, telling the truth does not necessarily depend on a universal law, since it is not possible except in the sense of mere mirroring. Since existence itself is not made up of tautologies (almost always mathematical), but of what are generically called analytical judgments, the result is that we risk continually referring our saying to a judgment of quality that by definition cannot be true, but only sufficiently close to truthfulness. Every such statement expresses our opinion, therefore it suffers from the deleterious effects that our existence accepts and that are continuously produced by the daily reality that surrounds us. No human statement can be expressed in its authenticity, and therefore there can be no exemplary model. Every time, when faced with a question that seeks to establish the relationship between truth and dignity, the answer inevitably remains suspended. Whoever tries to get an answer at any cost must expect a critical look at existence, with all the consequences of the case. First of all, the laying bare of the qualitative difference between life and existence.

In existing, there is a process of reproduction of reality and of the same interpretative codes in which the sphere of subjectivity and that of objectivity are strongly relativized. Life, on the contrary, proposes sharper judgments, requires - in order to be truly experienced - an absoluteness nourished by truth. Duty is commercially interpreted in daily existence as the absence of arbitrariness and even reluctant obedience. But it is not accessible, as a logical category, to any generalization, since the generalization would immediately be relativized and destroyed (exceptions are well codified, they range from relief for justified reasons, to the very suspension in cases of particular exceptionality).

An absolutely truthful man would not live a day in the world that hosts us. His being sincere would start, in fact, from the presumption of sincerity in others, which is quite doubtful. In the absence of reciprocity he would be immediately destroyed. There is no need to think back to the Hobbesian condition of *homo homini lupus* to conclude that only a saint can find the strength for such a choice. Absolute sincerity excites as possible other experimentation, it reminds the tragic figures of literature, but this is not the problem. Philosophy can cultivate this thrill, it can try to

feel what the possible boundaries of the human might be, but it can never take shape as a practical warning, no behavioral indication. Only a different consciousness can manifest the clash between action and truth, contrasting it with the existential marriage between doing and lying. The rest belongs to suppositions.

Truth is, in the field that hosts us all, dimensioned in time, in experience that accumulates and modifies until it gives the illusion of completeness, however never fully realized. This truth is a logical concept, almost always based on correspondence or mirroring, not an actual reality. This means that there is no logical truth, therefore valid in our daily existence because it is connected with parameters of control established a priori, that is not connected with falsehood. Certainly, it is possible to distinguish between error and falsehood, between non-truth that can be corrected - in other words, errors, chimeras, illusions, reveries, dreams, etc. - and falsehood itself. - from the actual false, and the conscious false, the detailed deception, the deliberate and constructed lie.

The blatant false, the deception artfully constructed, everything that leads to the falsification of reality, can not be demonstrated except a posteriori and often in a violent manner. The unmasking of the deception is possible only on condition of not assuming the existence of an absolute truth, otherwise we fall into the dogmatic fanaticism of which sometimes the same anarchists have not been exempt. The clash with the lie is a long-term struggle.

The reality that hosts us presents all the connotations of the conflict between a pervasive power, more and more able to use sophisticated means of control and recovery, and a variegated conglomeration of individuals and movements not well identified from the class point of view (this concept is undergoing radical attrition) but nevertheless determined, at various levels of involvement, to resist or attack. The false cannot be set aside as an instrument of this resistance and attack. The strategy of lying and deception belongs to those who do not want to be preyed upon. Lying is a way of hiding. For the moment we do not distinguish between the false intended to disrupt the structure of power and the lie in the face of a repressive activity of control.

Hiding does not in itself contradict the notion of truth. It simply means not setting protocol coordinates that can be easily verified between one's personal identity, one's intentions regarding what to do and the knowledge that the enemy may have of all this. Hiding in many ways has a defensive function, but it can be a form of attack.

Giving ourselves an effective cover, capable of dissuading the enemy from placing us in a category of antagonists to be effectively controlled is certainly the best solution, but it has drawbacks. For one thing, if we want our own fighting action to be effective, we must almost always link that action with our own person. Except for the marginal case of professional concealment, in which new identity and new personal relationships replace the previous ones, this concealment is reduced to the minimum precautions concerning forms of communication, the careful selection of topics that are discussed with others, the answers to be given to any inquisitive questions, etc.

And here is the source and the starting point of every lie, a behavior that may seem obvious at first glance and not worth reflecting on, but which, if applied carefully, is able to modify the behavior of the adversary, depriving him of the information he needs to repress us. If we do not want to become prey, we must ensure that they do not pursue us. Through the lie we modify an unfavorable situation to our advantage, removing the signs that we inevitably leave in our daily existence on which the attention of the enemy can be exercised. In fact, we do not know if there are control procedures in place against us - this is almost always the actual situation we find ourselves in - but we must take it for granted that they exist. In other words, we have to invent a reality that may not be true. We have to falsify not only our own proposition in front of the

adversary but also what in essence the adversary might have enacted. As a rule, this second part of the lie of concealment could be considered a true falsehood, an invention that it is good to place in the last degree of attention and danger, without expiring into paranoia.

But the field in which the deliberately constructed lie finds its greatest significance is that which we can more accurately define as false. The deliberate construction of a falsehood produces consistent modifications in reality and can constitute, as I said before, an effective instrument of struggle.

The transmission of false information is one of the main activities of power. This undeniable reality has confronted many with the need to differentiate from a procedure that risks making us revolutionaries confuse ourselves with the shameful machinations that take place in the control rooms. Right moral scruple and interesting political evaluation. This is a moral scruple to which I have responded, albeit in part, in the previous pages, but that does not affect the revolutionary coherence because the very content of the false must be (directly or indirectly) harmful to power and can never be presented as an advantage. While there is no doubt that the daily falsifications perpetrated by power are for its exclusive benefit. The political evaluation that leads to a condemnation of the false because people would end up no longer believing in the revolutionaries who made it starts from a basic quantitative choice that does not interest us. That is, it assumes that the job of revolutionaries is to convince the great mass of people of the goodness of their analysis in order to channel them towards their own choices. Such could be the hypothesis of the old revolutionary syndicalism or of the outdated synthesis organizations of the anarchists. I'm certainly not talking about these museum pieces.

We come then to the false signal. This can prove advantageous to a minimum or a maximum extent, even more so than the veridical signal, as long as it is interpreted as genuine and taking into account the objective of attacking power, considering this attack not only in its extreme but also in its smallest features (simple dysfunctions, inefficiencies, productive obstacles, boycotts, etc.). Mimesis must reconnect to the original form of the specific communication, while dissimulation must fit into this pattern as content, that is, as modification.

## The false Sartre

In early January 1978 came out with the Edizioni Anarchismo *My political testament*, signed by Jean-Paul Sartre, No. 6 of the series "New contributions to an anarchist revolution", translated by me under the pseudonym of Giuseppe Alvisi.

To say that this pamphlet, of only 40 pages, had the effect of a large stone thrown into the stagnant waters of the European intellectual world is perhaps excessive, but it was certainly a nasty joke played on the French philosopher, a joke that, as far as I was concerned, I had been planning to play for several decades and that in this way ended up taking shape.

What are the characteristics of this fake?

First of all the text, by Joseph Déjacque, an anarchist, who died in Paris in 1864. So a dated text, but effective, for concepts and theses, extremist and unflinching. Attributing it to Sartre could only be a provocation, directed to stimulate and make us think, as well as to embarrass the Stalinist philosopher, unable to decide for a legal intervention against us. The lawyer Nino Marazzita, in a telegram of April 3, 1978, let us know: "On behalf of J.-P. Sartre and in respect of his ideological principles contrary to all forms of repression, I invite you to cease publication and dissemination of my book *My Political Testament* falsely attributed to him stop defect I will be forced to turn to civil judge to obtain seizure stop waiting for feedback cordial greetings.



Of the many chatters and stupidities published all over the world by newspapers and magazines I will try to give here below an idea, even if approximate.

Umberto Eco on "L'Espresso" of April 2, 1978 wonders anguished: "In the last two years: political posters published and posted by group A with the signature of group B, the false epistolary of Berlinguer published in a false Einaudi edition, the false text of Sartre mentioned in the next card. We still notice it because the forgeries are coarse and all in all inept or too paradoxical: but what if everything was done better and with a more intense rhythm?". Apart from the fact that the paradoxicality of the text attributed to Sartre was a deliberate choice and not accidental, in order to show how far the stupidity of intellectuals could go, not only Italian but, to put it briefly, European, the fact remains that the content of Déjacque's text is anything but paradoxical or incongruous. Reading it has a disruptive effect, and the fact that many have thought that it was the Sartre in question who wrote it is only a secondary effect, and not even very important, of the falsification operation. But Eco's concern is much more deep-rooted, he continues: "All that would remain [if this were to happen, that is, if the diffusion of forgeries were intense and persistent] is to react to the forgeries with other forgeries, spreading false news about everything, even about the forgeries - and who knows whether the article you are reading is not already the first example of this new trend. But this very suspicion shows the suicidal potential contained in forgery techniques." I don't believe that it is a self-eliminating potential, on the contrary it would make impracticable most of the current system of opinion making, and if we take into account the immense reach of the Internet, the diffusion of fakes could be so high as to be inconceivable at the current state of diffusion through printed paper. All this if the content of the fake in question is a revolutionary content, and that to be "fake" remains only the container, the means that carries the message. I know well that between these two aspects there is an increasingly intrinsic connection of mutual interference, the false container module can only enhance the attention to the real, and well-founded, content. Never vice versa, limiting itself only to draw attention to itself.

Eco himself recalls: "About ten years ago [in 1968] two episodes of forgery caused a sensation. First someone sent to the "Avanti!" a false poem by Pasolini. Later, someone else sent to the "Corriere della Sera" a false essay by Cassola. Both were published and caused a scandal. It was containable because the two episodes were exceptional. The day they became the norm, no newspaper would be able to publish an article that was not personally delivered by the author to the editor. The entire teletypewriter system would go into crisis". As we can see, even if today the data transmission system is different and allows a more effective control via e-mail, this does not mean that Eco's worries have disappeared, since it is certainly not difficult to enter unprotected systems such as those between a writer and a newspaper. The ghost of confusion and chaos is always behind the doors.

Eco says: "The theoretical idea that regulates these forms of falsification comes from the new criticism of the idea of power. Power never originates from an arbitrary decision at the top but lives on thousands of forms of minute or "molecular" consensus. It takes thousands of fathers, wives and children who recognize themselves in the structure of the family for a power to be able to stand on the ethics of the family institution; it takes a myriad of people to find a role as doctor, nurse, janitor for a power to be able to stand on the idea of segregation of the different". Here too the basic thesis on which a revolutionary use of the false is based is well examined by Eco. Of course his scandalized purpose is to warn about the potential of this tool, but the fact exists, even if it has not had the following that would have been desirable from a revolutionary point of view. Eco continues: "In the era of electronic information, the watchword for a form of non-violent (or at least not bloody) guerrilla warfare, the guerrilla warfare of falsification". After all, the "false

Sartre" only intended to show the fragility of the intellectual apparatus placed in front of a proposal that was not easily decodifiable and, at the same time, intended to indicate a fairly easy road to take to put power in difficulty. No guerrilla hypothesis. But Eco is even more documented on the subject, after all it is about communication and this is the subject of his greatest competence. He tells of the system used by American universities to make free phone calls all over the world using the credit card numbers of executives of large multinationals. These are confidential numbers that are nevertheless found on the market for a few dollars. From a conversation with the American sociologist Joseph La Palombara, Eco reports that "the thousands of students playing games like this are not the only example of electronic dissent. A California group had urged everyone to pay their phone bill regularly, but adding an extra cent to the check. No one can charge you if you pay a little more. But if you do it in many the whole administrative system of the telephone company jumps. Its computers in fact to every irregular payment stop, record the discard, make to leave a letter of credit and a check of a cent for every creditor. If the operation is successful on a large scale everything stops." I am not sure that today things have remained the same and that there are no effective means to make the computers work anyway, but it should not be difficult to use further modifications in the form of this sabotage that closely resembles the famous "working to rule".

"Every power of the top - Eco specifies - is based on a network of molecular consensus. But it is necessary to distinguish between those consents that allow the deployment of macroscopic forms of control and those forms of consensus that satisfy instead of a rhythm that we would say biological, and that are infinitely beyond the constitution of power relations properly so called. Let's take two examples. A modern state succeeds in making its citizens pay taxes not through the imposition of a top-down force but through consensus. The consensus arises from the fact that the members of the group have accepted the idea that certain collective expenses (for example: who pays for the sandwiches for the trip on Sunday?) should be redistributed collectively (answer: we pay for the sandwiches each). Let's admit that this custom of microconsensus is wrong: the sandwiches should be paid for by those who make the most profit from the trip, or those who have the most money. If the micro-consensus base is destroyed, the ideology on which the taxation system is based is also in crisis. But let's move on to the second example. There is a group of people united by any relationship. Among these people, as in any group, there is a convention that whoever gives news gives true news. If one lies once he is reprovved (he has deceived others). If he lies habitually he is judged unreliable, the group no longer trusts him. At the limit the group retaliates and lies to him. But suppose the custom of disregarding the minimal condition of truth spreads, and everyone lies to others. The group unravels, the war of all against all begins." The first hypothesis, with its puerile example, is laughable and, as such, does not fully illustrate the system of operation of taxation, it does, however, make one understand the disastrous consequences that would occur when the collective consensus collapses. The second example does not take into account the fact that the false does not make sense that it is directed towards everyone, only a senseless behavior could suggest such a thing. A well-directed fake tries to put a part of the referent in crisis, while the remaining part, usually the minority closest culturally and ideologically to those who produced it, knows perfectly well what it is really about, or possesses the means to decipher the fact in question with great ease. Moreover, even if this were not the case, the objective content of the forgery must, in order to be the kind of forgery we are dealing with here and not just any forgery that on principle simply says everything and the opposite of everything, possess a truth content, a message that respects the revolutionary power relations and indicates means and processes of development for an attack against the enemy. As if to say, the false remains valid, only the assignment to a precise source is false, and this casts doubt and panic, as happened

precisely with Sartre's false *Testament*, only those who assign meaning to a content, to any idea, only through the filter and the guarantee of whoever signed that idea and declares himself its author.

From this point on, the good Eco, who had retained considerable lucidity of analysis, gets lost and begins to say the usual nonsense that people of his ilk are wont to let slip when they get into confusion. "At this point [when everyone is lying], power relations have not been destroyed. The conditions of group survival have been destroyed. Each person in turn becomes the overwheeler and the victim. Unless the power is somehow reconstituted in favor of someone, namely the one or those who link up to work out some more effective technique, and lie better than the others, and faster, becoming in short the masters of the others. In a universe of fakers, power is not destroyed; at most, one power-holder is substituted for another." This consideration is obviously puerile since it starts from the hypothesis of a clear separation between truth and lies, when on the contrary it is demonstrated that this separation, and its "pure" use, is only possible in the extremist, and obnubilated, minds of philosophers. The example of Fiat being undermined by a false communiqué, which in turn hires a more skilled falsifier to undermine those who undermined it, is so stupid that it is not worth discussing.

The last pearl of this reasoning, which began well and ended badly - from which we can deduce that poor Eco has gradually become so frightened that he has lost his temper and his normal judgment, which is not little in these matters - is as follows: "Certain forms of consensus are so essential to associated life that they reconstitute themselves against any attempt to undermine them. At most they reconstitute themselves in a more dogmatic, I would say more fanatical way. In a group in which the technique of disruptive falsification spreads, a very puritanical ethic of truth would be re-established; the majority (in order to defend the biological bases of consensus) would become fanatical about "truth" and would cut out the tongue even of those who lie to make a rhetorical figure. The utopia of subversion would produce the reality of reaction." To tell the truth, the criticism I received for taking responsibility for the affaire Sartre did not come to cut my tongue, although certainly not tender, but came from comrades who had, and have, a rigid conception of anarchy and unable to go beyond their noses. In any case, if these comrades had reflected at all, they would have realized the groundlessness of what Eco says and also of their fears or their petitions of principle. When the latter specifies, immediately after the explosion of his fear: "Does it make sense to propose to disrupt the thin network of micro-powers (note well, not to put it in crisis through the criticism of its assumptions, but to disrupt it by making it unusable suddenly) once it is assumed that there is no central power and that the power is distributed along the threads of a web thin and widespread? If this web exists, it is capable of healing its local wounds, precisely because it does not have a heart, precisely because it is - let's say - a body without organs". Illusory reasoning because it is by no means certain that the purpose of falsifications is to bring down power, or power diffused throughout the territory, as state structures inevitably are today, it can, as in fact it is, only seek to put them in difficulty. No one has ever been able to claim, and it would be a delusion of omnipotence, that by falsehood one can destroy power. One can hinder it and, in the long run, the latter would end up finding adequate answers and then it would be necessary to find other ways and means. Always saving the validity, and I would say the truthfulness of what is the content that the false, falsely, conveys.

Umberto Eco, in a separate box, published in the same issue of "L'Espresso" mentioned above, lets us know how many types of fake there are, the fake that imitates the original shamelessly without having the ability to do so, the artistic fake that manages to make the imitation perfect, and then only the notarial certification can save us, and finally: "The work seems almost made by

its alleged author, except that it says things that the author had never said (even if he would have wanted to, or could, or should have said them). When the play is uncovered we have the forgery as parody, and it is a form of literary or social criticism. When the object intends instead to pass for authentic, we have a forgery technique that can tend to two purposes: either to spread false news about that author or to provoke, after the discovery of the forgery, an atmosphere of distrust towards any message, since we can no longer trust the "genuineness" of its issuance. In the latter case the forgery technique doesn't make use of our trust, on the contrary it wants to blow up the very notion of authenticity and make group relations based on a network of microscopic consensus unworkable". Here too Eco begins well and ends badly. The conclusion picks up on the questioning of authenticity with the aim of bringing down power, which is clearly a fola, while interestingly, here he finally realizes what this "faith" in authenticity is, and how it plays its role of support and guarantee, making our hearts flutter with fear that some thoughtless person, like yours truly, will mess up the cards without warning.

We leave Eco to his destiny and we pass to Valerio Riva who is the author of another interesting article, always on the same issue of "L'Espresso". He writes: "Of all the political fakes, the craziest or at least the most bizarre is the last. Jean-Paul Sartre is its victim. It is not yet known whose work it is, but certainly of some French intellectual, probably of anarchist feelings, however well educated, good memory, familiar with the history of the labor movement and, so to speak, bon vivant of modern philosophy. What is it all about? Here it is. A few weeks ago, a Sicilian magazine "Anarchism" which exhibits as its only address a post office box (No. 61) in Catania, publishes a plaquette of 40 pages entitled *My Political Testament* and signed no less than Jean-Paul Sartre. The plaquette does not escape the attention of many friends and connoisseurs of the French philosopher in Italy. They have no difficulty in recognizing the false. There is nothing of Sartre, except perhaps a few sentences here and there, the style does not belong to the traditional one of his works. Sartre himself, informed, immediately denies ever having written such a thing. But then, who wrote it? Let's see. First of all, let's try to understand why it was written. On "Messaggero" Costanzo Costantini advances the hypothesis that it is a maneuver: to invent a Sartre advocate of violence and senile theorist of rebellion at all costs. The hypothesis seems convincing. But curiosity is not satisfied: even in these terms it is too naive a forgery. Not even the most violent anarchist of 1978 would write in this way. Let alone Sartre, senile or not. Let us therefore go further. The style of the plaquette immediately presents itself as a strange, unpredictable pastiche of typically nineteenth-century writing mixed with very current indications. The whole text would seem to have been constructed with this curious procedure: taking one or more writings by nineteenth-century anarchists, mixing them together and expunging all references to facts and characters from that historical period and replacing them with references to President Giscard, Mitterand, Marchais, 1968. At this point I wonder if this pastiche can be revealed in its stylistic components. And let's go to a historian of French anarchism, Jean Maitron, author of the most comprehensive bibliography of 19th century anarchist literature. Maitron immediately identifies, if not the author of the text (which is almost always anonymous), at least the time when the original text may have been written. Around 1880, in France, there was a blossoming of magazines, pamphlets, short texts, inviting the rebellion against the bourgeois society, even preaching the practice of poisoning wells, food, rape, murder, looting, burning. And so absurdly incendiary as to border rather on literary delirium than actual political propaganda. But why attribute a text of this kind to Sartre? In the dedication on the title page of the book there is perhaps an explanation of the whole trick. The dedication says: "To my anarchist friends whom I unjustly despised and to the memory of my friend Camus". To have taken a text from 1880, insanely delirious, literally

violent, all in all quite ridiculous, to have attributed it to Sartre (with a few minor modifications) and to present it as a sort of posthumous reparation for differences with Camus, is perhaps the joke of a witty literary man? An example of literary criticism? A philosophical exegesis? Like saying that the political Sartre is no less delusional than the naive literary anarchists of a century ago?" These considerations are interesting and demonstrate, regardless of the medium used, the false that could still take other paths and multiply going around the world to sow various disruptions, demonstrates I said the inconsistency of the dominant culture. Think of Maitron, undisputed specialist, professor at the Sorbonne, who takes a very serious blunder (obviously for him), failing to identify the text of Joseph Déjacque that dates back to 1864 and not to 1880. And, finally, the dedication, which brings the rambling extensor of the reported "piece" to considerations of literary exegesis and of a small internal squabble in the fictitious world of stylistic imagination, while the problem slipped elsewhere, towards shores that for these people are absolutely incomprehensible.

The "Corriere della sera" of April 3, 1978, in an article signed by Sebastiano Grasso, tries to build an interview with me, which took place in the typography Alfagrafica Sgroi in Catania, which was only a series of jokes with a fellow countryman (I think Grasso is from Acireale) whom I met years before and who at that time presented himself as an interviewer. My answer was only: "I won't tell you who the author of the text is, certainly not Sartre, look it up for yourself, and I won't give you an interview. On the other hand, where were you journalists when we published, again with Anarchism Editions, the *Complete Works of Mikhail Bakunin*, of which the first five volumes have already been published for a total of 1700 pages? That was an opportunity to discuss together. But these things do not interest you, you are interested to know how, today, your incompetence does not allow you to understand who is the real author who is under the name of Sartre.

The "Messaggero" of April 12, 1978, in an article of nine columns, entitled "False, stupid and ugly", signed by Costanzo Costantini, addresses the problem. The author's skills do not allow him to grasp even remotely the phenomenon in front of him. So here he is limited to an equal reproduction of the text with abundant quotations, since he had to fill the entire third page of the newspaper. Then he adds: "There is no need to have read the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, to understand, immediately, that it is a gross fake, a vulgar and insulting attribution: even who has not read even one page can immediately realize it. There is not a single line, in the whole book, that could have been written by the French philosopher, even now that from many sides, not only from the right but also from the left, they try to make him pass for a senile old man and they do not hesitate to say that, now old and almost blind, he would go in search of consensus at any cost, and that he would have lost control of himself and of what he does. Not even his fiercest adversaries, not even his most virulent and most bad faith detractors, can deny that Jean-Paul Sartre, in all his writings, even the least literary, even the most occasional and most directly political, always retains his own style, a high stylistic level, research and writing quality that place him among the greatest prose writers of the last half century... Not even on the ideological and political level the booklet can be attributed, for one minute, to the French philosopher and politician. We mean to refer, specifically, to the anarchist component found in him, in his thought and action. On the occasion of a recent controversy that arose following his signature to the "Appeal against repression in Italy", we had the opportunity to point out that Jean-Paul Sartre had always shown a strong anarchist tendency, and that this tendency represented an element of coherence and a proof of intellectual rigor even in the great volubility of which he had given example as a thinker and as a politician". Costantini is truly amazing, the Stalinist Sartre is dressed in the clothes of the anarchist. Could this be the effect, in retrospect, of our false will? Basically, as everyone knows, the French philosopher (so to speak!) had gone hanging out in all the

homologated versions of the political modulations of the left, even the most extreme, but a Stalinist can ultimately be an anarchist? Only in the interpretation of any pennivendolo our provocation can be taken as a defacement of the substantial (and true) anarchism of Sartre. I have always thought that Sartre was nothing more than a Stalinist, endowed with affabulatoire skills, but nothing more. The undaunted Costantini continues: "From the positions taken from the distant forties to the most recent, he had insisted on a constant motive: that he preferred the movement to the stasis, the becoming to the being, the negation to the affirmation, that he was for the continuous change, the incessant renewal, for a society without classes, without dictatorship and without stability; that he was against any kind of institution and power, against the institution and power in themselves. But these tendencies and motifs of thought have nothing to do with what one reads in this apocryphal political testament." But come on, how can one say such things about a character like Sartre. I leave it to the readers to explain why this journalist takes so much trouble to defend him. After all, it would have been enough to pass our libel over in silence. Instead he didn't, and the reason could be, I suggest one, that a little bit everyone has been interdicted, given the generalized ignorance, and have perhaps thought that underneath there could be a provocation, but made by Sartre himself. Human stupidity has no limits.

A little with hindsight, Domenico Settembrini on "L'Europeo" of July 19, 1979 wrote, speaking of the false *Testament*: "A good high school knowledge of history should also allow the common reader to place the original between 1850 and 1861, attributing the authorship to one of those French who emigrated to America following the failure of the revolution of 1848 and the subsequent establishment of the II Empire of Louis Bonaparte. The clues in this sense abound. From the continuous references "to the provisional government" and "to '48", considered as still burning events, to the tirade against slavery "the whites of America deny the human race to the Negroes". Yet, questioned by a journalist, Jean Maitron, one of the most serious and prepared historians of French anarchism, shifts the date of the original around 1880, to attribute the authorship to one of those anonymous to whom we owe in those years a flourish of anarchist appeals to the rebellion, written with the same incendiary and apocalyptic tones of the "testament". The cantonata has incredible. Already in 1971, the publisher Champ Libre, stimulated by the neo-anarchist wave of 1968, has in fact made available to the public bookstores the collection of the writings of Joseph Déjacque, *A bas les chefs*. Here you can read in full *La question révolutionnaire* del 1854 that served as a canvas to the unknown author of the false will. Except for a few small cuts and the updating of personal names, such as Giscard instead of Bonaparte, the two texts are indeed identical." Settembrini is a documented reactionary, and to realize it is enough to read the following passage, contained in the same article cited above, which concerns me personally: "Bonanno, publisher of the Italian edition of the testament, for years has been preaching the need to recover and apply on a large scale the most destabilizing techniques of classical anarchism. His motto is: from the sabotage of production in factories to guerrilla warfare. It was clear then the intention to endorse with the name of Sartre the terrorist choice, while making it clear to the philosopher that anarchism is a consequential idea, embracing which you can not expect to stand eternally on the threshold, as the father of existentialism has done with communism. As for Bonanno, one cannot deny that he has plenty of consistency. He has in fact harshly criticized the hesitation of most anarchists, to take sides without reservation with the admission that anarchism or is revolutionary or it is not. I want to mention here that in my many vicissitudes with the repression, both at the level of police investigations as well as real trials, I have often found myself in front of these analyses published (not only the article mentioned above)

by "L'Europeo", even with signatures different from Settembrini. Police collaborators and spies are many.

Giacoma Maria Pagano, in the "Rivista di studi crociani", in the April 1978 issue, p. 228, writes: "This pamphlet [Sartre's *political testament*] appears only as the product of a frenzied protest, stimulated perhaps by the problems within which the society of our time is struggling. In the background there is a certain aspiration to make everyone happy in the world, to free people from oppression, whether it be dictatorship or laws and institutions; there is a hymn to freedom (the famous "freedom without restraint" of which Camus had once spoken: it is not by chance, perhaps, that the book was dedicated to him - forgetting, however, the lively controversy Sartre once had with him)". But with what capacity for understanding do certain people approach problems? It is not known. The dedication to Camus, of course apocryphal like everything else, was intended to suggest a rapprochement (this is possible) to the political and revolutionary legacy of his former friend Camus. It was, in a sense, the misleading indication, placed in anteporta that, as we can see, had enough imbeciles who fell for it. I spare the reader the rest of the article, as stupid and flat as you can imagine.

An example of gullible imbecile is the article by G. Mazz., "Sartre arrives at anarchy in a confused political testament", published by "La voce repubblicana" of February 18, 1978. The poor reviewer takes the bait in full and even cites the (fictitious) original French publisher from which *Il testamento politico* claims to have been translated: Gare l'explosion. But gare l'explosion, in French means: "watch out, it's going to explode". In short, a mockery. It was enough to have a better familiarity with languages. Besides, since no one has noticed this gem, why take it out on poor Mazz. Let's leave it at that. He writes: "In less than forty pages the tormented philosopher exposes what he defines his own "political testament", and entrusts to the history a group of ideas in which the final result of his philosophical research is condensed. Reading it all in one go, one has the impression that the author of the book is not Sartre, but any anarchist soaked in the nineteenth-century letter on the subject. Yet here and there re-emerge small phrases and notations that reveal the presence of the sartrian pen". But that's not all. Stupidity runs rampant further on: "Sartre attacks every constituted power frontally: he does so with a disconcerting simplicity almost forced by the desire to say everything and at once, his anxiety for liberation. Sometimes he falls into the rhetoric of effect sentences full of images that should excite the aggressive imagination but that more often have the effect of weighing down the reading. A vein of deep vitalism creeps throughout the writing. Verbs of action and movement frequently recur and mix with some flashes of harmonic utopia. All the ingredients of the traditional anarchist controversy are found, from attacks against all forms of government, the hope of direct legislation, the fight against all religions, against the family, property to the breviary of social reforms in which the people as such is erected to subject united, mythical creator of its history without intermediaries. I do not count here on following Sartre's arguments, because there are none; what matters to me is to evaluate the congruence of the things he says. There is no serious novelty in these pages, written in a sanguine style, full of overabundant adjectives in which the labyrinths of existential thought seem to be devastated by a brute force full of certainties and great waste, anxious to assert itself against everything, in the name of the revolution for freedom, but through all sorts of iconoclasm and plundering. It is a pleasure to see how far the cards can be cheated for some intellectuals and how these people can derive deductions at will from anything that is put under their nose.

Also on the "Corriere della Sera", this time on April 15, Sebastiano Grasso back on the subject writing: "The anarchists do not yet declare what "classic" it is. It is clear that they seek the controversy. At all costs. And the telegram of the lawyer of the philosopher must have surprised

them not a little. It is clear that Jean-Paul Sartre, who recently denounced the repression in Italy, does not want to be, himself, an incentive for this. The criminal trial, therefore, there will not be. With great disappointment of the anarchists who, perhaps, aimed precisely on this. After all, what apparently could seem to be a commercial operation (five thousand copies of circulation now, it seems, all sold out) in the long run reveals its real aspect: a political operation. The aim? Perhaps to refute, with facts, the ideological position of Sartre. But, apparently, the French philosopher did not fall into the trap". Grasso touches here an element of greater concreteness, only he is mistaken in thinking of a repressive response from Sartre, it was more than evident that the old Stalinist could not turn to the judiciary, and precisely because of his not remote positions against repression in Italy. As for the attempt to unveil Sartre's real positions, in order to have this project, it was not possible to rely on forty poor pages, it was necessary to make a more serious investigation, which has not been done so far.

Luigi Compagnone is really priceless. On "Tuttolibri" of April 8, 1978, he writes: "Either the person in charge [of Anarchism Editions] is an idiot or he is pleased (as an interested superidiot) to contribute to this horrible bilge of confusion, hatred and violence that feeds our country. If he really is an anarchist, he is the dumbest of all anarchists because he doesn't even know that in their recent congress, the real anarchists have rejected the dogmas and codes of the violent and murderous. At this point I can not, I Neapolitan, not regret Ciccio Cacoza, a very sweet anarchist of the late nineteenth century Neapolitan, who in 1898, during a demonstration managed to slip into the cabinet of the prefect Casavola shouting: "Sir, you are my hostage!". "Cacoza replied, annoyed, "Your welcome, sir, is so unmannerly that I feel obliged to remove the disturbance immediately". And he left. Ciccio Cacoza never threw bombs but only leaflets inciting the tenants not to pay the rent. He died at the poor man's hotel. His poor life had been a respectable and painful "pastiche". What to say? Apart from the contumelie, which do not touch me, said by an imbecile like Compagnone they seem almost compliments. The story, if true, is worthy of the stories of Croce. The *Testament*? Don't even mention it, let each one go his own way.

Alberto Stabile, from the pages of "La Repubblica" on April 4, 1978, could do no better than inform his readers of the fact that in Sicily the people of Catania are known as unrepentant forgers, due to the famous Ciulla, who at the beginning of the 20th century held the police forces of all of Italy in check with the perfection of his forged banknotes.

It does not matter to report the articles of "Le Figaro", "El Pais", "Die Frankfurter Zeitung", "The Guardian", etc.. In the same way, it is of no interest to report the considerations of the many militant newspapers that have published part or all of the *Testament*.

## **Jean-Paul Sartre: *My Political Testament***

Jean-Paul  
*My*  
Edizioni  
Paris 1977

*political*  
"Gare

Sartre  
*testament*  
l'explosion"

Translation by Giuseppe Alvisi

To my anarchist friends whom  
I unjustly despised  
and to the memory of my friend Camus



## To the proletarians

Proletarian brothers, it is to you that I dedicate this work, the fruit of the vigils of one of your own.

It is to you that I commend these pages, ink crystallized in the loneliness and exile of grief; exercise in hatred and contempt, in the ruin and death of the bourgeoisie; full-throated attack on religion and family, government and property!

May these pages, like hailstones in space, serve to crack the notions of right in your consciences and make social anger vibrate in your brains and hearts. I am anxious for the moment when you, the energetic mass, raised by logic and revolutionary force, will rush like an avalanche upon this society laden with privilege and exploitation.

And so, like a fertile seed, like a life-giving ray, may these pages add to the regenerative spring that will succeed the winter of destruction; opening the way to human life, to freedom, to equality, to fraternity.

And may thus, after the bloody cataclysm, humanity always walk from science to science and from discovery to discovery, to the conquest of the ideal, to harmony, relegating, from day to day, from hour to hour, civilization among the monstrosities of the past, among antediluvian antiquities!

## Introduction

Any government that does not include the people as a whole is a de facto government. The law - if rights and government were not sworn to remain always at odds - would be the people legislating by themselves, without representation, without delegation.

To date, there have been only de facto governments.

But, however much the old and new usurpers of the sovereignty of the people, statisticians of all kinds, formalist republicans or montagnards, insist, is Giscard perhaps outlawed?

If it were a matter of political law - and for these gentlemen it is nothing else - of the law as it exists under all and with all powers, constitutional or absolute, no, Giscard is not outlawed. On the contrary, he is the God and the pontiff.

It is in the law like the representative, legislative or constituent assemblies, granting charters or laws to the people; like the provisional government of the revolution, launching its formulas from Mount Sinai.

On this point no dispute, Giscard is not outlawed, that is, he is not outside the political law, it is understood.

But, law is one thing, social law, human law, natural law is another.

In this respect, is Giscard in the law? Evidently not. No more than the provisional government which turns the February victory to its own advantage. No more than the legislative assembly that imprisons, deports, shoots, guillotines the social forces of the future; that votes and enacts at will taxes on misery.

But not only Mr. Giscard is outlawed. So is the government, all previous governments, the entire bourgeoisie, all landlords, bankers, shopkeepers, industrialists. Every master who exploits the labor, production, misery and hunger of the proletariat.

Yes, outlaws! And one has the right to protest against bourgeois oppression, with the rifle by rising up en masse, flags in the wind, in the sunshine of the barricades, and also with the knife by rising up individually, alone, on a deserted street corner or under the veil of night. Killing and stripping a prince of his scepter, killing and stripping a bourgeois of his gold, does not mean killing

and stripping a man: it means slaughtering a ferocious beast and stripping it of its fur; in every minute of the twenty-four hours, for the proletarians, it is self-defense.

Who among you would dare to cast the anathema against the servants of the Middle Ages who set fire to the lord's castles, plunging their hands into his belly to tear out his entrails and then dance in the ruins of the smoking castle? Who would dare to cast anathema on these servants who intended to wrest their freedom with iron and fire?

Who among you would dare to cast the anathema on the slave of ancient times who struck the patrician in the midst of an orgy, snatching the golden cup from his hands, and after emptying it fled, taking his booty with him and murdering the robbed?

Who among you would dare to cast anathema on the republicans of old Rome who, wishing to free the Republic from a tyrant, plunged their daggers into Caesar's hips, washing with blood the shame of his yoke?

Well. Times have not changed. Caesar still exists. Yesterday he was called provisional government, liberation government, constituent, legislative assembly, President; today he is called Giscard; tomorrow he might be called Marchais or Mitterand.

Would Brutus and all the regicides then be dead?

The patrician, the feudal lord, are they not the bourgeoisie of today? The slave, the servant, is he not the proletariat of today? Slaves, servants, revolutionaries of the present times, logic is inexorable, it guides our conduct. So, stand up! let us renew the tradition with Brutus, Spartacus and the peasant rebels of times past! - On your feet! action! insurrection! revolution!

- Action, insurrection, yes, but why?

- To have us imprisoned, machine-gunned to no purpose; to leave our companions and children in mourning and misery? Very poor thing all that.

- Revolution, yes, but what?

- The one who will replace power with another power, one man with other men? Sadder still! - We all have the right and, when the time is right, the duty to act; to use the muscles that nature has given us to violently break the chain of slavery that binds us at the throat and wrists. Individually we can do little; collectively, all of us - we have the strength. What we lack to act successfully, what is too little unfortunately! is the idea, it is faith, passion, fanaticism for the idea; faith, passion, fanaticism without which mountains cannot be raised, miracles cannot be worked; idea without which force is fruitless and sows only to reap catastrophes. The force without the idea is like a locomotive launched at full speed in a direction where there are no rails; it is a ship without a pilot and without a compass that will soon be swallowed by the waves.

So no action, no insurrection, no revolution without a social purpose, unless we want to "put in the place of a crime another crime."

However, immobility is not admissible. It is necessary to act, to rise up, to revolutionize. Let each one therefore question his own thought, the thought of others, penetrate it and throw ideas into it. Let all these individual convictions, without losing any of their individuality, be grouped together in a unity of principle like the leaves in the branch of a tree. Let one or more problems be addressed: government, religion, property, family. Let all those who solve them positively stand on one side and all those who solve them negatively stand on the other. Thus, without agreeing on everything that follows from these four great heads of the beast that under the name of civilization forces us into modern barbarism; while reserving differentiations of detail, let us try to constitute the unity of the revolutionary party. Then the ship will have a pilot, a compass; the locomotive the rails; the force will be at the service of the idea and the revolution will be powerful.

## About the revolution

Principles  
freedom, equality, fraternity  
consequences

Abolition of government in all its forms, monarchical or republican, of the supremacy of one or of majorities. Establishment of anarchy, of individual sovereignty, of complete, unlimited, absolute freedom to do everything that is in the nature of the human being.

Abolition of Religion, Catholic or Israelite religion, Protestant or any other kind. Abolition of the clergy and the altar, the priest - curate or pope, pastor or rabbi - the Deity, idol in one or three persons, autocracy or universal oligarchy.

In their place, man - at the same time creature and creator - with nature for God, science for priest and humanity for altar. Abolition of individual property, ownership of land, buildings, workshops, ownership of everything that is an instrument of work, production or consumption.

Property shall be collective, one and indivisible, possession in common.

Abolition of the family, the family based on marriage, paternal and marital authority, and inheritance. In its place, the great human family, the family one and indivisible as property. Liberation of the woman, emancipation of the child.

Finally, abolition of authority, of privilege, of antagonism. But freedom in their place, equality, fraternity embodied in humanity.

Out of the abstraction of the past this threefold formula will have to develop all its concrete consequences in the positive reality of the present.

That is, Harmony, this oasis of our dreams, ceasing to be like a mirage before the caravans of generations, and delivering to each and all, as fraternal shadows and in universal unity, the sources of happiness, the fruits of freedom; a life of delights, at last, after an agony of more than eighteen centuries in the sandy desert of civilization.

## Government

No more governments, these steamrollers, these levers of support for reaction.

Every government, - and when I say government I mean every delegation, every power outside of the people, - is in its essence conservative, - conservative-limited, conservative-retrograde, - as it is in man's essence to be selfish. At man, the selfishness of one is tempered by the selfishness of others, by the solidarity which nature has established, whatever he does, between him and his fellow-men. But the government being unique and therefore without counterweights, it results in relating everything to itself. All that does not bow before its image, all that contradicts its oracles, all that threatens its duration, all that is progress, in a word, is fatally its enemy. - So when a government begins-you have an improvement at first on the previous government-then soon, in order to remain in power, and in the face of the new ideas that undermine it, it calls for help reaction and more reaction. Thus from the arsenal of the arbitrary the measures most unfriendly to the needs of the time will come out; it will make a firework of laws of exception and as long as it can - as long as the fuse of the bomb has been lit by the revolution - it will blow up together with its own means of defense. Can it act differently, abandon one of its bastions? - The enemy, i.e. the revolution, would take possession of it to set up its own batteries. Capitulate? When it is told to

surrender unconditionally, it knows that surrender means the plundering of its interests, its enslavement, and then death.

And you, soldiers of progress, but fearful lovers of liberty, who carry deep in your hearts - as a remnant of the family and Catholic education of youth - the prejudice of authority, the superstition of power, remember the provisional revolutionary governments, the programs and promises. Remember the lies and hypocrisy to capture the confidence of the people; remember the cunning and violence.

And do not hope from the best of men, a happier choice. It is not the men, it is the thing itself that is bad. According to the environment, the condition in which they move, men are useful or harmful to those around them.

It is necessary not to put them beyond the rights of all, in order to prevent them from doing harm. In other words, we must not give ourselves shepherds if we do not want to become a flock, and we must not give ourselves rulers if we do not want to become slaves.

With the end of the governments, there will no longer be those evil ambitions that use the backs of the people, ignorant and credulous, as a platform for their tricks. Thus there will no longer be acrobatic candidates who dance on the rope of professions of faith, their right foot on one side and their left foot on the other. So there will be no more political magicians playing with the three words of the Republican flag, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, as with three balls that they pass under the eyes of suckers and then make them disappear into the depths of their conscience, this secret pocket of malice.... That way we will no longer have acrobats of public affairs who, from the top of a City Hall balcony, or on the steps of a Convention or a Constituent Assembly make us watch parades in the *best of republics*, which they then make us pay for - poor fools that we are - with our sweat and our blood.

When governments are finished, there will be no more armies to oppress the people through the people. More Universities to level young intellects under the yoke of cretinism, to manipulate brains and hearts, to petrify and sharpen them in the image of the fallen society. More magistrates-inquisitors to torture on the trestle of investigation and condemn to suffocation in prison or exile the voice of the press and groups, the manifestations of conscience and thought. More executioners, more jailers, more gendarmes, more police inspectors, more spies to identify, intimidate, kill all those who do not accept devotion to authority. More director centralization, more prefects, ordinary and extraordinary commissioners to put every region in a state of siege. More expenditures to train, arm, equip, fatten with potatoes and truffles, and get these servants in the uniforms of soldiers or generals, prefects or police inspectors, executioners or judges drunk on schnick or champagne.

Let's get it over with governments, and then a million, two million and maybe more good men can be returned to work, to production.

Toothless old woman, Megera with hooked fingers, Medusa with her forehead crowned with vipers, Authority!, step back and give way to freedom!....

Make way for the people in direct possession of their sovereignty, the organized commons.

## **Of direct legislation (A) as a passage to anarchy**

Direct legislation, with its majority and minority, is certainly not the last word in social science, for we are still dealing with government, and, as I have already said, I am of those who tend toward individual sovereignty. But since individual sovereignty has as yet no real formula, so far as I know, being still in the state of intuition in the spirits, we must well resolve to what is applicable,

that is, to the most democratic form of government, waiting for its absolute abolition. On the other hand, with direct legislation, the majority is and always remains dominant. Like a tide, it moves every day under the incessant action, under the propaganda of the ideas of progress. Finally, it is today the only powerful means that can be employed, the straightest line to follow in order to arrive at the realization of any social reform.

To those who dispute the aptitude of the people to legislate by their own intelligence, to govern themselves by themselves, I will answer by pointing out the desires of the latter, from '48 onward. Let it be shown to me whether they have not always been intelligent, always revolutionary, I do not say as results, but in principle. Do not intriguing politicians always come forward with promises of reform? Is it the fault of the people if all promises are not systematically kept? Will it not be true that the day when the people are called upon to pronounce on the law and not on men, the result will be altogether different?

And again, I would add, under what conditions do the people vote? Are they free? No, they are not. On the contrary, they are at the mercy of the master who advises them: "Vote for a man who will certainly not be able to satisfy your needs in any way, but vote anyway because that candidacy suits me, you cannot do otherwise because I have you by the belly... and I deceive you with the reforms that will come into force in... six months". Whereas, when the people will vote directly, from one day to the next they will take possession of the instrument of labor and ensure their own subsistence, dropping the threat from the hands of the master like a blunt sword.

In addition, I believe the people - and especially the people of Paris - are mature or very close to being mature for this idea of self-government, of direct legislation. 1968 proved it. The people remained deaf, then, to the voice of those who claimed to be their leaders, and who, - surrounded by multi-colored scarves and titles of representation - tried to convince them to defend their prerogatives. He remained a stranger to the "left" and the "right", which disputed power. And in fact, what does he care about the color of the master, if it is still indispensable to him to suffer a master? He let De Gaulle pass, patience, from the negation to the affirmation of its opposite there is only one step. And the day is not far off when, from being a bored spectator of political tortuosity, he will become an actor by intervening, throwing his democratic glove into the arena, in front of all the parties: *Gaullists-cadaveric*, *Christian Democrats-disintegrating*, *Giscard-vampires*, *socialists* and *communists-mummified in the granite of 1993 and '17*; and in front of the Past, in front of the Present and in front of the Future, he will affirm himself, the great All, in his own sovereignty.

I believe that in the next social insurrection, self-government can and will be decreed by the people of Paris on their barricades and acclaimed, thereafter, by the rest of the people around the world.

Now, in order to be clearer and to make my whole thought better understood, I develop some points of view:

*First* - Will you set 21 as the appropriate voting age? Why? Perhaps the man of twenty years cannot have the same developed faculties as the man of twenty-one? Perhaps he cannot be equal to them, humanely speaking? Will you set it at twenty years of age? But perhaps the nineteen-year-old is not, in the same way, fit? And so are the others. To be consequent, it would be necessary to establish the limit at which the old man loses his faculties and falls back into childhood, to limit the right to vote; it would perhaps be necessary to establish categories of ability, to expel from meetings those who cannot read or those who, knowing how to read, do not know or know how to discuss insufficiently. Perhaps, by chance, infants cannot ask for a ballot? And - in this society,

old in civilization, where one still finds, at the foot and galvanized by the electric battery of capital, the fossil institution of the family - well, if, for children of a certain age, the father exercises a disastrous influence, perhaps, on other children, another father, could not exercise a contrary influence? Might there not be some kind of compensation?

Would you deny the right of the woman? But woman is a human being like man. The bourgeois of '89 made the Revolution for their own profit and to the exclusion of the proletariat. - Proletarians, would you want to make the same mistake, to commit the same crime by making the Revolution for the profit of men alone and to the exclusion of women? No, without a doubt, because then you would be, in blindness and infamy, equal to your masters.

And the thief and the murderer himself, and the madman, would you take them away from the right to vote, to their own self-government? But in the name of what principle? Perhaps in the name of liberty, in the name of equality, in the name of fraternity, you say? - Doesn't eliminating from the possibility of self-government the convicts, the men most authorized to complain about society, mean that the proletarian, forced to work, will soon be excluded from the same exclusion? Doesn't eliminating the madman from the possibility of self-government mean that every free thinker will soon be excluded under the pretext of subversive opinions? Finally. It is not a question - from the bourgeois point of view - of anything but a few more bulletins in the ballot box! Differently...

There is no middle ground: the principle of popular sovereignty is good or it is bad; if it is bad, why imitate it, when we should just put it under our feet, why exhume law from its well and look back on its legitimacy? If, on the contrary, it is good, we must affirm it entirely, without crippling it, take it as a whole; accept its logical consequences under pain of denying the whole by denying a part. To amputate it is to kill it.

I want the small commune because I think that in it everyone will find the satisfaction of his needs. But I want it of a certain size, so that it may have its schools, its theaters, its arenas, its libraries, arsenals of thought; and its machines, industrial and peasant weapons; its crystal palace will be the bouquet of all productions, and its public gardens the cushion of all flowers; its parks will be endowed with tree-lined walks; its salons will have every kind of amusement; its popular salons, silk and velvet; its fountains, its monuments, its baths, its museums, what else to say?... the useful and the pleasant together: instrument of work and instrument of pleasure.

And I want the commune to be sovereign, because I am for freedom, against authority; because I want to leave the field free for progress; because if one commune is ahead of the others on any organizational issue, it is not right, it is antisocial that it should be hindered in the application of its ideas. Finally, I want it to be sovereign because I want unity and not agglomeration... agglomeration, the result of obligation; unity, the result of freedom. It is the law of attraction that makes the stars gravitate in their own circle; it is the law of attraction that will bind together the communes into national units and, later, the national units into a universal unity.

*Public functions.* The people, being sovereign, must necessarily appoint themselves to perform the necessary functions. It is incumbent upon it to make the law, to put it into practice.

The functions, after all, are considerably simplified. The work must be done by the associations. By doing this the leprosy of bureaucracy will be destroyed, so that these impertinent, lazy and monotonous officials will disappear. There will be no more than workers, all interested in doing their work and, especially, all employed according to their faculties.

*Justice.* Again, the people, understood as the conscience that decides where the truth resides, that searches for it and puts it into action.

I do not mean to refer either to jails, executioners, preventive and repressive detentions, or to prisons or guillotines. These government monstrosities have had their day. I just want that if someone performs acts against the community, he should be held to reparations or, if he does not want to fulfill them, he should be put out of the community.

*The police and the military.* Still the people, direct agent. No specialized corps having a permanent organization that is a danger to public liberty. All the people in arms, no army outside the people, not even the genius, not even the navy.

Remember all the bloody harassment of the police and the army, and call down upon them the civil excommunication, the eternal dissolution.

The police and the army... Who is still today so cowardly as to put his neck in the snare of these two hounds of capital, the glittering grand sultan, of metallic lubricities, and ruthless jealousies?

The police, like justice, need only be the public conscience that manifests itself freely. When the public conscience is free, the police have no reason to exist. Everyone, being part, on an individual level, of the public conscience, can see that thus his own conscience becomes his own police officer.

The army, as a force organized for the support of authority and war against Liberty within as well as without, must disappear. Every man must be armed when the municipality or municipalities united, when the public thing is threatened. The function of self-defense cannot be delegated. It is, in a regime of self-government, a right and a duty, like that of setting the rules of coexistence, a personal and physical debt of each and that all are obliged to pay voluntarily when danger arises both inside and outside. Strictly speaking, every municipality could have its own courses in the handling of weapons, rifle and cannon firearms and bayonet fencing. Some municipalities could have special schools for engineers or artillery. Finally, others, those near the sea, could have schools for the navy. But none of them will be able to have a military organization of paid people, a disciplined force of *soldiers*, these forced praetorians of all the Caesars of the past, present and future. It would be better to suppress all these warlike exercises. It is always dangerous to accustom the peoples of today, these great children, to play soldier. The public spirit becomes chauvinised and, therefore, cretinised. The children inherit their fathers' taste for this sort of tragi-comic masquerade and, in order to respond in the present moment to an often imaginary danger, a very real danger is created for future generations, the danger of intoxicating the masses.

After all, a people, like a man, is always strong, regardless of whether it is more or less skilled with weapons, when it has in its heart and brain the love and intelligence of freedom!

Let us therefore burn all the cannons, let us transform their metallic substance, as with the guillotine, into instruments of production. Revolutionaries, do we want to be strong in the supreme struggle of Liberty against Authority? Do we want to triumph over internal and external enemies? Well then, at the next proclamation of the Republic, let us give the world a great example: let us burn our fortresses, as the ancients burned their vessels!... Let us put ourselves in the necessity of winning or dying. The truly prudent are the imprudent!

Remember the barricades of May. They are the ones who lost the insurrection. Without these cobblestone shelters, erected with their own hands, the proletariat would not have stayed to age in the suburbs, it would have marched on City Hall and, with its numbers and strength, would have emerged victorious.

*Teaching.* Free. An allowance to the proletarians taking the courses and to the relatives of the young schoolboys. The child fed, clothed, housed in a special house, ventilated, spacious, and open to the outside world; all this in place of tuition by the pound and the claustrophobia of boarding schools.

*Free Teaching.* Everyone must be able to teach, making his own contribution to progress. New methods and new curricula will emerge from the limbo of theories, and will demand and receive, in the light of experience, the baptism of reality. The teaching of living languages will replace the teaching of dead languages. Professional and social education will take the place of bourgeois and lawyerly education. Attractive study will replace the abrasive one. The ignorant of Catholicism and the University, the shopkeepers of education and education killed, buried by the rough competition of the freedom and truth of teaching. All these merchants of prayers and amulets, under the pretext of education; all these merchants of buns and paper, under the pretext of education, driven from the temple of science. The instructor created for the pupil and not the pupil for the instructor.

## **Religion**

All religions have in common that they preach to the oppressed the submission to the oppressor's yoke. If the sword of the soldier makes the multitude a physical slave, the catechism of the priest, - a weapon far otherwise dangerous - makes them a moral slave.

The idea of God, the cult of divinity: here is the first cause that had as effect the decadence of man, the first page of the book where was written in essence the martyrology of humanity.

Thus he who denies divine right on earth, must likewise deny in heaven the kingship of a supernatural being.

Today we laugh at the ancient peoples who worshipped the sun. And, relatively as ignorant, if not more ignorant than they, we worship in another form, a being that our imagination endows with supreme power. And, - much more stupid than these worshippers of a star which does us nothing but good and which we can see and ascertain, - we go looking for our idol outside and above nature. And the more it does us harm, the more we bless it, because the more we will have to suffer down here, those who are happy and privileged in this world tell us, the more we will have happiness in the other, up there, in a paradise far away no doubt, since, like God, it lies beyond the infinite. And not only the body, - a carnal creature, which this God would have given us, - must be killed every day by old age and sickness; but the soul, - a spiritual creature, - must also undergo all sorts of mortifications. And this for the greater glory of an infinitely good, infinitely just, infinitely loving, infinitely merciful God.

That is, to bring back a certain axiom: "We see the bit of straw in our neighbor's eye but we don't see the beam in our own eye."

We can say that the clergy is the poisoner of the human conscience. Through it, in the form of speeches, we are poured the daily dose of nicotine that urges us to renounce the joys of this world, to renounce the rights of man and citizen. It is the most dangerous auxiliary of despotism, or rather it is despotism itself. The kings and emperors of all kinds, have but the mantle of sovereign power. They have the scepter of it.

*A similarity:* One can often see at some old bachelor's one of those girls of problematic age and of incontestable pinguine. In appearance they are servants, in reality they are lovers. Sweet and



violent at the same time, hypocritical and impudent at the time, they are there and never lose sight of the purpose of what they do, the article of the will. Nothing is done in the house without their approval. They have the keys to everything, the direction of everything, and over all they rule. It is of these girls that it can be said with certainty that they reign and rule. The fact is that they have the secret of the master's weaknesses. During the day they know how to tickle his little passions for some delicacy, for some obscenity of language; at night, for some alcove complacency, for some carnal courtship. So is the clergy in the service of the prince, the religion paid by the authority.

What would be the point of divinity and worship if not to get us used to sacrificing to the gods of the earth? Why force us to kneel before fetishes?

Let's study instead of praying. Let us educate ourselves in the natural sciences. Ignorance, that is what makes our globe a vale of tears, a hell. Science, here is what will make it a sojourn of delights, an Eden.

Yes, it is science that - of men who today tear one another to pieces like the damned, - will make them communicating angels together in abundance and fraternity.

Forward! The axe on confessionals! The hammer on the churches! Let us burn all the priest's skirts! Let us demolish, destroy, smash, burn to the roots divinity and worship, - altars and holy books, temples and curates. May the hour come when the flame of fire may rise on this chaos of lies and iniquity, on this hodgepodge of old rubbish that is called religion. May the hour come when - dipping our flashlights in resin - we can burn everything else too!

The religious question is resolved today. Religion sustains itself only with the help of authority, just as authority sustains itself with the help of religion. The one is the cog that drives the other and vice versa. Let there come a day of popular victory, and that will be for religion, as for authority, the day of last judgment.

What man, free, would be so enfeebled by pietistic morality as to want to consign his sister or partner, his daughter, his children, to the licentious teachings of the confessional, to the systematic corruption of their physical and moral nature? What man, for himself, for the perdition of his own body and soul, would still want to pay tithe to breed and fatten swine of every sect and every form? That would really be too much!

So, no more spending on worship. Let's affirm religious freedom.

Whoever wants the priest should pay for him. But let priests and cults enclose themselves in the cockpit of their superstitions and never reappear in the public light, as an attack on the modesty of reason.

Religion! You festering old woman, you impudent vestal and pregnant with human bestiality; you who in temporal obscenities have let faith be extinguished, this sacred fire of your altars; Caesar's prostitute, you must die.... The abyss is open, but before you fall into it, look!... and recognize, with a triple halo in his forehead, no longer the son of God, but the son of humanity, the son of nature. It is the Messiah of socialism who - prophesied by philosophers from generation to generation - was born, finally, on the miserable bed of the proletariat; and who - like his predecessor risen after being crucified - goes to convert the old Christian world to the new gospel, to the humanitarian trinity: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity!

And all the oppressed will wince at his approach; for he truly comes to redeem them from slavery, for his *Republic* is of this world!....

## **Property**

What would the authority of government, even with the concurrence of religion, be, this luring of souls, if it had not the currency of property to lure arms, capital to credit strength? It would be a monkish despotism, very dangerous, when it had the intention of striking hard, of gathering, instead of slavish obedience, a few scapegoats of the popular John Bull type; a rampant arbitrariness on the eve of closing up store for exhaustion of merchandise and lack of consumers eager to gorge themselves on its drug.

Unfortunately, the idea of individual property is not only in the spirit of the bourgeois, it is also in the brain of the proletarians, and it is so much in evidence, that the poor sufferers - who have neither a piece of cloth to cover themselves nor a piece of bread to put under their teeth - are cursing shouting divide! As if - supposing that communism made this division, which is not true since the reality is quite the opposite - there was something to divide in a society in which they have nothing and others have everything.

However, if the idea of collective property is still repugnant to a population atrophied by misery, there is something that is at least as repugnant to it: the exploitation of man by man.

The community which, by concentrating the forces and efforts of each, the forces and efforts of everything, would make them all converge to the same end, to the social economy, and, with the unity of property, with human solidarity, would assure the individual an equal amount of enjoyments, an immense distribution of well-being and freedom, - and that, let me make a parenthesis about this word: Freedom! of which there has been so much abuse against the community and of which it must be admitted that the authoritarian communists of every school have made a very good market.

- In a society of equals, in which the sovereign would be called the people, and no longer king or pope, emperor or father, president or servant, dictator or delegation - would not men, who all have the instinctive feeling of freedom, and all want the integral development of their multiform nature, put this freedom first on the list of needs to be satisfied?

- And, to resume my interrupted sentence - the community, I was saying, in which everything belongs to everyone, would ensure that each person would be freed from the daily preoccupation with individual provisioning; freed from the necessity of ossifying his heart, of drying up his intelligence, of using all his energy in imagining and realizing how to use the means of production for his own well-being and for the destruction of his fellow men. In this way each one could open his brain as well as his soul to fruitful thoughts for each and all, and the attractive organization of labor would come to replace Malthusian competition and repulsive labor. The community, a splendid ideal, a luminous sphere, still too blinding for the masses brutalized in the habits of the past, in the darkness of ignorance. These masses see and feel more closely the exploitation, which, cigar in mouth and whip in hand, keeps them bent under the weight of work in the torment of humiliation and need, while the master leads in the satisfactions and joys of his own arrogance and idleness.

The right to work, this is what impressed the proletarians most in the formulas of 1948. Here is the small opening through which, in spite of the trench, one will penetrate into the bowels of property and finally have reason.

But it is not a question of affirming all this in principle. It is necessary to realize it materially, to solidify it, to give it a body, that is, to abolish usury, in all its forms, in the form of interest on capital at any rate; in the form of wages, for any work, in the form of rent for anything, apartments or land, workshops or tools. Declare the exploitation of man by man a crime and a felony. - That he who owns a house is bound to give lodging to those who have none. That whoever possesses land is obliged to associate with it those who wish to cultivate it with him. That whoever owns an

industry, tools, is obliged - in case he does not make them work - to give them to those who want to work them and make them produce. That community stores, based on free exchange, replace the store, origin of the mercantile personality, of the usurious trade. That in the new code, theft with golden keys, theft by exploitation, be assimilated to theft with forged keys, to theft by breaking and entering. That the usurer - under the denomination of owner, banker, manufacturer, trader - be assimilated to the ordinary swindler, and hit like the latter. Finally, that the law of expropriation for causes of public utility be remade, and that all those who will leave their houses empty, their lands uncultivated, their working materials unused, be expropriated, as happens now with a road, a railroad, and that the house or the tools of labor be delivered to the workers who have requested it.

Do not think that I am here proposing a simple palliative to deal with the illness of property, it is not only this that I desire. The aim, I have said, is to arrive at collective property, at possession in common. But, once the sovereignty of the people is fixed, and nothing other than what the people want is possible, no dictatorship will be in a position to exercise any violence on them, so I have only to bow before their prejudice, forced, suggesting a passage through individual possession, instead of pure and simple expropriation.

In essence, what I want is the abolition of individual property, through the suppression of the exploitation of labor by capital. And this, even the proletarians most entrenched in bourgeois ideas of property, will undoubtedly accept.

Capital! Octopus of gigantic proportions, sucking the blood of the exploited with your tentacles, horrible mollusk of the ocean of labor, poisoning the waves of production with your gold; you who attach yourself to the virile parts of mankind, sucking with all your pores the blood of those who work, taking from them even the marrow of their bones. Monster of easy robbery, your hour has struck the clock of public indignation, and you will not escape the harpoon of the right to work! May the personal property you have vomited not escape even for one day the same fate, and may humanity bathe as soon as possible in the blue waves of community!

## **Family**

Government, religion, property, family, everything holds and ties together, everything coincides. Everything is cause and effect, parallel and consequence, logical induction and deduction, one from the other.

A creation of religion, the family is the foundation on which property and government rest, the backbone, the sap that feeds them, the udder that nourishes them. It is not enough to cut off the branches, one must also saw off the trunk and rip out the roots. It is not only the young that must be taken and slaughtered, but also the mother that must be hunted down to the bottom of the den and disemboweled, if we do not want the tree or the beast to give us new shoots.

The family... you see: it has preserved through the ages, and despite its successive transformations, the stigmata of its origin. It is to patriarchy what the representative government is to absolute authority.

Small State, - in which man is sovereign, woman and children subjects, - it uninterruptedly sets individual duty in antagonism to nature, material interest in hostility to conscience.

Confederation of private principalities, it makes society a permanent battlefield in which each of the groups, in the name of its domestic economy, indulges in combat against the other groups. Within, it is the insurrection of the subjects, - woman and children, - which man, - despot mitigated

by liberalism, - is powerless to contain. On the one hand, brutality and corruption erected as a system of government, on the other, in retaliation, hypocrisy and intrigue.

At the exit of a brothel, at the doors of an all-male show, or a dive bar, or a gambling hall, where he has lost his fortune or his wages, you will find the man - worker or bourgeois - intent on imposing silence on the cries and reproaches with some scolding or with some promise to buy a miserable dress or a rich parure, cotton parure for the housewife; diamond parure for the grand dame.

On the other hand, the insurrection of women or children: insurrection by lying to escape paternal or marital repression, insurrection by lying, stealing and sometimes even by arsenic and adultery, to obey the passions compressed in the soul and senses.

For all the disappointment, the desecration of all true feelings, of all the pure and suave aspirations of love. It is the prostitution sanctioned by the catechism of religion and by the government. It is the youth sold to the old man or thrown into the arms of a stranger. It is the trade of youth and beauty. It is the forced coupling of the sexes in the face of prejudice and material interest. Interest and prejudice bring together here what is disliked and condemn to live under the same roof. Interest and prejudice divide what is likeable and condemn separation.

It is the sacrifice of souls and bodies offered in perpetual burnt offering to the golden calf.

So everywhere, tribulations, scandals. And so everywhere, sickness, unemployment, bankruptcy lead as a consequence to moral perturbation, material confusion, famine and meaningless living, to the annihilation of the fibers of the stomach and the heart.

Regarding government I have come to the conclusion of the necessity of self-government, of direct legislation. With regard to religion I have arrived at the necessity of the cult of the positive sciences. Now, with all my strength, I tend to the unity of property through communism, as to the unity of the human family through the destruction of the small family.

To destroy this feudality of the family, what must be done?

- Abolish the inheritance, this apple of discord which disunites the brothers, and drags them to the point of patricide, the inheritance which honors in the father the employment of all fraudulent means, of all baseness and all crimes consecrated to the acquisition of a fortune to be handed over to his children, the inheritance, finally, which makes the children rejoice in a wealth that they have not earned and that almost always, not to say every time, the father has stolen from his neighbor, of a good that, lawfully or unlawfully acquired, is and becomes again with the death of the holder the heritage of all.

What more needs to be done?

- Abolish marriage, this legal prostitution, this trafficking in women that has survived the slave trade. Whoever wants the man free must demand the liberation of the woman. He who has been nursed by a slave has slave blood in his veins. He who has been educated by a slave has slave thoughts in his brain. Whoever is engaged to a slave, whoever is the possessor of a slave, is engaged to slavery, is the possessor of slavery. If we want new destinies for man, let us fix the right, this morality of nature, in the heart of his companion, let us weave for the young woman a crown different from the classic orange blossom crown, let us give a new impetus to the formation of the human embryo.

Thus, we liberate woman through the abolition of marriage and through the organization of the right to work, the destruction of the tyranny of man and of hunger.

Let us emancipate the child by the equality of all before the common inheritance, by the establishment of kindergartens, where he will find all that will be necessary for his physical and moral development, and where it will be pleasant for him to exercise his right to existence and

education, if he does not prefer to stay with his father and mother, whose paternity and maternity will no longer be oppressive, lacking the legal sanction that today makes them so.

The child should no more be at the discretion of the family authority than man should be at the discretion of the government authority. It is not under the bell jar of the small family, with the manure of the selfish group that the child must vegetate, to develop his individuality and become strong and healthy he needs space and freedom.

The woman, - I am ashamed for my sex, to be forced to say these things that should be in the heart and spirit of all, - the woman is in human nature the parallel of the man, she is equal for needs to satisfy and for the right to satisfy them. To want to establish a superiority or inferiority on one side or the other is to violate the balance of nature, to force it into monstrosities.

Let the aristocrat, the baron of fraud and banking, putting the woman at the same rank as his horses or his dogs, make of her, as of an animal of luxury, an exhibition at the Bois de Boulogne or at Chantilly, let the aristocrat, artist or beautiful spirit, framing her living in the frame of roses or in the golden frame, putting her in robes of silk, exposes it in the museum or in the greenhouse of his salon, between two Chinese vases or two statuettes of Pradier, like a painting of author or a rare flower, that the bourgeois, small manufacturer or small shopkeeper, considers it like a maid suitable to remember his stockings, or like a calculating machine to do his accounts, this is understood, they are in their role and act accordingly. But that the proletarian, the worker sees in her only a tool for cleaning pots, an outlet for his male appetites: that is what is not understandable. And when it is the pretended democrats, the pretended socialists who, by thought and action, insult human nature in this way, insulting women, we are faced with something even stranger.

To deny the needs and faculties, the rights and intelligence of women, is to do as the bourgeois and aristocrats deny the rights and intelligence of the proletarian, as the whites of America deny the human race to the Negroes. And whose fault is it, moreover, that women are what they are and are not different? - Is it the fault of the master or the slave if the Negro grows sugar cane instead of cultivating his own spirit? If the laborer works matter instead of working his intelligence, and if the woman cleans pots and pans and tries to adorn her body like a doll to make the rich man like it, instead of cleaning the faculties of her brain and adorning it with sound knowledge? Men, let us not glory in this, let us not outrage the woman, we have no right to do so: the slave has never been anything but a reflection of his master.

Proletarians who want to free yourselves, let us extend a fraternal hand to the woman, and let us march united with her to the conquest of freedom, to the demolition of the exploitation of man by man as well as the exploitation of woman by man.

Oh family! Sodom of all corruptions, feast of all vices, I call upon thee the rain of fire of all human curses, the avenging thunderbolts of socialism! May you, oh family, who carry within you the germs of prostitution, on your lips the rodent cancer of social demoralization, may you soon disappear from our institutions to make way for the great principle of human unity, for the building up and organization in the world of freedom, of feeling and sense...

## **Conclusion**

Thus, as a solution, freedom, equality, fraternity. Freedom of thought,  
Freedom of Love,  
Freedom to work,  
Freedom of Action:  
Freedom for everything and everyone.

Equality of rights, equality of duties: social equality.

Fraternity, that is, the social character imprinted on the simultaneous action of freedom and equality on the plane of humanity, a scene that is deduced from it, the last syllable of the form: qualification of solidarity and unity.

And, as a means of operation, as a transitional means, self-government, direct legislation.

And let it not be repeated that the people are too ignorant, that if you put an instrument in their hands that they do not know how to use, you must always resort to those who have the science to govern them. No, I will answer these cacasenno of the revolution, these supporters of dictatorship. It is only by striking iron that one learns to be a blacksmith; and it is by making one's own laws that the people will learn to govern themselves and to do it well. I know very well that the apprentice blacksmith breaks his nails many times before he learns to do his trade well. This teaches him to pay more attention to what he is doing and, as they say, "that gets the craft into his hands." The apprentice-legislator will certainly break his nails at first, trying to govern himself, which will teach him to examine his projects more thoroughly, in order to better carry them out. And if sometimes they take bad measures, the next day they will be ready to modify those measures, hammering on them to forge better ones.

But, before getting there there is a material obstacle to be broken: imperialism; and another means of operation to be employed: insurrection. However vast the suffrage that sustains power, the latter is sitting on a crater. Lava ferments at the bottom of the chasm. The blizzard and the attempts made in the past have, it is true, somewhat extinguished the fire that smouldered beneath, but the new generations are mounting, the social ideal clear in the brain, so that soon a considerable degree of upward force will be reached. If power itself does not open wide fissures to let socialism through, it will be brought down by an eruption of the volcano some day. The earth trembles under reactionary poisoning, and the old society, like another Pompeii, will not be long in being swallowed up under the incandescent flood of revolution.

Let's get to work, then! For it is not a matter of falling asleep waiting for the day of atonement. It must be prepared. Every day, women and proletarians, to the extent of their strength and convictions, in the family as well as in the workshop, on the corners of deserted streets, is today, is always the moment, is always the right moment to act, to rise up, to revolutionize.

To work! And those who are hungry and want to eat,

Who is thirsty and wants to drink,

Who is naked and wants to dress up,

Those who are cold in body and soul and want to warm themselves in the heat of the brazier or love,

He who bears in his hands and on his face the marks dug out by murderous labor and no longer wants to break his own flesh to make the idle fat,

Those who perish under physical deprivation and don't want to die under the festering climate of deleterious institutions,

Those who brood in their breasts the consumption of moral pains and want to heal, all those who suffer and want to rejoice,

Finally! all those who have palms and crowns of misery, let them stand up!... and let their numbers and their revolt freeze with fright the spectators, the instigators and the executors of their martyrdom!

All rise!

And, with arms and heart,

With the word and the pen,

With the dagger and the rifle,  
With irony and expletive,  
With plundering and adultery, (B)  
By poisoning and burning, (C)

Let us make, - on the great path of principles or at the crossroads of individual right, - by insurrection or by assassination, - war on society!....war on civilization!.... (D).

On our feet! - And, if by misfortune, any of us falls into the hands of the repressive authority, - let each of us, - at the bar of the accused, under the whip of the condemned, in the galleys or before the firing squad, - let each of the new believers, confess - before humanity and in the presence of nature as a witness - that he acted but in virtue of his own right and in obedience to the religion of his own conscience.... (E).

On your feet, proletarians, on your feet all! - And, let's unfurl the flag of social warfare! On your feet! And, - like the fanatics of the Koran, - in the midst of the insurrectionary struggle, where those who die die only to be reborn in the future society - let us repeat the cry of anathema and extermination for religion and family, for capital and government, this cry of hatred and love, - of hatred for privilege, of love for equality, - this avenging cry at last, this cry of our faith:

- The *Revolution* is the Revolution and *Freedom* - today vilified, hunted, hunted, but tomorrow victorious and powerful and always immortal, - *Freedom* is its *Prophet*!...

## Notes

(A) Well understood when I speak here of direct legislation, the fact is that in my thinking there is not yet complete clarity, for nowhere else do I see a complete plan of organization of society absolutely destructive of legality. The day this organization becomes known to me, I will not only abandon this idea of legislation, but in addition I will be the first to fight it.

It is eighteen months since this booklet was written, and I must say that at the time of beginning it I was much more enthusiastic about direct legislation than I am now; yet I did not wish to suppress this part of my work without being able to replace it with something better. May the criticism of sincere men, bring forth and produce a system entirely detached from the imprint of the past.

It is clear, after all, that this is how I understand it, that it is up to every man - man and woman, *human being*, - to always protest and evade legality, whatever it may be, when he has the strength, once this authority oppresses him. It is up to him to judge whether insurrection is a necessity, or whether it is more useful and more productive for future success, to fight with active propaganda.

(B) By adultery, that is, to cause the greatest possible disorganization in the family menage. That there be no husband who can say, "I am the father of this child." And that, finding in marriage nothing but toil and disgust, an unbearable existence, he may see himself obliged, in order to escape, to demand the freedom of love himself and to abandon his own authority. - That in all things good arises from the excess of evil, for, by their resistance to progress, the great evildoers want it so.

(C) Let each revolutionary choose, from among those on whom he thinks he can absolutely count, one or two other proletarians like himself. And let them - in groups of three or four with no connection between them and functioning in isolation, so that the discovery of one of the groups does not lead to the arrest of all the others, - act with a common purpose: the destruction of the old society. And they put the privilege so well and for so long in danger, that the latter is obliged, in

order to escape ruin and death, to make common cause with the proletarians to claim equality. That there is no salvation for it and that it can hope for nothing but its own annihilation.

Let each group, for example, proceed as follows: That if among the three or four members of the group there is a construction worker, he should take the imprint of the locks of the apartments of the rich where he may be called to work, that he should check the exits well, that he should skillfully interrogate the servants, for the purpose of obtaining all indispensable information, and that then, having taken all precautions, warn the other members of the group, - his accomplices, if you will, - and that at a given moment, they penetrate at night into the apartment of this rich man, stabbing or strangling the master or masters, forcing, breaking or opening by means of false keys the furniture where silverware, jewels or cash may be found; that they take away all that will be possible, and that in leaving they set fire to the house. Above all, let them not use the proceeds of their plunder to improve their condition, for this will lose them: a change in their condition will betray them, and report them to the police.

Let them kill and plunder to destroy. Then let them bury all the gold they have collected, in order that if any of them are suspected or discovered, this gold may be used for escape.

The group which, with the proceeds of the expropriations of the rich, will be able to clandestinely purchase a printing press, let it do so, and let the bulletins proclaiming the aim and means of the action of the terrible society, tell the public every day all the murders, all the thefts, all the poisonings, all the fires that are committed in the cities and in the countryside by the revolutionaries, new peasant insurgents, and let it go on like this until the authority is finally destroyed.

In another group, where there is a journeyman confectioner, let him make every effort to get himself employed in one of those great bakeries which supply the aristocracy, and for the New Year's Eve or New Year's Eve party, I suppose, poison one or ten or twenty trays of cakes, as much as will be possible, and the next day have a hundred or a thousand aristocrats cease to live.

Let the secret society, with its clandestine printing presses, then claim responsibility, and let the stoic poisoner disappear, escaping arrest by fleeing.

Let a perfumer do the same. Let them poison the champagne, if possible, the fine wines, the gloves, the cakes, the ice cream and the sorbets. In the countryside let the harvests of the rich, the houses of the rich, and the churches be set on fire; in the cities let the same be done for the houses, the churches, the ministries, the town halls, all the commercial and governmental offices. Let the sword of Damocles be constantly suspended over the heads of the privileged; let the serpents of terror, like those of Nemesis, whistle day and night at their ears, making them tremble in their gold and in their lives; let their position become untenable, and let them, wearied with so much anguish, be obliged to fall on their knees and beg for grace, begging the proletariat to grant them life in exchange for their privilege, and common happiness in exchange for general misfortune.

(D) Civilization, being today synonymous with barbarism, is to be destroyed as barbarism was when the era of civilization opened. Humanity, which has become great, today rejects it as a garment too tight to enter the new phase of progress called harmony.

(E) The individual or group that is brought to the assizes should go there with their faces up, and should not place themselves in the situation of the accused, but in that of an enemy, and an enemy that is always dangerous be it what it may, prisoner or free, dead or alive, because the man of principle won in the struggle never dies completely and there is his consolation and his strength, his companions survive. - Therefore say to those who are there to condemn him, "Tomorrow, if you do not release me, you will be dead. I call loudly on you the daggers of the secret societies of which I am one of the members, and this invocation, you should know, is a real order for them!



And now, strike me, if you dare!...." And the next day, if this revolutionary is condemned, let the secret societies kill, at any price and without flinching in the face of any danger, the jurors and judges who have compromised themselves in the sentence.

Gentlemen of family and property, of religion and government, you want privilege, well! suffer the consequences.... Do you think that your life, your world, your verminous society, will be able to last long against such a revolutionary means? Answer, sons of Malthus?

But, unfortunately, the energies are weak, today, and only in the aftermath of another crushed revolution will this idea bear fruit. Waiting, I sow the seed in the hearts of all those who suffer, and, come on! you will not escape this new insurrection. May it begin at once!

[Jean-Paul Sartre, *My Political Testament*, tr. it., Catania 1978].

## **At the origin of truth**

Since the beginning of human history, the myth of the search for truth has been handed down to us. Even before the severity of philosophy and science gave a sense and a particular order to this search, it was channeled on the wings of imagination, giving rise to those mythological treatises that today are considered as a useful means to investigate the mentality of primitive peoples.

Truth, daughter of time, is considered - in Greek mythology - mother of justice and virtue, and represented naked with a mirror in front. Beyond the particular meaning, we can see how the highest idea of justice and the parallel idea of virtue find justification from the truth. One cannot claim to speak of knowledge: mythology is quite categorical on the subject. After all, the search for truth, understood in terms of a blind impulse towards justice and virtue, is always a preparatory phase, which hardly allows for the brilliant surge capable of leading to true knowledge. Moreover, this truth is fundamentally different from what will be the truth in the light of scientific and philosophical investigation. For now it is a truth glimpsed not by its own virtue, but because so granted by the gods. Mythology does not include anything meritorious in justice and virtue, the mythological hero - even in the case, say, of Hercules - is always a toy in the hands of forces alien to him and more powerful than he. The famous labors do not presuppose any desire for research or knowledge. Hercules performs them because forced by his brother Eurystheus, deviously trained by Juno. His story is morally remarkable, for the frankness and strength of temperament, but at bottom he is a little sorry, too tied to events greater than himself, totally unable to operate with discernment and initiative.

If we exclude the myth of the giants, recognized as men in half, equipped with a tail of snake instead of the feet, there is no case of an open revolt to the will of the gods. The only valid exception is the myth of Prometheus, symbol of the human effort of reason to pursue the search for truth beyond the barriers of an absurd and uncontrolled authority. The story goes that Prometheus, who stole the divine fire, created the first man, using the powerful means he had come into possession of. The terrible wrath of Jupiter, consequently, struck him, condemning him, tied to a cliff, to the atrocious martyrdom of the vulture. Prometheus is also remembered in the ancient tradition because with his example and his teachings he was able to lead men on the path of truth. In the last analysis, Prometheus also moves behind pre-established tracks, but, for the first time, he moves badly. The popular imagination, contrary to what it had done previously, admits the possibility of revolt, of dissent in the name of something that it glimpses in the distance and of which it is not yet able to have exact knowledge. At this point, it would perhaps not be too far-fetched to say that the myth of Prometheus gives rise to a concept of truth quite different from the previous one. If

you want, it is a small step, made in a mythical key, but it is always a step towards the light, and therefore always a progress.

And the myth of light is the Apollonian symbol of Greek civilization. Strengthened by an entire scientific and at the same time magical patrimony received from the Egyptian and Babylonian heritage, the Greeks set about the work of reconstruction and continuation with great ardor. However - and this is their highest glory - they did not use all that knowledge for the same purposes as their predecessors, but also theorized the assumption. The theoretical nature of Greek culture manifests at the same time its profound inadequacy for immediate purposes and its simultaneous possibility of always giving rise to new solutions and new problems. The eternity of the Greeks is to be found in the method they advocated rather than in the results they achieved.

One of the fundamental methods of knowledge is the generalization of the particular case. The Egyptians and Babylonians did not go that far. Their geometry, born from the need to calculate the extent of land annually flooded by the Nile and the consequent division between different owners, did not go beyond a series of practical rules that, perhaps, were never used in other countries and, certainly, never were exposed to educational purposes. Their building technique, chemistry, metallurgy, mathematics were a set of particular notions, devoid of intimate meaning and, therefore, not yet constituting a "science".

Of course, one cannot consider a clean break in the work of the Greeks as the initiative of a single man. It is a matter of slow collective movements, which only after centuries can be identified. The road to generalization and theorization passes, even in Greece, through myth. On the other hand, we must think that scientific explanation requires a critical mind particularly suited to selective investigation and synthesis, and in addition requires a broad vision of horizon, all things that the Greeks of the beginning could not have. To give an example: an eclipse could not be explained scientifically and, therefore, the necessary generalization that is part of the spirit of the Greek people turned out to be of magical form. It is the spirit of primitive peoples, forced to continuously submit to unknown forces, which easily turns to magism and rituals.

Only few men, particularly gifted, are able to identify the hidden meaning of the theorization, beyond the immediate and practical results, but these are rare opportunities that humanity presents to straighten the destiny of men. After all, the Greek people were children, potentially capable of respecting the destinies of the world, but too inexperienced not to pursue chimeras and false realities.

The first problem in which this yearning for truth found open expression was, in primitive peoples, the cosmogonic problem. In its development we see a great intellectual effort, because all these peoples started from the most absolute absence of a cultural tradition, and set out to strike straight to discover the origin of all existence.

It will be necessary to keep in mind the different environmental conditions and the state, more or less dispersed, of that certain oral culture which, if it does not constitute a decisive argument, especially for the results of an investigation conducted after such a long time, must have had its importance at the time of the formulation of cosmogonic solutions. In fact, in the Hebrew people we have a highly poetic interpretation, in accordance with the religious environment in which it developed and the liveliness of the priestly tradition typical of the Hebrew tribes. While in the Sumerian people, in spite of the poetic form, the religious presupposition is lacking, building the logical development of the problem in a fantastic and superficial way.

In the efforts of the Indians and Persians, and with less intensity in those of the Egyptians, it is possible to identify the long accumulation of the work of generations of thinkers and ascetics. The thought appears immediately fluid and master of any logical quibble, although it remains within

well-defined limits, so as to suggest that this philosophical tradition, while having influenced the method, has not had the strength to serve as a real culture. In other words, it is the case of the origins of philosophy, where it is possible to find the influence of great educational personalities, but where it is also possible to note the complete absence of a transferable *corpus*, such as to serve as a basis for future philosophical constructions. With regard to the position of the Greek people, towards the cosmogonic problem, it is a text in itself, as an example of the highest effort made by the ancients to reach the truth.

The Hebrew narrative of the Bible does not even presuppose the possibility of a generalization organized on theoretical observations. Conducted in a mythical key, it rises to lyrical heights perhaps never equalled in later philosophical-religious terms, but it does not allow any impulse towards the search for truth. The story takes on the face of revelation: magical attitude precipitous of many other texts of antiquity.

Persisting in the observation of phenomena and "realities" that cannot be explained directly, it becomes necessary to split: from the "actual reality" to a "desired reality", that with its extrasensory authority can justify the existence of those extraordinary phenomena. And here arises the religious myth of the Jewish people. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters". (*Genesis*, I, 1). The tone is the characteristic one of revelation, nothing is inferred, no possible doubt is admitted, no cognitive process is put in place: it is only asserted that in the beginning God created the world, and for two thousand years a substantial part of humanity has remained fascinated, unable to establish the poetic limits of the Bible.

The cosmogonic myths constructed by the Sumerians have a predominantly fable-like character, with a particular characteristic: they trace all the manifestations of their world back to an earlier origin. As Giovanni Rinaldi pointed out, the Sumerians linked "political-social, religious, cultural facts, even cities, single temples, etc. to an origin, or rather to an author, or creator, of divine or superhuman nature (heroes), from which those things had originated". (*Storia delle letterature dell'Antica Mesopotamia*, Milan 1961, p. 27).

From this it is evident the position maintained intellectually by these peoples. Their culture had a fundamental religious imprint. So again Rinaldi: "Among the elements of the Sumerian culture that it is important to know in order to interpret their literary texts, religion occupies undoubtedly the first place. It changed, partly for evolution, but mainly for syncretism, and it will become the religion also of Semites, Babylonians and Assyrians (the two elements, Sumerian and Semitic, however, are very difficult to distinguish). Basically it is a religion made of "cults (some sexual) of fertility", i.e. directed to implore the abundance of water and soil products. One can think of the Baalistic religion of the Canaanites (Ugarit documents and allusions in the Bible), but only because of a partial similarity. "The religion of Baal is religion of capricious rain, which comes and disappears; it involves the veneration of a principle of cosmic order." In contrast, "the religion of Sumerians considers fertilizing water according to a firm and established order, an order embedded in the hierarchy of the community of the gods, who make the patterns of all things, which on earth are forces and skills. Water is an element full of wisdom, which can do everything, as when it is regulated by canals and enclosed between dams; this regulated and beneficial water, whose origin is in the heavens, where among the first things the gods did they fixed the shining destiny of fresh water, is well distinguished from the primordial waters, which, like sea waters (with which, moreover, they are identified) have disastrous effects" (Bergmann-Nober). This fundamental disposition, which explains so many otherwise incomprehensible expressions, appears well in coherence with the natural environment, if we consider its elements: the sea and the nearby desert,

from which move, besides the raiders, the very strong winds of the region (every day two, in opposite directions, one from the dry burning desert, which holds up dust, so as to veil the sun, the other humid, soft from the sea) and the fresh water of the Tigris and the Euphrates. And it also suggests the foundation to the historical-religious judgment of religion itself: veneration of the gods as givers of abundance, not acceptance of a revealed and practical teaching of life fundamentally oriented toward a "divine spiritual charity" (Bergmann-Nober). These gods to whom prayers are addressed, who are honored with rituals, who are thought to be authors or knowers of the fates of men and things, are innumerable, varied from place to place and time to time, fused together and linked by the relative speculation of priests in the schools at the temples. The theogonies ultimately merge with the cosmogonies: religion, primordial history, and the 'science' of origins (in which the Sumerians took an extraordinary interest) are all one." (*Ib.*, pp. 28-29).

Moreover, not even the Babylonians, their successors, were able to substantially modify the tradition. Fetishism managed to remain alongside a confused mythology, completely lacking in those possibilities that allow the opening to the search for truth. Maybe a real religious tradition was missing, or at least it was very weak and never succeeded so important, as for example for the Persian people. As a demonstration of this it is quite valid the fact that some religious treatises are found mixed with ritual texts for averts, magical acts, mythographies, etc.. Very famous is the "Witchcraft against toothache":

When Anu (had created the sky),  
the sky had created (the earth),  
the earth had created the streams, the streams had created the  
canals, the  
canals had created the quagmire, the  
quagmire  
had created the worm,  
the worm went to cry before Shamash,  
to shed tears before Ea  
: - What will you give me to eat?  
What will you give me to suck?  
- I will give you a ripe fig, or an apricot.  
- And what will I do with ripe figs and apricots?  
Let me dwell between the tooth and the gum:  
I want to suck the blood of the tooth,  
I want to gnaw the blood of the gum!

As we can see, in a strictly mythographic sense there is not that clear consequentiality typical of Greek or Indian mythological plots. The spiel, for other beautiful, more than a cosmogonic explanation, is a description in allegorical key of a particular phenomenon: the toothache. This example is enough to show the insufficiency of the Sumerian-Babylonian thought in facing a difficult problem such as the cosmogonic one.

Well otherwise things turn in the solution prepared by the Persians, where it becomes clear a terrible duality between good and evil, a struggle between two powers of equal strength and equally determined to regulate the world according to their intentions. Among the most ancient Persian writings there are the *Gatha that can be* traced back to the pen of Zarathustra Spitama himself and

that are part of the *Avesta*, a collection of religious and liturgical writings, in which is enclosed all the doctrine of Zoroastrianism: "And when these two spirits [the excellent and the bad] met, then first of all life and non-life were posed [...]". (*Gatha, Yasna*, 30, 3, tr. Pagliaro).

Evidently, this interpretation reflects a modification of the traditional aspect of ancient cosmogony. The creators in this case are two: good and evil. A characteristic of Persian thought that will continue for many centuries, giving truly interesting manifestations of theological investigation.

In the biblical world the Supreme Good alone occupies the entire horizon of the picture, Evil is at its direct dependence. Even in the case of the temptation to Eve, Evil does not act on its own initiative, but is employed by the Good so that man undergoes a test. The Evil of the Israelite tradition never reaches the height of the Good, despite being endowed with extra-human peculiarities, it always remains in the state of semi-god, not once endangering the stability of the Good's position. Now, even to those who participated in the formation of the biblical context, the situation of Evil, operating in the world beyond any pre-established directive and independent of the influence of correction, must have seemed curious and ill-posed. Hence it became necessary not to manifest the presence of Evil in the "earthly paradise". Only when man was detached from an environment that was not congenial to him, did Evil take on its most suitable appearance as an independent actor, but always within the sphere of human actions, and its exclusion from divine things continued. This particular way of looking at the relationship between Good and Evil reveals the gigantic effort of a small people to give itself the greatest authorization to dominate other peoples: that which came from being guided by an invisible God, absolutely unassailable to the forces of Evil.

The Persian religion, however, from the beginning, was forced to fight other religions already in place, very strong and established, such as naturalistic, the cult of fire, that of Soma, etc.. Hence it became necessary to merge and reorganize previous cults, in a more complete religion and at the same time more suitable to understand the fundamental idealizations of Good and Evil, which in previous cults were considered separately. As we said, the duality that we are describing lasted for centuries in Persian theology, enlarging more and more the concept of equal fight between two equally infinite powers, and trying to rationally demonstrate the "unique" foundation of the concept of "duality".

This characteristic way of proceeding, although the result of a fairly late period (perhaps it is to be reported to the period between the ninth and eighth centuries), shows a significant cultural development, especially in the Mazdaic tradition. Here is a passage from *Denkart* (book IV, called *Aoven namak*, tr. Pagliaro): "The One, which is also the First principle, similar to itself, has no cause. The Two, the primary alterity, the one that among the Attributes is the first, according to the link of creation is Vohuman, but its beginning is from the adversary and its cause coincides with the origin of creation. To consider carefully the Two and the others included, it may seem that in one thing, in relation to the double development, the principle "for such effect such cause" does not apply. In fact the very term "cause" has implied a meaning that comes from multiplicity and coexistence. Of two existing things it is not possible to calculate exactly the combination and in the limit the thin lines break. Thus it does not happen to be possible for the thin line, which holds on two sides, to be divided into two. In fact the One, that in unity is compact, for itself is indivisible for the same reason that, if it moves, it continues on itself and is no longer one, but duality, which has a cause, and this is demonstrated in the primarity, stability, uniqueness of the unity of the One".

As we can see, the rational effort is not indifferent. We assist to a real philosophical covering of a mythical concept. Example that will have not a few brothers in the western speculation. In all cases we can say that the Persian cosmogonic speculation, even excluding the late aspect much more complete and evolved, is detached from the Jewish one for the effort made in wanting to place at the origin of all things the duality and not the uniqueness.

Also here the road that leads to true scientific research is still very far. If in the biblical myth we remained in the field of poetic art, in the Persian myth we pass into the field of speculative technique, not yet true philosophy, but still to be placed, for the purposes of the discourse we are tracing, on a higher level. For example, the texts of *Denkart* or *Bundahisn* are rich in logical constructions, but they lack the possibility of overcoming the obstacle of the magical myth. This contributed to blocking the efforts of the Persians on this side of a fusion between experimental investigation and relative rational deduction.

On a much lower plane is the position of the Egyptian people, in the common need to give organization to the cosmogonic problem. The fundamental characteristic is the absolute lack of the idea of an evolution, when it is in time, independent of the creative force. Whether we turn to the most ancient texts, such as those "of the pyramids", or whether we go back to relatively more recent times, this lack is always very evident. Yet, in parallel, the Egyptians performed miracles in narrative, historiography and, it seems incredible, in scientific investigation.

Precisely this last Egyptian heritage is the one that causes the greatest wonder, since it was not able to reach a generalization that would have made evident the untenability of the theological tradition. Even putting aside the chemical texts, which it would be difficult to purify from the traces of magic and astrology, there are still the texts of scientific research. In the latter, the observation of the particular case is pushed to the improbable, the phenomenon is dissected with analytical procedures that would make a modern scientist envious. Here, for example, is the didactic description of a case of tetanus caused by a head wound: "But if you find that this man's limbs are burning because of this wound that is in the suture of his skull, while this man is in convulsions because of this wound, then you will put your hand on him. If you find his forehead drenched in sweat, his neck strained, his face cyanotic, his teeth and back and the smell of the box of his head is like mutton urine, his mouth tied, his eyebrows distorted, and his face as if he were weeping, then you shall say over him: one who has an open wound in his head that penetrates to the bone and passes the sutures of his skull, and is in convulsions, and has his mouth tied and suffers stiffness in his neck. A disease that cannot be treated." (Smith Papyrus, Case VII, cf. S. Donadoni, *History of Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Milan 1959, pp. 45-46).

Here we find ourselves in front of a very acute example of experimental observation, it will be necessary to wait thousands of years for such an impulse to empirical research. A generalization of phenomena suitable to prepare and illustrate the interpretation of a presumable future case, even resorting to empirical comparisons, demonstrates the existence of a scientific mentality in full development. So Sergio Donadoni specifies: "The coldness of the scientific description finds the necessary words to indicate the whole complex game of phenomena as briefly as possible. It knows how to take advantage of comparisons (the smell "as of mutton urine", the contractions of the face "as if it were crying") but without taking them out of their specific function of explanatory elements, of support. The order, the precision of the language, the very brevity of the negative conclusion, as quick as a condemnation, arise not from a stylistic desire, but from this attitude of commitment to a mundane and practical reality. No miracles are expected here, and the mentality of the magic formula is dead. From this rationalistic objectivity (which can be the simple search to fix the sentence that the cowherd really says during his work, which can be the need to give an

unequivocal rule that has juridical value, which can be the commitment to describe symptoms that must be clearly identifiable at a first direct analysis) arises in many ways the difficult experience of prose. The word is no longer enough: it must narrate and describe, it must bite into a life experience. While in the *Texts of the Pyramids* only a few details are illuminated with a very bright light, which must serve to evoke an entire lyrical and mythical atmosphere, and one proceeds by allusion, and if one describes with graphic vigor a moment or an object, this is always a term of comparison and never what one is really talking about, here there is a calm relaxation, a consideration of things and phenomena in their organic nature. The lightning intuitions of the *Pyramid Texts* give way to slow enumerations or analyses. The lyrical descent is over here: the texts are now written to be understood without too much difficulty, not to be 'felt' or 'experienced'". (*Ib.*, pp. 46-47).

In these men the influence of myth is as slight as ever. Yet nothing of this spirit of research transcends into the realm of pure concepts. The theorization of a principle, a concept that could logically come out of scientific research, remains foreign to religious doctrine. Here is how in a text that specialists date back to the time of the V dynasty (therefore some time later than the text cited above) a cosmogonic theory is exposed: "So it was found that his [Ptah's] power is greater than that of the other gods [...]. He created the gods, made the cities, founded the names, placed the gods in their sanctuaries, consolidated their offerings, founded their temples, made their bodies similar to their desires. So entered the gods into their bodies of any kind of wood, of any kind of stone, of any kind of mineral, of any kind of substance that is born on him and whose appearance they took." (*Ib.*, p. 48).

In the Egyptian tradition, as we have seen, the fetishistic idea prevails, as in the Sumerian and Babylonian tradition. With the evident difference that while the spirit of the Sumerians is purely fabulous and mythological, that of the Egyptians, while remaining tied to an irreplaceable fetishism, concentrates in individual things, in individual phenomena, that idea of the divine, which elsewhere cannot be seen. It is a little bit the scientific inheritance that shapes the religious concept, in a curious way if you want, as it does not take into account the principle of generalization, but always determinant. In the single phenomena, the Egyptians had learned to see nature itself, the gigantic effort of a force that always reappears under different guises, sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile, sometimes known and sometimes unknown. And this game was, for them, divine.

It doesn't seem to share the opinion of those orientalist who affirm that in Egypt a monotheistic religion was quite developed, in line with a general movement that goes from Zarathustra's theories to the poetic elaborations of the Israelites. Such a theory is, at least, devoid of evidence, especially if one takes into account the fact that attributing the work of creation to a single engine does not mean failing the fundamental fetishism. Bredet and Moret formulate this hypothesis, collected by Corrado Barbagallo (*Storia Universale*, vol. I, Torino 1955, p. 195).

The story of the Egyptian people cannot be separated from this plurivalence of divinities, especially if we keep in mind the highly developed empirical consciousness, which always proposed new discoveries and new problems, in contrast with the total lack of a coordinating idea of these vital forces in motion. All that of a phenomenon could be discovered by empirical investigation, assumed the guise of reality and was not contaminated by magical and ritual proposals, the rest did not escape the fate common to many other unsolved problems of antiquity.

The road to truth also passes through the Egyptian experience. These are small attempts, blind and desperate, but admirable, if you think that they were conducted in times when looking into the face of truth could mean looking into the face of death. And we must not smile at their solutions,

they almost always pass by the substance of things without crashing into it, too immersed in their magical fear of the unknowable, which must be known and explained at all costs, and too tied to that necessary substantialization of the phenomenon which is in this way elevated to the rank of divinity.

The Indian people, for their part, provide one of the highest philosophical formulations of the problem we are dealing with. These deductions are always devoid of the theoretical quality that we find among the Greeks, but they are very valid as documentation of one of the most considerable efforts to reach the knowledge of the truth. The Indian speculation, because it can be defined as such, abandons the purely descriptive phase, typical of the hypotheses already studied, to assume the tone and the authority that compete with a scientifically organized research.

First, we can distinguish the work of a Creator from the subsequent work of created things. Even if the discourse always remains on the mythical plane, it is easy to detect the progress of this idea which helps to veil the permanent fetishism. No longer is the presence of a single principle necessary to justify the formation of the particular substances and phenomena all. Now the Creator is observed in all his power in the unique and determined creative act, from which, in successive epochs and without his creative force having intervened any longer, new forms always spring forth, in a rudimentary evolution.

In the *Rigveda* (X, 82), a poetic text of very ancient formation, we read: "The father of the eye, constant in his purpose, produced these two sunk in the fat liquid, when at first their extremes were consolidated the sky and the earth stretched out. The author of all, infinite in soul and power, is the creator and orderer and supreme gaze; of these the desires with sacrifice thrive where, beyond the stars of Ursa, he alone they say to be. He who is our father and parent, he who as creator created all creatures and all worlds, he who established the gods, he alone named them, he alone is the one to whom the other beings go to question. To him sacrificed their having the first seers, as singers in abundance; who in the dark and bright space established these creatures shaped [...]". (Quoted by V. Pisani, *Storia delle letterature antiche dell'India*, Milano 1959, p. 38).

The vagueness of the initial concept of creation can never detract from the principle that flashes between these lines. Obviously, these are not definitive, clear words, unassailable to doubt. It is useful, however, to note the concept, of the presence of everything in the "fat liquid". The partition of heaven and earth, understood as two extremes of something indivisible, finds its origin in a whole that together justifies and merges them, even before creation. With regard to subsequent creations by the "first seers", we must refer to the need of these primitive men to explain the existence of many species of animals, plants and minerals, in difficult agreement with the hypothesis of a single creator. From which will derive a certain weakness in the later scientific elaboration of an evolutionary theory. But, staying within the scope of our assumption, we can see how the singer of these verses, a passionate poet and at the same time an acute applicator of his own reason, does not fail to express his disappointment for the current state of things, for the exteriority of the mechanism of creation, from which it will never be possible to have an exact knowledge of its creator, because it is too wrapped in fog and "chatter", the work of the inept "reciters of hymns".

But the effort of the Indian people on the road to the resolution of the cosmogonic problem does not end in simple poetic theses, even if deeply felt. What we have seen confusingly tries to delimit an "absolute principle", but it doesn't go further, it doesn't turn the principle into itself in order to obtain a logical truth, a new force that can alone justify the birth and permanence of the "absolute principle". For some scholars we have to wait until the affirmation of Buddhism in order to have a beginning in this sense, but well certain manifestations existed since the time in which we can



date the above mentioned hymns. Here is how this idea is outlined in the Hymn X, 129, 3, also of the *Rigveda*: "Darkness there was of darkness enveloped, in the beginning: undifferentiated water this all was: that energy, which of emptiness was enveloped, by the power of internal ardor was born as the Only One". (See *op. cit.*, p. 39).

Here we come to the identification of a Principle in the principle, of an energy inherent in the creative force, which serves as a justification of the principle itself. Buddhist doctrine will have the task of fully clarifying this assumption, with the substantializing concept of "prayer". Certainly these speculations do not bring any definitive contribution to the conquest of truth, especially for us Westerners, too distant from the particular world that these concepts presuppose. To our comfort remains the fact that those who have approached the Indian spirit have come out profoundly changed. A very valid example is the work of Schopenhauer, where it is possible to detect a lot of Buddhist inspiration.

Thus Vittore Pisani on Buddhism: "The doctrine of the Buddha (we abstract here from further developments) is summarized in the "four truths": I - pain is birth, old age, sickness, death, union with what is unpleasant, separation from what is pleasing, not getting what one desires; II - the source of pain is the craving that leads from one birth to another; III - the suppression of pain is obtainable by suppressing craving, and this is done by totally destroying desire; IV - to set out on the path to the suppression of desire and pain one must set out on the "eightfold path" consisting of: righteous faith, righteous resolution, righteous speech, righteous action, righteous living, righteous aspiration, righteous thinking, righteous concentration. The cessation of pain is a concept that falls with the "nirvana"; nirvana, however, has a special meaning for Buddhism, because it does not pose as Jainism of individual souls eternal and constant: what for others is the soul, for the Buddha is nothing but an ever-renewing product of feelings and representations; once these are gone, the possibility of rebirth and therefore of suffering is also lost. But on what we could call the metaphysical substance of the universe, the Buddha refused to express himself, rightly answering, according to an ancient text, to the disciple who asked him about nirvana: "No measure can measure the one who has entered nirvana; there are no words to say about him; vanished is what the thought could grasp: so every way is precluded to the word"; in this divining the ultralogicality of metaphysical ideas, demonstrated by Kant's criticism. For the purposes of the eightfold path is addressed to the establishment of the Buddhist community consisting of monks and nuns. They renounce their homeland, family and caste, shave their heads, wear a yellow robe and wander as beggars (*bhiksu, pali bhikkhu*) after having vowed to chastity and poverty, the latter not only for the individual but also for the community, and finding acceptance, where they exist, in convents founded by lay people who constitute a circle of believers who have not definitively set out to conquer liberation, we would rather say sympathizers. Given the nature of the religion, there is no worship; the laity, however, collect the relics of Buddha or other holy men in monuments called stupas and celebrate festivals with offerings of flowers and illuminations. But the monks and nuns must gather twice a month for a public confession, intended to prevent any deviation from the well-defined rule. One trait of social order is particularly noteworthy, such as the one that sharply opposed Buddhism to Brahmanism and perhaps was the final cause of its disappearance from India: the rejection of caste distinctions made by the monks on their entry into the order, which could not but be reflected on the attitude of the laity towards this pillar of the Indian social edifice. By laying down such a practice, the Buddha sanctioned a principle already snaking among the *cramana* and in general among elements of that secular thought which we have seen in part flowing into the *Upanisads*; only that, given the importance and diffusion assumed at certain times by Buddhism, this annulment of the caste hierarchy and above all of the supremacy

arrogated to the Brahmans must have provoked the most decisive opposition on their part". (*Op. cit.*, pp. 59-61).

And here we are, still in the context of the cosmogonic problem, the Greek miracle. Indeed, the work of a people that, from the same starting point of all the others, that is from myths and magic, comes to a scientific organization of the concept of knowledge, leads to wonder.

In order to well understand the intimate lesson contained in the cosmogonic attempts already examined, it will be clearly seen that knowledge is understood as a kind of re-presentation in receptive form of a reality in its own right and independent of our efforts to reach it. Whether, therefore, this reality is mythical or actual is of no real importance. For the Egyptians as for the Babylonians, for the Indians as for the Persians and the Jews, the concept of reality is substantial, but spurious.

We have already seen the unhappy position of these peoples with respect to their surroundings. Of course, the difficulties of the Greeks were not less, but they were able to overcome them because they agreed to unify the efforts of reflection and research. For all primitive peoples, knowledge, when it does not ruin everything in mythological constructions devoid of meaning, is understood as a process that contributes to the reflection of the world's presence. The Greeks were able to make full use of this common meaning, and at the same time they were able to elaborate a logical generalization extensible to research in general.

The first steps emerge only weakly from myth. Hesiod's *Theogony*, despite Aristotle's laudatory testimony, remains only an attempt to give logical justification to the mythical covering with which the unknown origin of the world was covered. The conceptions of Aeschylus, Ferecides of Syrus and the Seven Sages remain on the same line. On the borderline between reliable information and legend, of these men we know that they did not succeed in overcoming the mythological envelope of a pretended cosmic organization and limited their activity to dictate precepts of wisdom directed to regulate the moves of men, that they interpreted without sense and without purpose.

At this point, the problem arises as to why the Greek people, at the beginning of philosophical reflection, turned to the explanation of the cosmos rather than to the study of man and the things that surrounded him. First of all we must clarify that the problem arises for the Greeks and not for the other peoples examined above, because only the Greeks, as we have seen, reached that maturity of thought that only can make man capable of choosing between several problems or research directions. But to return to the question that has long engaged historians and critics of philosophy, we can say that the central point lies in the fact that we can not explain why the extreme difficulty of the cosmos, with all the mysteries that it hides, has attracted more attention of Greek scholars, diverting them from the relatively easier difficulties of man and external reality. And to this obstacle, or at least to an explanation that we could define of contour, have stopped the investigations of men like Eduard Zeller, Wilhelm Windelband, John Burnet, Ernst Cassirer, Paul Tannery. The explanation of the outline is traced back to Locke and his comparison with the visual limitations of the eye, from which it is reduced to a lack of historical perspective: a solution that presents unchanged the initial problem. But an energetic development, in my opinion, has been produced by Rodolfo Mondolfo: "The cosmic problems, in the initial mythical reflection, are conceived essentially as human problems, modeled on the example of the same. But this, evidently, means that, contemplating and trying to understand nature, mythical thought already possesses the concepts relative to the human world, and for this very reason it can use them; in other words, reflection on the human world preceded reflection on the natural world, and therefore the latter can rest on the latter, since it arises for the first time". (*At the Origins of the Philosophy of Culture*, Bologna 1956, p. 13).

Moreover, we could add, without taking anything away from this conception that I consider definitive, that the thought of the ancient Greeks had necessarily to address to the cosmos before to man - meaning by this more than an effective priority, a manifest exteriority - as the rarefaction of the use of the thought itself relegated this last one in the bosom of determined castes for the most part of priestly organization, and therefore to eminent esoteric and magic character. Here is therefore the opportunity, for these groups of people, to give a unitary and explanatory address to their activity of sorcerers and then of intermediaries between mystery and reality, between the unknown world of the beyond and the rest of the ignorant, immersed in the darkest superstition. This, in broad terms, the initial situation, characteristic of the first cosmogonic solutions. Only later, when the backbone of thought was able to thicken, when the first stutter was able to pronounce entire speeches, other men, completely different, no longer tied, or only weakly linked, to interests of caste or school, picked up the ranks from the hands of predecessors and undertook the first, true, path to the truth.

With the birth of this feeling or sort of self-consciousness of a necessity of research, when it is outside the binding contingent relationship of myth and destiny, a new form of thought stands out clearly: philosophy. Of course we cannot speak of a real birth as a well-determined entity, which did not exist before, and which after a series of events had life and form. Mostly these first flashes lack that reflection on the internal organism of philosophy itself, which alone gives scientific light to every desire for knowledge. We begin to look around us, on the immense ground of ignorance, and to gather those random fruits, which in a field never traversed by human feet do not fail to be found in abundance. One cannot speak of philosophers, just as one cannot speak of scientists, theologians, astronomers, doctors, but only of everything taken together. They are pioneers who courageously explore a new land, going to meet dangers never known, running the risk of compromising at once the few conquests made.

As an example, following the line of development we have undertaken, let us look at the cosmogonic solutions of two early Greek thinkers: Anaximander and Anaximenes.

Starting from the consideration that every representation of our reality, freed from the dross of magic and myth, is nothing but a reworking and not a pure representation, Anaximander was forced to seek a confirmation alien to the same reasoning process, a confirmation that, based on analogies and generalizations, could give proof of the theoretical assumption. Contemporary of Thales, Anaximander represents the first serious attempt of scientific inclusion in the examination of the cosmic mystery. Even more than Thales, too covered by the cruelty of the centuries, this man appears to us as the first figure of scientist who managed to deconsecrate the oriental myths of the origin of the world. Cosmology abandons the religious character that it had maintained for centuries by the most diverse peoples, to be treated in the same way as astronomy - science of which Anaximander was a lover - physics, mathematics, geometry.

Some scholars (e.g., Johan Haser) argue that the development of the various scientific disciplines took place, in this period, in parallel, without any interference between their results. There is no exception to this concept, which is documented for some disciplines and not for all. Nevertheless, I would like to stop the attention on a detail. It is true that the development took place in a parallel direction, but we should not forget that if medicine progressed in isolation from mathematics, and if geometry did not give signs - at least superficially - of being influenced by philosophy, there was only one guiding concept that united all the sciences and all equally pushed towards a continuous progress: the theoretical nature of the particular, examined and studied in view of a generalization. The infinite and indefinite principle, designated as the origin of all things

by Anaximander, is a remarkable progress in relation to the water of Thales, a concept that, in turn, was a great leap forward in the scale of cosmology.

Recognizing to the same matter the high possibility to host a principle not only infinite, but also indefinite, that is not only able to embrace all matter, but all possible forms, it is eradicated definitely the absurd claim to place the origins of everything outside the whole itself, paying any remaining debt with the myth of the past. With Anaximander we see one of the first clear formulations of the process of evolution, not so much in the partition into categories - such as men who believe they were born from fish and then thrown on the ground: intuition, for another, brilliant, but absolutely free, at that time, because not supported by any possible experiment to search for organisms of passage - as in the exposure of the law that forms the basis of the separation of all forms: the law of justice.

Time plays a fundamental role in this theory, appearing for the first time on the philosophical scene of thought. In time the long sequence of beings is arranged, each one owing to the others its own iniquity. Thus a law of complementarity is established that regulates the behavior of beings, both on the cosmic and on the human level: a law of justice and injustice, of death and survival. The primordial unity of the infinite is to be broken by an act of injustice, from which emerges the different, the limited, the partial, it will be up to an act of justice to bring back the balance. So Theophrastus speaks of Anaximander: "He says that the principle is not water or any other of the so-called elements, but a certain different infinite nature, from which arise all the heavens and the worlds they contain [...]. And it is clear that [Anaximander], having recognized the transformation of the four elements into one another, thought it unjustified to establish only one of them as a substratum, and thought instead to establish as such something else beyond the elements. He then traces the generation not to the alteration of the element, but to the separation of opposites through the eternal movement. (*Dox.*, 476, 6-15).

Anaximenes of Miletus, a little later than Anaximander, turned his cosmogonic studies to replace the infinite principle of his predecessor with another principle, closer to the external world of man, but presenting the same external characteristics of individuality and persistence in all the formal divisions of the universe: the air. Perhaps it is not entirely accurate to assign to Anaximenes this way of reasoning, perhaps he was aware of the corporeity of air and only experimental observation of certain phenomena led him to replace the infinite of Anaximander with a material substance. Certainly beyond peripheral issues, we can only admire the scientific preparation of Anaximenes, his procedure that leads him to consider fire as rarefaction of air and wind as condensation. We are in the midst of evolutionary theory when from wind, through a further condensation of air, we pass to the cloud, to water, to earth, to stone. Cicero has a nice saying: "I have almost exposed not judgments of philosophers but dreams of people in delirium. In fact the tales coming from the voice of the poets are not much more absurd, harmful for their own sweetness, they represented the gods inflamed with anger, and mad with lust and they made us see their wars, the fights, the battles, the wounds, moreover their hatreds, the dissensions, the discords, the births, the deaths, the lamentations, the querimony, the lusts expressed in every intemperance, the adulteries, the imprisonments, the unions with the human kind and the mortal offspring born from an immortal". (*The nature of the gods*, in *Political and Philosophical Works*, tr. it., vol. II, Turin 1955, p. 510). In saying this he shows that he did not consider these efforts in their proper value and did not understand the intimate awareness of these men who first dared to go out into the open field, out of the comfortable shelters of myths and superstitions. Thus Anaximenes: "As our soul, which is air, sustains us, so the breath and the air surround the whole world." (*Diels*, 2).

The parallel between Anaximander and Anaximenes shows a remarkable difference in position. The former is more philosophical, the latter more scientific, the former more inclined to the great organizing idea, the latter more attentive to the single phases of the unfolding process. Both of them, beyond any illusion, are still indebted, in many ways, to the mythographic tradition. Anaximander comes off more, boldly establishing the infinity of matter, but his successor is quick to bring the master back down to earth. We can also meet in the writing the extremes of a philosophical concept of "divinity": the first official attempt of supreme idealization of a concept. In this way Anaximander would come to detach himself completely from the previous theological aftermath to give us, through an intellectual effort not indifferent, one of the most energetic addresses to the truth. But the message is not collected by his successor. Little we know of the personality of Anaximenes, but from that little we can deduce a greater tendency to scientificity than the master. The love for the direct observation of phenomena was able to prevent the use of a concept not admissible by experience. The road to truth is brought back on the scientific track of the proof: not only the brilliant intuitions are enough, but also scientific demonstrations are needed.

From what we have already said about such a delicate and heartfelt problem as the cosmogonic one, we can draw a first consequence. Philosophy, in its own manifestation as the life-blood of every searching thought, was essentially born under the guise of heresy, inasmuch as the vocation of these first researchers was not to be afraid of the Nume, and to look it calmly in the face. And, keeping in mind the times of superstition and terror of the god, in which these efforts manifested themselves, one cannot but admire the great work of these initiators, especially when compared to the sluggishness of those who today, in otherwise free and mature times, mystify the task of thought, under the pale reflection of a modernized and refined superstition or under the more concrete reflection of an accommodating and productive servility.

When the dawn of the destinies of the world began, so did the history of philosophy. And this must make us reflect today, after so much time and after so many testimonies, on the real task of every philosophical reflection, so that it does not turn out to be vain academic exercise. The long cosmogonic story serves to illuminate the central motive of this effort, which observed in its fractions may seem quite otherwise directed. For the primitives, the solution of the aforementioned problem meant a clarification of man, primarily of the origins of man. A kind of decisive detachment from the tyranny of an absurd and terrible deity. But we must not delude ourselves that the unfolding of this plan ended with the exhaustion of the cosmogonic problem. It follows the arc of man's destiny, an uncomfortable but necessary companion, used now with discernment now with stupidity, but profoundly ineradicable.

With the rise of the religions of thought, this unfolding became more tortuous, almost invisible, but always present to the exercised eye of those who have followed it since its emergence. If the organized reflection of thought analyzes religion, it does not for this reason fail in its original heresy. The very fact of setting conditions, of mitigating the absolute power of the god, of establishing canons of behavior, of assigning tasks, of evaluating the deserving, of condemning the guilty, of establishing rewards, means blocking the unconditional absoluteness that initially inhibited or made one-sided every god-man relationship.

Thought, even when it does not rise in the solitude of a clear rejection, even when it labors to construct demonstrations and theological supports, is always heresy. Perhaps it is not daring to extend the concept of heresy to that of truth if, as we said earlier, every effort of research is constitutionally directed towards the knowledge of truth. Proceeding in this way sheds new light both on the problem of the meaning of philosophy and on the need to give content and form to a concept of truth. If one considers truth as an objectifiable entity, placed in a dimension whose

knowledge does not belong to us, and waiting to be all but extrinsicated from this unknown dimension to occupy another kind of dimension, more accessible to us, one commits a very serious error, which constrains any future development of knowledge. And philosophy is forced to follow the same path. If it is posed as a technique or an organized process of this achievement, it dries up in empty expositions of a thought that remains such only in its external form.

[Published in "Studies and Research," 1968, pp. 33-48, under the title: "The Problem of Truth at the Origins of Philosophical Thought."]

## **Martin Heidegger and Parmenides of Elea**

Essential knowledge pertains to the one who is. The habitual understanding of something is in essence knowledge, but this is not essential knowledge.

Parmenides and Heraclitus are the two thinkers, both living in the decades between 540 and 460, who seek to think the true. To think the true means to experience the true in its essence, in other words to know the truth of the true.

In the sphere of the important history of thought, that which contracts on reality proper, the beginning is what comes last. But for a thought that knows only the form of calculation and measurement the above statement is a nonsense. At its debut, the beginning appears in the form of characteristic veiling. I try to understand but I insist on becoming rigid, I do not admit possible abandonment and oblivion, I want to be vigilant but I turn out to be discontinuous, I get caught up in fear and I go backwards historicizing my attempts, thus permeating them because of their insertion in a supposedly objective mechanism. The result is the singular fact that the initial is easily deemed something incomplete and approximate. Heidegger states that the first true initial thinker is Anaximander.

The other two, he continues, the only ones besides Anaximander, are Parmenides and Heraclitus. Distinguishing these three thinkers as the initial early thinkers, preferring them to all the other thinkers of the West, may seem arbitrary. Abandoning a solidified starting heath, a recognized territory, can lead me to confusion. I don't really know what to do, and the historicizing to which I resort hides the void in my knowledge. I need a memory that records facts, and my abandonments and my oblivions are not facts, they are suspensions or lightnings of doing. So I cannot treasure these experiences of immediate consciousness, every time I have to start over.

In the course of the epochs of Western history, Heidegger says, to successive generations previous thought becomes increasingly foreign. Ultimately, the detachment is so great that it raises the question of whether a later epoch is generally still able to rethink older thoughts. This causes me a delayed restlessness, a form of solicitation that comes from the anxious state caused by not being able to determine exactly where I come from and how to base my claims to turn towards the whole, questioning it from a stable base, but which in the long run proves to be unreliable, too tied to artificial measures and incomprehensible if entrusted only to themselves.

To this doubt Heidegger associates another one, that is, if this purpose, assuming it is feasible, still brings some benefit. Why should we wander in order to follow the almost erased traces of a thought passed long ago? This is a doubt that is the last resort of productivity, and is itself imposed by incompleteness. If my purpose is to seek other possession that satisfies my need for completeness, in doing I always find a bitter reprieve, almost always backwards. In everything, on the contrary, I find the possibility that always answers the fundamental question, but it comes to me from destiny and this doing points to something else, perhaps an action?

Heidegger expresses doubts on the possibility and usefulness of an attempt to trace the original thought, which has come only in fragments. This depends on being accustomed to certainties that, in the end, are not such. In the tradition that arrives to me in this way, there is not a permanence but a revocation in doubt, not a narrowing but a widening. It is not the historical past but the possible future that I experience in the field as doing that opens up to something different.

The intention to meditate, even today, on the thought of Parmenides and Heraclitus thus remains shrouded in a quantity of doubts and perplexities, Heidegger says, which we allow to subsist, thus sparing ourselves from dismissing them one by one. But even if we attempted to dispel such perplexities, we would still have to face first an unavoidable task, namely, to think what the two thinkers think. There is one thing, however, we cannot avoid, and that is to pay attention first of all to their words. Perhaps, with due attention and perseverance of thought, we will be able to see that the aforementioned doubts are unfounded. The maximum response of attention to these words is at bottom too accommodating, it portrays in too much detail the daily doing that does not feel emotions if not repetitive, that is, it discovers from time to time only what it knows to find, no surprise, no trace of a possible overcoming. This depends on an unfinished presence, not completely consumed, a trace of another word that refers to a further incompleteness. The ultimate listening, suggested by Heidegger, is an event itself, but more than an event it is the sign of a lack, the blade of a knife on which my life pivots, in any case not an insurmountable limit.

The words of Parmenides have the linguistic form of verses and stanzas, that is, they present themselves as a "poem," but because they expound a "philosophical doctrine," we speak of the "didactic poem" of Parmenides. Heidegger says this but, at the same time, he lets it be understood that a different questioning is needed here. The blade on which I pivot must produce a more perspicuous ability to listen to the messages of destiny, while these signs are given as something insecure, capable only of relating to a hypothetical possible completeness, never identifiable with what in my heart is still and in my hand does not tremble.

This definition of his thinking saying is the result of embarrassment. We know what a poem and a poetic composition are, just as we know what a philosophical treatise is. But it is just as easy to notice that in Parmenides' verses there is very little that is "poetic", while there is a great deal of what is called "abstract". Heidegger proposes to take into account two things that threaten to contrast each other. The reality is that a fact, like a saying that spans millennia, is never an event that can be circumscribed once and for all. By describing it in listening as a historian I reinvent it each time, I remake it again. The sequence of these reinventions, historiography, traces the active line, in the world, of a perceptible qualitative diversity, even if only as a residue. This intensity is saved from time to time beyond the very fact that it remains recorded. The saving of the qualitative message refers to a different and much more risky way of thinking, but in itself this nucleus is a living content that becomes next to the corpse of the event.

Heidegger, referring to Parmenides, and his poem, says that the way in which words are said here and the way in which the saying is thought can only really be clarified if we first know what is thought here, and what must come to the word. Here the word is said in a peculiar way, that is, a saying is uttered. This is why we will later call the initial word of Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus the "saying" of these thinkers. Moving towards them with the objective of understanding, I put myself at stake, I revoke in doubt my faith in daily certainty, I go out into the open air towards a free zone where the canonical series of signs has disappeared, where distance and difference are resolved and converted into a reciprocal encounter and give rise to the emergence of different perspectives.

For Heidegger, the saying of these thinkers means the whole of their saying, not just individual sentences and phrases. I read the single sentence and I dispose myself to my comprehensive making, yet behind it there is the unattainable world of acting in perspective, I sense possibilities that in the simple making of the text something of my own are not always accessible. In the separateness of the word, placed in front of the whole of what is said, there is the production of a zone of meaning not yet identified, always meaning that cannot be grasped by responding to the pure and simple word.

To know what is said and thought in the words of Parmenides, we choose the safest way, we follow the text. The translation already contains the interpretation. This interpretation, however, needs elucidation. Yet neither the translation nor the elucidation carries any weight as long as what is thought in Parmenides' words does not touch us directly. It all depends on whether or not we pay attention to the call coming from the thinking word. But this paying attention is a prisoner of doing, it grasps new perspectives that are not simply doing, re-presentation of what has already been said, but it does not access the real saying, the word that opens to action, this is not the way to cancel the absolute modification. The word is also the bearer of anomie, it upsets the diffusion of contents, it is unpredictable. It is necessary, however, that it be on the way to becoming other than itself.

Only by paying attention to the recall do we know the saying, says Heidegger. What man pays attention to, the kind of attention he pays to the object of attention, the originality and constancy of his being attentive are what decides the dignity that is assigned to man on the basis of history. The inhospitable condition of the word pure and simple must be rejected forcefully and critically. This negation completes the word by presenting it again as an open linguistic game. Thus, each time the word digs into itself and presents itself as a new perspective. Each time the limit is proposed, suggested and made to vanish.

And the goddess welcomed me graciously, Heidegger quotes from Parmenides, taking my right hand with her right hand, then she spoke and addressed me: O you, companion of immortal charioteers, who come to our abode led by your steeds, hello! For it is not an adverse destination that has prompted you to set out on this path - and indeed it stands apart, far from the path beaten by men - but both order and expediency. But it is necessary that thou shouldst learn all things, as much the unconcealing heart of the unveiling that surrounds all things, as that which resplendently appears to mortals, and in which resides no reliance for that which is unveiled. The obscure affirmation that seals the landlocked meaning is defeated and the game resumes. The remote meaning, qualitatively different, calls to incisive work on the word, calls to go deep, where no one has yet arrived. In the end, no matter how much one may affect with this interpretative work, only new limits are proposed. The aspiration to diversity by insisting becomes self-limiting. The opening interrupts this game and goes elsewhere, using the material obtained but overturning its meaning, pushing the correspondences towards their border regions where every logical convenience jumps. Listening to this rupture cannot demand the arrival of words coordinated on the known scheme.

But you will nevertheless have to learn, the goddess continues in Heidegger's reposition, to know this as well: how that which shines [by necessity] is required to conform to appearance, pervading everything and [therefore], in this way, accomplishing everything. The force of the whole is concentrated in itself without relating itself except to itself, so conformity shines out of necessity. This self-relation is indestructible and internal, it has no different condition and is not even excluding because it includes any exclusion. It cannot be declined into distinctions because it is itself the distinction. Any other condition is included in the absence of condition. It has no



purpose and no demands because it is itself the purpose and the demand. It has no latency or inaccessible zones, no surplus or limiting covenants. It simply is. The absence of binding is the maximally binding point.

Who is the goddess? Heidegger asks himself. The answer, which we give here in advance, is actually provided only by the whole of the "didactic poem." The goddess is the goddess "truth." It itself - "the truth" - is the goddess. Let us therefore avoid the phrase that would like to speak of a goddess "of" truth, since the expression "goddess of truth" suggests a goddess to whose protection and blessing "truth" is merely entrusted. The impossibility of spatializing and temporalizing truth, which has a sense only as everything, makes every description indescribable. The pure image of movement to which I am accustomed and mimics its conventions by inserting every time the attempt occurs an excess, an overbearingness of determination that continually raises the radical question. Light is the source of modification but it is not completely sayable because it expresses itself only in the expression, mainly in the word and without ever condensing definitively in a precise way. The light does not go out in the opening, but the intensity is different. It rises as an intensity that radiates but does not recite the same plot. The term of the word missing does not allow for the movement of light as in the realm of limitation. The diversity of sense cannot be seen and therefore light also exerts a different influence, perpetuity is that of lightning which contains within itself an infinite duration, therefore immeasurable.

If Parmenides calls "Truth" the goddess, then here it is truth itself that is understood as the goddess. Says Heidegger, this may seem strange to us. In the first place, in fact, we find it quite singular that a thinker refers his thought to the word of a deity. The peculiarity of the thinkers who later, from the age of Plato onwards, are called "philosophers" consists precisely in the fact that they create their thoughts on the basis of autonomous reflection. Thinkers are called "thinkers" in the strong sense of the term precisely because, as they say, they think "by themselves", putting themselves at stake in such thinking. The thinker answers for himself the questions that he himself has posed. Thinkers do not announce the "revelations" of the god, they do not report inspirations of a goddess, but they affirm their own point of view. This autonomy of judgment is an eternal instant, which the whole reenacts from time to time, it is not always and neither is it still in an infinite ecstasy. It does not proceed but exists like light, whose movement needs an abstract hypothesis to be grasped. Light cannot be seen starting from the whole, but it is in the experience of totality that it is understood as a modifying element that makes us better understand the nuances and residues of diversity that wander in the world.

What, then, does the goddess have to do with our "didactic poem", Heidegger asks himself, which expresses the thoughts of a thinking of unrepeatable purity and rigor? However, even if the thought of Parmenides came from a foundation still hidden to us, and on the basis of it legitimately found itself in a relationship with the goddess "Truth", nevertheless we would lack here that immediate appearance of a divinity as we know it from the Greek world. One is led to think that here we are not dealing with a "mythical experience" of this goddess, but with a thinker who on his own initiative "personifies" the general concept of "truth" in an indeterminate female divinity. On the other hand, this procedure of "hypostatization" of general concepts into deities is frequent, especially in late antiquity. Truth, like quality, as a conditioning quality, flashes but cannot be explained, although the world is full of treatises on logic and aesthetics. It is not the correspondence of superior harmonies that marks truth; when these coordinations emerge and make understanding possible, truth is already far away. The work in the field is directed toward doing, but it can self-criticize, understand its own limitations and search deeper, take away, move, destroy, scrape to the bone, and then the intuition of something different, sudden, immense emerges.

Maybe the thinker Parmenides - Heidegger hypothesizes - adopts a similar procedure in order to give more fullness and color to his thoughts otherwise too "abstract". Moreover, if we consider that, according to the current opinion, the beginning of the Western thought among the Greeks is accomplished as a release of the "logos" (reason) from the "myth", it seems plausible that the first, "primitive" attempts made by this thought still contain residues of the "mythical" mentality. The whole that the word lets you guess but cannot color in its details is the form that does not accept information and refuses every limit. The truth is present here as a residue, but these traces are the path that opens up in the forest, a bumpy path that does not allow symmetries or balances, it goes by surprise and does not use light except to draw indications that it then immediately abandons. Each indication refers to a whole path, which is taken up again and once again abandoned. The simple and the complex are multiplied, the starting point, the threshold, provides possibilities but also participation in a different experience.

Provided, however, that the thought of Parmenides and Heraclitus is of an essentially different kind, Heidegger continues, a rejection of the current conception is imposed, which has nothing more to do with the mere refutation of the learned but erroneous interpretations of the two thinkers. This refusal concerns ourselves, and in an ever new and ever more decisive way. Only in appearance is it a "negative" attitude. In reality it constitutes the first step by which we agree to pay attention to the call of the beginning, which, despite the temporal distance understood in historiographic terms, is closer to us than what we usually consider the closest. I'm thinking here of an interruption of the veritative flow, a rupture of the modifying movement that considers itself capable of reflecting reality as a simple tautology, and this is conceivable from within the making as an absence of product, an unproductive making because it is productive of something different, veritably different. The unquenchable production of meaning, which always refers back to an inexhaustible completion, has a new address that disjuncts and opens up new perspectives.

Habitual thought, Heidegger points out, whether scientific, pre-scientific, or non-scientific, thinks about entity, and thinks it according to its individual domains, its separate planes, and its delimited perspectives. This thinking is an understanding of being, a knowing that in different ways masters and dominates it. Unlike the mastering of the entity, the thinking of thinkers is the thinking of being. Their thinking is the retreat in the face of being. What is thought in the thinking of thinkers we call the beginning, which now means: being is the beginning. However, not every thinker who has to think being thinks the beginning. Not every thinker, and not even every thinker at the beginning of thought in the West, is an initial thinker, that is, a thinker who explicitly thinks about the beginning. I think that the thought of the beginning is the entry, violently decisive, within the already said, which almost always coincides with a reversal of meaning, a distancing that is not easy to understand because every distancing is distancing, therefore waiting for something that has yet to come to us. On the other hand, in the passage towards this different intuition, hence the threshold, I take something with me and I leave the rest, but the separation is an infinite flow, what I leave is my baggage of cognitive heaviness. Catastrophes follow one another in this flow and modules of preservation and enlargement never thought of appear, none of these movements is exhausted in the extreme of its possibilities, there is always a still further. There is no way to make this passage appear definitive, just as there is no way not to recognize the debt that I carry with me. Perhaps the eventuality of madness destroys any residual appendage but only because the logic of madness cannot be catalogued except indirectly. The immediate consciousness that sees a new path, of a different nature, cannot be devoured by the truly different consciousness, but neither can it devour this new condition. The dream proceeds in its own way, and to impose rules and

opportunities on it to follow is a meaningless effort while it is precisely the meaning that I am discussing here.

According to Heidegger, Anaximander, Parmenides and Heraclitus are the only initial thinkers, but not in the sense that they inaugurate and begin Western thought, since already before them "there are" thinkers. They are initial thinkers because they think the beginning. The beginning is what is thought in their thinking. This sounds as if "the beginning" is a kind of "object" that thinkers place before themselves in order to think it through. But it has already been said in general that the thinking of thinkers is a retreat in the face of being, so that if in the sphere of thinking the beginning is the supreme thought, then here a retreat of a particular kind must take place. These thinkers, in fact, do not place themselves in front of the beginning in the same way that a scientist "places his hand" on something. Initial thinkers do not even think of the beginning as if it were a mental creation produced by themselves. The beginning is not the fruit of the grace of these thinkers, by which they operate in this or that way, on the contrary: the beginning is what makes something begin in these thinkers, since it claims them in such a way as to demand of them an extreme retreat in the face of being. Thinkers are those who are initiated-captured by the beginning-capture, those who are reached by it, to be gathered and reunited there. This initial condition is not in the world, neither in heaven nor on earth, that both of these hypotheses are in the world and yearn to design it in their own way. The beginning, on the other hand, is the absolute other that shocks me, the truth that no longer tells me anything, that by keeping silent finally speaks to me the one word I have been waiting for forever. With this new voice, driven by it as by the sirens' song, I turn, I return to the truth, and this is the sign that leaves in me the need for what I lack, which is transformed into the possibilities that my destiny offers me. Nothing is the object of that extraordinary tension that grips me, and nothing is possible to represent that necessity that I live only as a flow of possibilities that my destiny is realizing for me. There is in this necessity that drives me a sound that fascinates me and that I neither know nor can locate, a vibration that is not based on any harmony, but rather on a remote nostalgia, as of a lost universe, the whole that continues to elude me.

The characteristic state of necessity - Heidegger says - that forces the thinker of the modern age to write a book of more than four hundred pages in order to say only something of what he has to say is the unmistakable sign of the fact that the thought of the modern age is located outside the scope of the initial thought. It is enough to recall Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* or Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. From these signs we recognize that for a long time the world has been unhinged and man has been lost. But neither should we forget that the fundamental text of the philosophy of the modern age, Descartes' *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, has little more than a hundred pages, and that certain decisive treatises by Leibniz occupy only a few sheets. These facts seemingly only external indicate that in such treatises, so simple and concise even in the internal structure, a transformation of thought takes place which, although not reaching the beginning, nevertheless returns to approach again the boundaries that circumscribe it. By the very fact that for a long time we have been forced to obtain our knowledge by selecting it from the excess of what is said and written, we have ended up losing the ability to hear that little of what is simple and that the words of the initial thinkers say. The whole does not refer to any determination of time or duration, the now is absence of condition and is the whole as it is, but to specify this now is to set a condition that requires the banality of space, then to take away the whole. What I imagine as depth bounces off me in immediacy, it is not unfathomable, in fact I forward my different experience to you, but it is immeasurable. I can be there, but not be able to be there on my perceptual terms, I must be dragged away, not drag along with me what I want. The oscillation

is not between two extremes but in the same throb of fear and abandonment, it doesn't show itself with an analogy but is clear enough to itself, not for me who always procrastinates flabbergasted. There is no segment that I can turn into my own treasure, cut, tear to pieces, I can play with these movements, but where can I find sufficient naivety.

Parmenides tells about a goddess, Heidegger points out. The appearance of a "divine being" in the reasoning of a thinker arouses wonder, first of all because the task of a thinker is not to announce the message of a divine revelation, but to enunciate from himself what he has investigated from himself. Even when thinkers question themselves about "the divine" - as happens in every "metaphysics" - this thinking about the divine is, as Aristotle says, a thought based on "reason", and not a reproduction of theses drawn from a cultic and ecclesiastical "faith". But the appearance of the "goddess" in Parmenides' poem is particularly surprising because she is the goddess "Truth". For us, in fact, "truth", as well as "beauty", "freedom", "justice", is something "general", something that is subtracted from what is particular and real - to what is from time to time true, fair and beautiful - and therefore is represented "abstractly" in the mere concept. Conversely, to make "truth" a "goddess" is to transform a mere concept of something - in our case the concept of the essence of truth - into a "personality". The certainty I take in speaking of truth does not belong to the sayable certainty of clarity that is summed up and hovers like a living light over quantitative concreteness. Truth is not an object outside of me, it is first of all myself, and afterwards also myself in the whole, an indissoluble interweaving that I do not unravel but by which I am enveloped and unraveled with eternally oscillating movement. Even in the different experience, when I live for a time that is not quantifiable truth, this oscillation is not interrupted, it fades in the leap of madness or in the obtuseness of the most boorish accumulation, but even in these conditions of extreme poverty something continues to move under the apparent ashes that cover the heads of madmen and industrial managers.

But, Heidegger confirms, when we speak of truth or the essence of the gods, we know nothing about either. Even if we wanted to claim to be informed about the essence of truth according to the conception of the Greeks, taking as a criterion the doctrines of truth of Plato and Aristotle, we would already be on a false path, which in itself can never lead us back to what the early thinkers experienced when they named what we mark with the word "truth". If we ask ourselves what on earth we think of using the word "truth," a confusing multiplicity of "perspectives" or, conversely, a general perplexity soon emerges. Far more important than the large number of divergent interpretations of truth and its essence is in fact the awareness, ready to reawaken on such an occasion, of the fact that up to now we have generally not yet meditated seriously and carefully on what we call "truth". Nevertheless, do we not always have a great desire for "truth"? Every epoch in history seeks "the true." What is perfectly unattainable is truth, its dimensions remain unknown to me but not foreign, I am always there on the verge of collapsing into the knowledge of this unknowable that is, simple self-affirmation. I reappear in this endless clash and I do not feel the detachment, I do not account for the separation. I am not in the truth but I move as if I were, it is the only hope of having a different space in a territory that does not capture me but keeps me alive, lights my way. The true perspective liberates quality, therefore true freedom, indicating an immemorial presence that is thus put on display even if not in the guise of a sayability. Full life is not a play on words, fullness is a poor condition if I experience it as quantity, but there is another perspective that hides and suggests itself, that refuses and participates, the perspective of truth.

But how seldom, says Heidegger, and how little man is informed about the essence of truth, that is, about truth! However, even if we men of today were in the happy condition of knowing the essence of truth, this would still not guarantee that we would also be able to meditate on what was

experienced as the essence of truth in the ancient thought of the Greeks. In fact, not only the essence of truth, but also the essence of everything essential has its own patrimony from time to time, from which a historical epoch can always draw only the little that constitutes its part. The future speaks to me through the truth and it is here that I catch the signal of possibilities as it rolls up around the same daily modification. Every point that I identify is taken for granted and preludes to an obligatory path, but it is also an arrival from the future, a truthful power that manifests itself and that always catches me by surprise even when it is nothing more than one of the many attempts to complete the quantity. The extreme concreteness of this taking shape of truth does not make me forget its original origin as a possibility, something appears, is born, slips out, disappears. It is the invisible that materializes and grabs me by the hair, but it is not the usual sauce, there is a special breath in the air that widens my heart and makes me free.

The word "unveiling," Heidegger points out, indicates that what the Greeks experience as the essence of truth is due something like a removal and elimination of veiling. The German prefix un- corresponds to the Greek ἄ-, which in grammar is called alpha privativum. Of what kind the privatio, i.e. deprivation and subtraction, is respectively in what is named by the words formed by means of privatives, is something that must be defined in every reference to what is exposed to a deprivation or reduction. Unverborgenheit, "dis-veiledness," can mean that veiledness has been removed, eliminated, overcome, or banished, where, moreover, removing, eliminating, overcoming, and banishing differ in essential ways. But "unveiling" can also mean that veiling is not allowed at all, that is, that it, which is possible and continually looming, does not exist and cannot occur. From such polysemy of the prefix un- we easily deduce that already in this perspective the Un-verborgenheit, the un-veiling, is difficult to determine. Yet it is precisely here that a fundamental trait of the essence of un-sailliness comes to light, a mark that we must consider expressly if we wish to experience the initial Greek essence of "truth." In dis-velation as such, this conflicting opposition is also essentially present. In the essence of truth understood as dis-velation a kind of conflict with veiling and veiling dominates. The arrow of the future comes back and turns towards me, it denounces its presence as a constraint that has materialized in the quantitative aspect, but it is not only this, it is also the access to a codified image that however rigid can be broken by making a different territory resonate. Listening to this opening breaks the idolatry of the protection and guarantee of the quantitative and suddenly strikes me grasping my sacrosanct convictions based on security and guarantee. I know that this new condition is ungrateful and throws me into trepidatious disquiet, but this prospect does not frighten me, I insist by regrouping my forces in this listening that identifies what no one sees and what no one can accumulate.

The goddess, Heidegger continues, greets the thinker who has arrived at his abode and at the same time reveals to him what he will have to experience in the future. It is what for this thinker will constitute the to-think and that from now on, in the history of truth, remains the to-think in an initial way. Hence we easily recognize, although at first only confusedly, that the essence of this goddess "Truth" decides everything about the thinker and the to-think. Before formally clarifying the individual fragments and verses, we must therefore attempt to shed light on the essence of "truth". For this purpose we ask: what does the name of the goddess mean, i.e. what does the Greek word ἀλήθεια, which we translate as "truth," mean? We seem to be "dealing" with a word here. Since the word and language have become for us a means of transport and an instrument of communication among many others, the fact of "dealing" with "words" immediately arouses a strange impression. It is as if, instead of getting on a motorcycle, we were standing in front of it, making it the object of our beautiful speeches and thinking that we were learning how to ride it.

But the word is not a tool, even if we believe that language is only a means of communication, or even of transport, so it is indifferent to say "university" thinking so still something, or instead just shoot Uni. Perhaps, however, it is true that nowadays one only "studies" in a Uni. Just as it is true that we do not "deal" with simple "vocabulary" at all. Sure, in science we can "deal" with vocabularies exactly as we "deal" with the evolution of earthworms. In the "literal" version, ἀλήθεια means "dis-velocity". By paying attention to "literalness" we seem to take the word seriously. However, as long as we are only interested in "vocabularies," we neglect "words" (Worte). Every obvious trace is destined to become mired in the unknowing and decline of incomprehension. It is not I who scatters the traces, it is the traces that never lead where I think I am going, every truth in the field contains its reverse, and it is tragic farce every tragedy.

Literal" translation, Heidegger points out, must not limit itself to reproducing words, thus "enriching" the language it translates with "new", unusual and often amorphous terms, but, beyond the words "that translate", it must think deeply about words. Knowledge of vocabulary does not yet guarantee understanding of words. They say what properly there is to be said, the word, the saying. If, therefore, we follow literalness in such a way that already before, and therefore constantly, we think about the word and on the basis of it, then, but only then, does our high esteem for "literalness" appear justified. With regard to the word, I am the insinuation that advances, that digs into the solidity of immediacy, that hides within it traps and secret paths, the darkness that activates the effective light, that gives birth to the unpredictable, that overturns life in itself accomplished, and reopens new conditions and new follies. Absurdity radicalizes the accumulating obvious, turning it upside down into the normality that breaks the patterns, the quietness that finds the way to the shocking storm.

The word taken literally, Heidegger says, we must hear it in such a way as to listen to the indications that direct us to the word. In this listening our perceiving thus obeys what the word says. It thus exercises attention. It becomes a thinking. Contempt for the sensible who fight among themselves, victims and exploiters, sausage eaters and Mozart lovers, all carefully catalogued. They dance absorbed in their own misery and laugh about it as they walk their grandchildren. Their only purpose is to survive, cannibals of each other.

Thus, Heidegger again, first of all two indications are to be named that can be highlighted and fixed by means of a different accentuation of the term "unveiling": unveiling (Unverborgenheit) and un-veiling (Un-verborgenheit). Unveiling refers first of all to "veiledness". Where there is veiling there must be, or must have been, veiling. Veiling can occur in various ways: as covering and concealment, as preservation and retention, or as an original closing and guarding, similar to the source, which flows only insofar as it already guards. Now, however, what the Greeks experience and think when, in "unveiling," they name veiledness together from time to time, is by no means immediately evident, and is clarified only by special meditation. For this purpose, however, it is necessary to know in general at least a certain range of modes of veiling, since only in this way can the "veiling" thought in Greek, with its circumscribed essential range, be delineated in sufficiently clear terms. But even before we reach this point, the Greek word ἀλήθεια has already become somewhat closer to us by virtue of its translation as "unveiling"; the range of experience which includes the "veiling" and the "unveiling", the "unveiled" and the "veiled", is in fact immediately clearer and more familiar to us than any meaning which, by means of hasty and approximate reflection, we can attribute to our current term "truth". We must, moreover, keep explicitly in mind from time to time the "definition" and the "meaning" of "truth" thus obtained, running, moreover, the danger of having hastily collected only one of the possible definitions according to the different philosophical points of view. Vice versa, veiling is known to us both in

the case in which the things themselves and their relations are veiled before us and for us, and in the case in which it is we who operate in person, who practice and permit a veiling, and, finally, in the case in which both possibilities - a veiling of "things" by themselves and their being veiled by us - are intertwined with each other. The freedom of truth is in truth because here everything is radical opposition to everything, an opposition that is not a splitting but an infinite condensation in itself, an eternal return to itself. No appearance is possible here except in the dimension of immediacy. Since visibility is always linked to a decision, in truth there is no decision, therefore there is no visibility. My freedom can be lived through the possibilities that are realized in destiny, but in this way I will always remain a hunger for freedom, therefore for truth, which like so many dreams will leave me with the bitterness of dissatisfaction, only the dream of these dreams, the dream of truth will be able to make me live a different experience, that of freedom. However, the possible adventure of truth in the world is not only possible, it is also necessary as I realize it in destiny, otherwise there would be rigged cards, I could manipulate destiny when I can only realize it through possibilities, only this flow is necessary because it is the manipulation of truth in the world. Modification as the death of truth is an antinomian statement because there is a mortal process going on and at the same time there is a possibility of transcending, the two aspects are inseparable. In this way I think of both death and life as internal to a single movement, the passage elsewhere takes me with it and my possible diversity does not deny myself, it does not put me to death but I die together with life and I live together with death. In the two aspects, the word assists and hinders me, it comes with me and runs away, it manifests and exists, it understands and closes itself in the most obtuse renunciation. The more it pushes me towards rationalization, the more the truth seems impossible, I return to be the man of my beloved mathematics, while the incomprehensible gnosis, closed in its own way, moves away mocking me. In death, in my own death, which I experience in others, truth also dies, all truth, and what has always eluded me I realize in the openness to radical disappearance. The search for truth, or for freedom, is a search for the why of death, not for death as an experience, which is impossible to search for, but for the meaning that does not renounce liberation in order to face the absolutely other. Truth is the realization of the possibility offered by destiny, that is, radical defeat or death, seem to dissonate, but they do not. By putting myself at risk they, truth and death, cease to be antinomian and are reconciled in the absence of conquest or possession to accumulate. Neither one nor the other can be accumulated. The reconciliation that I observe in the different experience resonates in my heart but is not sayable.

The second aspect, Heidegger continues, that is indicated to us by the word that translates dis-veiledness is the surprising fact that the Greeks, in the essence of truth, think of something like the removal, elimination and annihilation of veiledness. In accordance with this denial of veiledness, truth is for the Greeks, if one can say so, something "negative". In this way, a singular fact comes to light, access to which is barred precisely by that word "truth" (as well as by the terms *veritas* and *verité*) which for us is current and devoid of negation. What the Greek prefix  $\tilde{\nu}$ - and the German un- in the words  $\tilde{\nu}\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$  and *Unverborgenheit* actually mean is for the moment neither decided nor established, as is the meaning of that *Verborgenheit* which is thus eliminated and "denied". For now, the only thing that is certain is that the essence of truth as unveiling is somehow opposed to veiling. It seems that between unveiling and veiling there is a "conflict" whose essence remains controversial. Negative criticism is structure open to possibility, however much it may be surrounded by the minefield of concordances, it suggests that it is not a mechanism that threatens its results, albeit a dialectical mechanism. Punctiliousness in attempts improves negative responses and prepares the intuitive ground, and this is done by continually rethinking negation. The result

is not the opposite of the positive, it is not a clear-cut opposition between true and false, but it is something else again, and this result is unpredictable, that is, it does not come out automatically from the summation of attempts. The unthinkable hangs on the coat rack of the day, where I leave my coat and umbrella, the receptacle of normality.

The "truth," Heidegger confirms, is never "in itself," there present by itself, but must be conquered in conflict. Revelation is wrested from veiledness, in conflict with it. However, unveiling is not conquered simply in the general sense that among men there is a search for truth and a struggle for it. Rather, what is sought and disputed is itself, in itself, in its essence, independently of the struggle among men for its conquest, a conflict: "unveiling." Who there is in the struggle, and how the contenders confront each other, remains obscure. It is a question, however, of thinking deeply once and for all about that conflicting essence of truth which for two thousand five hundred years has illuminated all lights in secret. It is a question of properly experiencing the conflict that occurs in the essence of truth. If I can arrive at some determination of truth, it follows that this is not unconditional. Yet the impossibility of determination is a fact that is apparent from the field. The speaker is obliged to agree that the determination of the thing he provides is an image, it is only a reflection, a deception of logic, but he can also add that in the saying there is hidden a non-disclosable that opens up a possible edification never affirmed directly. Here I am in front of a conditionedness that partially escapes conditioning, only that this partiality is unfathomable. This limitlessness is a sign of total presence. This labyrinth hides an inexhaustible itinerary that I dig and that does nothing but offer me new possibilities with every result that I manage to grasp.

Heidegger again: but, of course, the essence of conflict also remains controversial at first. In all likelihood, "conflict" here means something other than either simple quarrel and dispute, or blind disagreement, as well as "war" and "competition." Perhaps all these are merely metamorphoses and superficial designations of that conflict whose initial essence we may suppose to be present in the essence of truth in the sense of ἀλήθεια, and which we shall one day know. Perhaps the very word of Heraclitus: "War is the mother of all things...", so often misused and always reported only in a crippled way, has now in common with Greek thought only an empty verbal resonance. The silence of truth is redundancy of its sound, of its word as it expresses itself in the desolation of absolute singularity, of the unrepeatable and therefore of the unspeakable. What I am obliged to consider an absence of word is word itself, indeterminate modulations of frequency that move away or closer depending on my capacity for abandonment. The more I can loosen my rigidity, the more I define this voice of truth that continues to speak to me. This message does not detach itself from the truth itself, it does not separate itself and begins a journey towards me, it does not take lexical body but, on the contrary, it attracts me and moves me, and it is its own body in my attitude towards opening up to the territory of the desolation of the one that is, of which Parmenides was the most frequent visitor. I abandon myself and I am new to the truth and here is its message never completely understandable. The extreme strength of the expression is gathered in the incomprehensibility, the result of any attempt to come out of the opposition with the pure and simple unity of truth.

Yet even about the essence of *pñlemow*, which according to the vocabulary means literally "war" as well, how could we know anything exact, or even presage the essence of the "polemic" named here, as long as we know nothing about a conflict that even inhabits the essence of truth? How could we know the initially conflictual character of the conflict in the essence of truth as long as we do not experience its essence as unveiling, while our knowledge of the ἀλήθεια still inheres at most in a verbal meaning fluttering here and there? The conflicting essence of truth has long



since been alien to us and to Western thought. Conversely, "truth" applies as that which is beyond all conflict and must therefore remain as that which knows no conflict. Distinction, the mother of every battle, can be internal to the whole and cannot be grasped distinctly. The essentially distinct dimension is not distinction. One cannot take the whole and then dissect it infinitely; one does not give a possible section of the truth. It would be taking an absolute unity and unraveling it to see how it is made.

We do not understand, Heidegger continues, therefore, to what extent the very essence of truth is itself a conflict. Yet, if in the early thought of the Greeks the conflictual essence of truth is experienced, it is not surprising that in the "sayings" of early thought we explicitly perceive the word "conflict." Thanks to the interpretation of Greekity developed by Jacob Burckhardt and Nietzsche, we have learned to pay attention to the "agonal principle" and to recognize in "competition" an essential "impulse" in the "life" of that people. We must ask ourselves, however, where the principle of "competition" has its foundation and from where the essence of "life" and of man receives its determination so as to unfold in an "agonal" sense. The "competitive" can only arise where the conflictual is already first generally experienced as the essential. If, on the other hand, it is asserted that the agonal essence of Greekness rests on a corresponding predisposition of the Greek people, such an "explanation" is no less superficial than it would be if, to those who asked us what the essence of thought rests on, we answered: on the ability to think. The conjunction that binds the truth as an impregnable whole, despite the struggle that takes place within it, is not simply the sum of the parts, it is a conjunction that does not distinguish and does not want to be distinguished. Every attempt to say falls into silence precisely because of its need to manifest unity. But unity cannot be said and it is not a question of the classic problem of the difference between thinking and saying. Therefore, the only way to say the truth and its unity remains non-saying, that is, the negation that rejects the primary relationship with the word, but does not close its ears to the sound of redundancy. Silence is listening to the profound and the sound of silence is the possible voice of truth. Truth is always identical to itself, it does not have a perfect form because it is completed in all its parts, a fact impossible in itself, but it has itself as a face, the totality of itself does not duplicate any signal.

Heidegger says, so far we have noted that, on the one hand, unveiling falls within a sphere in which veiling and veiling occur; on the other hand, unveiling displays a conflictual essence, that is, it is unveiling insofar as something in it is in conflict with veiling. A third indication is given to us by "unveiling" with regard to the fact that truth, by virtue of its conflictual essence, is situated in "conflicting" relations. Current theory knows as the opposite of truth only "non-truth" in the sense of falsehood. Something is either true or false. There is no doubt, however, that in the epoch of the first fulfillment of Western metaphysics - in the philosophy of Schelling and Hegel - thought comes to the knowledge that something can be both true and false at the same time, albeit in different respects. Here, too, and precisely in the form of "negativity," something discordant comes to light in the essence of truth. Yet the idea that what has been said above about the conflicting essence of truth coincides with the doctrines of Schelling and Hegel, or that it can be encompassed with the help of such a metaphysics, would be even more baleful than the discovered ignorance of all these connections. The manifestation of truth is truth itself, not the word of truth, a word which in its sound is incomprehensible to me. Truth does not produce itself, therefore it does not speak, it does not manifest the heart of itself but it is the heart, even of what I distinguish with my word. Truth does not produce because it does not repeat, it is not constituted by my specification but constitutes. When I refer to myself with the word precise and detail, I am the imperfect image of the world I produce.

For modern metaphysics, insists Heidegger, Schelling and Hegel, in fact, the fundamental feature of the essence of truth is never the ἀλήθεια in the sense of unveiling, but the certainty in the sense of that certitudo that, from Descartes onwards, characterizes the essence of veritas. Something like the self-certainty of the self-conscious subject is foreign to Greekity. Conversely, it is well true that in the modern essence of "subjectivity of the spirit" - which, properly understood, has nothing to do with "subjectivism" - the mutated essence of the Greek ἀλήθεια still resonates. However, no resonance equals the original sound. The initial only addresses the initial. The one does not coincide with the other, and yet both are the same (das Selbe), even when they seem to depart from each other in the irreconcilable. This applies to the following fourth indication that the Greek saying about the ἀλήθεια is able to provide to the meditation that pays attention to it. I have no secrets enough to conceal the paths to truth, I allow myself to be discovered by the mercy of the will, so I must double the net and the traps to escape this control that dissipates the constant arrival of my possibilities. I am outside the tutelage of the will, I can sense the fullness of truth and the rawness of the necessity of being and not being able not to be. The stranger, the absolutely other, who remains at rest in the face of my solicitations, the silent one who is analogous to himself, who cannot be other than what he is and precisely for this reason is other in an absolute way, that is, cut off in himself in a radical way, such is truth.

With the reference, Heidegger says again, here necessary though obviously very concise, to the essential history of truth in Western thought, we have at the same time hinted that we fall victim to gross mystifications if we arrange the thought of Parmenides and Heraclitus with the aid of modern "dialectics", appealing to the circumstance that in the early thought of the Greeks the "opposition" - and even the fundamental opposition between being and nothingness - "plays its own role". However, instead of borrowing from Schelling and Hegel a convenient and apparently philosophical procedure with which to explain Greek philosophy, we must rather solicit our attention and follow the indications that can be provided to us by truth in the essential form of unveiling. In immediate reply to what we have just said, one could indeed observe that we men of today are still only able to understand the initial thought of the Greeks by interpreting it on the basis of our present-day knowledge, even if one should then ask oneself whether the thought of Schelling and Hegel, that is, their entire work, does not in any case rise to a height incomparably higher than that of present-day thought. What sensible person could dream of denying this? The proliferation of truth is not generation, the world of doing with its multiple and fast modifications is not other than the truth, it is always the truth in its unchanged indifference. Distinguishing this from other generations is a pleasant exercise, but it remains only a philosophical complication. I name but remain immobile in the ingenerate whole, what I produce, the whole world, is always truth. I cannot cross the closure of truth and it is not a prison, it is I who invented prisons, only a man could do that, truth has no prisons and is not a prison. An abyss I can't fill because there is nothing to put in, there is no inside the abyss because its yawning swallows everything even itself. No fable can bypass the world and its cataloguing and no fantasy escapes the truth that contains it, the recollections do nothing but multiply the effects and redundancies and do not escape the catastrophes that make them implode. Silence is named by me and different experience takes on a modifying body, but it is the experience of truth that is something under the quantitative species, which claims to tell the truth.

We must admit, Heidegger says, that the beginning, if it shows itself in general, certainly shows itself not without our commitment. But the question still remains as to what kind this commitment is, from where and how it is and will be determined. At the same time, it may indeed seem that our present intention to think about the beginning is only an attempt to historiographically arrange the

past from and in function of the present. It would also be useless and especially misleading to want to calculate which of the two things would require a more essential commitment and preparation: whether the foundation and development of a fundamental metaphysical position within the tradition of Western thought, or simply paying attention to the beginning. Who could deny that in this endeavor we constantly run the danger of coming forward, with what is ours, inadequately? Nonetheless, we attempt to pay attention to the indications given to us by the essence of unveiling, scarcely thought of and everywhere hardly thinkable in depth. If I break off any relationship with truth I clutch a fistful of flies in my hand, I thus break off a relationship that might force me to engage my reluctance and shyness. Only stupid pride can temporarily annul this fantastic kinship, failing this testament that binds me to what I am, profoundly different from what I say I am. The house of the devils calls me back to its unsettling aspects, but ideologies dwell in it and I cannot respond to its allure. My carnality hates to the core what appears and attracts precisely because of its smiling and serene appearance, but it also hates pushing and urging and doing violence to oneself in the name of an ideal. The born blind study the panorama of laws and discuss its details, they prepare death for all those who do not believe in their visions of darkness, scapegoats of common imbecility. It is not I who see but it is in me the intention of another view that I cannot measure or grasp in its details.

Revealing refers back to the "opposition" with veiling, Heidegger says. The opposite of the usually known truth is non-truth in the sense of falsehood. We find this opposition already at the dawn of Western thinking and speaking, even in poetry. Given what we have said so far about truth as unveiling, we must obviously guard against interpreting ancient "representations" by projecting onto them later notions of the false and the falsehood. On the other hand, we can think adequately about the ancient meanings of the "false", in the sense of opposition to the true, only if we have considered the true in its truth, that is, if we have thought deeply about unveiling. But in turn, unveiling can be adequately understood only on the basis of its essential opposition (Gegenwesen), that is, to non-truth, therefore to falsehood. From what has been said, it is clear that if we can never think of the "true" and the "false", the "truth" and the "falsehood", in their essence, as isolated and in their own right, this is even more true in the case of truth as "unveiling", which already in its name immediately declares its relationship of opposition with veiledness. If, therefore, among other things, in the ancient way of thinking falsehood already appears as opposed to truth, that is, to unveiling, then the essence of falsehood, as opposed to unveiling, must be something like a kind of veiledness. If it is unveiling that characterizes the essence of truth, then we must attempt to understand falsity as a veilingness. In becoming the world, the truth does not change, my productive operation does not change the truth, what I direct does not change the truth which, if it changed, would no longer be so. I distinguish, that is, I separate, and I do so by naming. That is, I deny the mystery of truth by revealing a possible path and by revealing I throw the occult mystery back into the absolutely other. Truth is always the totality of the one, even in my artificial separation that modifies and accumulates. Foolishly man rushes, faster and faster, to get there, wipes his brow in fatigue as he savors the arrival of death, the unexpected guest who always arrives untimely and unexpected. The notes of the waltz call out to this great underground river, in vain, they never succeed in forewarning its scope. Moralists care about the distortions of man, they would like at least to be committed according to the rules. The human condition is deaf and dumb. En passant. I don't produce truth when I name it, but by making it enter the world under the effigy that suits me best, I produce a reflection of it that then takes shape in objects endowed with objective life. The objectivity of truth will persist in eluding me since it cannot be thought of as a product of thought and when I do, as in this case, it is an object variant of objectivity. However,

the said processing of truth plays an indicative role. I may not know anything about that forest there, but know that it is there and not just from having seen a topographical symbol of it or even from having seen it from a distance. When I decide to go inside, that is not why I know it; I dig a path and the rest remains shrouded in darkness. In every cognitive fact pertaining to the forest in question, the forest of my symbolic ignorance exists as immanent. Even the path I dig with great effort is partly the child of that intuition. The forest phenomenon will never attain perfect knowledge, which is always capable of modification, but the matter from which I started will always be there, with a weakened degree of modification precisely because of the rarefaction of its specific connotations.

In truth, Heidegger continues, it is not infrequently the inadequate ideas we have of language in general that guide us in our attempts to trace the fundamental meanings of words and vocabulary, from which erroneous judgments about the investigation of fundamental meanings then arise as a matter of course. It is wrong to assume that the words of a language originally possess a fundamental meaning in its pure state, which is lost and deteriorated with time. The fundamental and radical meaning would in fact remain hidden and appear only in the so-called "derivations". But such a definition is misleading already in assuming precisely that somewhere there is a "pure fundamental meaning" in its own right from which something else is then "derived." These misleading conceptions, which still dominate linguistics today, have their origin in the fact that the first reflection on language, Greek grammar, following the thread of "logic" - i.e. the doctrine of assertion -, developed as a theory of proposition. Consequently, propositions are composed of words and words indicate "concepts", and it is the latter which determine what is "in general" represented in the word. It is therefore this "general" character of the concept that is considered as "fundamental meaning". The "derivations" are particularizations of the general. I have no knowledge of truth except in the effort to express it; it is not any of my expressions but the expression of expressions, my expressing myself which enters into all expressions. It does not enter into what I say, but estranges itself from it, dwelling without intermission with itself and refusing to come into direct contact with me. I intuit its presence by deriving it from this refusal, but like every intuition it is not a hypothesis from which I can deduce the existence of something, it is there and that's all, it attracts me also because of this reluctance to be seen deductively and treated in the light. Truth in my intuition is affirmed as something foreign, not as something that is at the end of an argument, a calculation that, for better or worse, is made to reassure me. My certainty is poor insofar as it concerns only the cognition of a total existence from which I derive a restrictive concept, that of the whole, which I see moving in the modifying process like any other object. This certainty is such a poor certainty that in order to strengthen it, I am forced to condition it strongly with quantitative parameters and measurement coordinates.

In our questioning, says Heidegger, however, when we think in the direction of the fundamental meaning, we are guided by a totally different conception of the word and of language. The belief that we would limit ourselves here to practicing a kind of "philosophy based on words", which derives everything by quibbling only over their meanings, is certainly a very comfortable opinion, but also so superficial that it cannot even be qualified as false. What we call the fundamental meaning of words is what they have at the beginning, what appears not at the beginning but at the end, and that even then never gives itself as a derivative and pre-packaged product that we could think of in its own right. The so-called fundamental meaning secretly dominates in all the meanings of the corresponding words. In doing I produce reality and I also produce myself, in doing I modify the relationship I have with the world I continuously create. Negative criticism is always a doing even if it testifies to a condition of suffering of the immediate consciousness. To deny is not to go

beyond, it is just another way of doing and therefore cannot be considered the gateway to truth. The duty of doing is accepted as recognition of one's condition, but this does not close the circle, it lets the restlessness burn like an unstoppable fire. It is not a question of a logical and formal limit, but of an insuperable dissatisfaction that rejects the illusion of quantitative identity. Doing is a not yet done that is about to be done, to be made. Determination is the link between possibility coming from destiny and orientation between tension and meaning. This determination is always a not yet. It is not a matter of power that must be brought into being, it is precisely the only force that moves within the modification. It is I who registers the making in the accumulation and who then considers it in its historical cultural reality.

If for the Greeks, Heidegger says, the essential opposition to unveiling is falsity, and therefore truth, is non-falsity, then veiling must be determined from falsity. If, moreover, veilingness dominates the essence of unveiling, the enigmatic fact follows that, in the Greek sense, the essence of truth is characterized by the essence of falsity. This may indeed seem completely absurd, since the "positive" can never spring from the negative, but at most the opposite can happen. We know, however, that the Greek name of the essence of truth already expresses the enigmatic fact that in this essence veiling and conflict with it are decisive. Precisely for this reason it would be obvious to expect that in the word opposed to "unveiling", veiling would also be mentioned just as clearly. The distance that runs between truth and the science of accumulation is not a precise quid but a restless and indeterminate space, a land where it is possible to jump into the absolutely other but also into the most obvious and obvious orthodoxy. Here resides a condition of indifference that places the opposites of the oriented relationship as moments of a possible overturning. There is no radical crisis, no contradiction that calls into question not only the coordinates and agreements, but also the other as never known because one and unknowable. The approach to the Parmenidean one is impossible, every dialectical dream is precisely a dream, no contradiction to overcome, no relationship other than that which I describe by resorting to all the artifices of saying that, as we know, have their limits. On the contrary, the one that is such and is not other, is only the extreme separateness and the absolute impossibility of separation. I have the desire and the need for distinction and I bring back into the ambit of this perspective that one which on the contrary is absolutely avulsed. Despite the impossibility of the way, no other way is possible for me.

Thus Heidegger: Athena, unnoticed by Hector, renders the spear to Achilles. But if we think in a Greek way we have to say: Athena remained hidden to Hector in her return of the spear. Again, it is the term "hidden" that defines the fundamental trait of the goddess' behavior, since it is above all the trait of concealment that gives to her particular action the character of her "being". The direct inversion of our way of experiencing, thinking and saying with respect to the Greek one is clearly and concisely highlighted in the well-known Epicurean saying: "live in concealment". The Greek says: "Stay hidden in the way you lead your life". Being hidden, veiledness, defines here the character of man's presence among men. "Veiled" and "unveiled" are a character of the being as such, not, however, a character of noticing and understanding. Nonetheless, perceiving and saying still maintain, even for the Greeks, the fundamental trait of "truth" or "non-truth". It is not acceptable to understand truth in the figure of the matrix of the modifying world. There is no determinate figure of truth because every determination is always a parcelling out and truth refuses to be divided. The existence of the whole cannot be derived from quantity, it is necessary to start from quality. From quantity one can only arrive at an addition of quantity and this without reaching completeness. If I were satisfied with summation I would only obtain further additions, quantity upon quantity, while what I seek lies elsewhere, lies in the distinction within the truth that does not distinguish, that cannot be read in separation but in totality. This distinction is the whole that I

think indistinguishable, but in order to think it as such I distinguish it from the thought that thinks it, that is, I absolve it, I make it absolute. But the absolute for me is not the truth, it is a distinct modulation and not free, circumscribed. No matter how hard I try, there is no way to reach this life in the whole except through immediate experience, which as soon as it approaches is already lost in recomposition and oblivion. Truth remains foreign to me, but it is this foreignness that makes it free to be as it is, other than me who is a prisoner.

Here is Heidegger: these few hints can clarify how decisively the scope and the event of veiling and veiling dominate for the Greeks both the entity and the human behavior towards the entity. If we now, in the light of what has been said, once again think about the Greek root word  $\lambda\alpha\theta$ - which is most familiar to us, namely *lanyanomai*, it may become evident that the current, and also "correct", German translation with *vergessen* (forget) does not reflect Greek thought at all. Thought in the Greek way *lanyanomai* says: I remain veiled to myself in the reference that something otherwise unveiled has with me. In this way the latter is itself veiled, just as I am veiled to myself in my reference to it. The entity sinks into veiling in such a way that in this veiling of the entity I remain veiled to myself. At the same time this veiling is itself veiled, which happens when we say: I have forgotten this and this. In forgetting not only do we miss something, but forgetting itself falls into such a veiling that we ourselves, in our reference to the forgotten, fall victim to veiling. Therefore, the Greeks strengthen the term in order to emphasize the veiling of which man is prey even with regard to his reference to what is taken away from him through the veiling itself. It is difficult that the essence of forgetting can be thought of in a more extraordinary way in a single word. Whatever hypothesis I want to start from in order to fix the truth, this hypothesis like all others is contained in the truth itself, it is not distinguished from the whole that I try to remove for the sake of convenience of distinction. My hypothesis suffers here in the ambassms of obligatory coordination, but it is entirely suspended in the whole that completes it qualitatively. If I were not completely blind I would see this necessary completeness, but instead I linger in the possible completion of the addition, I flounder to the point of exhaustion. With this certainty I do not imprison the hypothesis in a circle of guarantee at all, I lead it back to its own possible nature, the letter of destiny as it appears to me in the heavens of my strength. The possible factual way would be stupid obedience to a superior dictate, if it were not nourished in its very adherence to the canon by a light of madness. Negative criticism itself drowns in this light by losing on the way the series of punctilious dissonances. If I thought that by denying it could save the already constituted, I would be mistaken. Negative criticism does not save but, on the contrary, prepares for the destruction of what has already been saved. The closure of safety jeopardizes the entire immediate construction, showing the weaknesses and inconsistencies of everything that previously cried out for certainty.

Both in the way in which the Greek linguistic usage says in general - Heidegger continues - the veiled being, the hidden being, as a "regent" verb, and in the explanation of the essence of forgetting as the occurrence of veiling, it is already quite clear that in the "being" of Greekity, that is, in its being inside, in the middle, of the entity as such, essentially dominates the essence of veiling. From this we can already more easily imagine why truth is experienced and thought in the sense of "unveiling". But on the basis of the manifest procedure of veiling, and thus of veiling itself, should not the essence of the opposition to the better-known truth, that is, the essence of falsity, also be determined? If the hypothesis with which I describe truth is also total, if it participates in absolute diversity as a certain completion insofar as it permits, in the diverse experience, the unification of quality with quality, I cannot despair before the continual repetition of my defeat. On the contrary, this is precisely the strong point of my search, the circle of destiny

that frees me and makes me unbreakable. It's just that this splendor of absence is absurd if I want it to be delivered to my home; to have it, simply to intuit it, I have to come forward, I have to put myself at risk. Meaningless then is my everyday life, without excuse in the face of its misery. The rule for living, for experiencing life and not vegetating ignorant of myself, is exceptionalism. It is not a question of courage or of great feats, the older I get the more I realize that it is not fanfare that gives content to life, no front page gesture can put me in front of the wonder of a daydream. The false opens up a radically different encounter with the true.

This assumption, Heidegger specifies, is consolidated if we consider that what is false and untrue, for example an incorrect judgment, is a kind of not knowing in which the "true" state of things is taken away from us in a way that is not identical, but in a certain sense corresponding to that "forgetting" that the Greeks experience from the veiling. Whether Greek thought understands the essence of the false, of the  $\psi\epsilon\ddot{\upsilon}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ , from the perspective of veiling is something that can be demonstrated only by paying attention to the immediate expression of Greek experiencing, without first dealing at all with what Greek thinkers expressly say about the  $\psi\epsilon\ddot{\upsilon}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ . The life that I feel in my bones, in my veins, is a scandal; it is present in the truth of which I know nothing, in the same way, and perhaps more, than the poor measurements that satisfy me daily. It is not it that is hidden and concealed, it is I who escape my responsibilities and who want only to want, I am capable of nothing but wanting, I avoid anger and excess because I am a respectable, good and willing mass murderer. But the scandal continues, it pulses inside me and it doesn't stop, a sign of extreme freedom that if it is not within reach it is not even out of reach. The hidden wakes up the exposed, the reasonable and makes it become unreasonable and hidden, it suggests the garment of the whole that cannot be decided. The awakening is other possibility, different intersection of the event that is perpetuated in destiny. I decide to accept the possibility, but this acceptance reduces within the limits of the accessible discounted the possibility itself, I must avoid deciding to accept, but this condition is hardly realizable and is the highest acceptance of life.

We are trying, says Heidegger, to pay proper attention to the saying of Parmenides of Elea, the thinker who thought his saying at the time when in Posidonia, that is in the future Paestum, bordering Elea, the temple of Poseidon was built. The saying of this thinker says the word of the goddess "Truth". The essence of the goddess "Truth" is present in the whole construction of the saying and in each of its sentences, but especially and in a clear way in the initial verse, which however is silent about the name. That is why, before elucidating the individual fragments and in view of this, we must first know something of the essence of the goddess. Vice versa, the essence that is dominant here appears equally in her figure characterized in initial terms even on the basis of the thoroughly thought-out "didactic poem". Wrapped in time, punctuated by its rhythms, I do not approach the thing. I wait for the horizon to ripen, for the sun to rise high, for an auxiliary force to pull me out by the hair. There is no such force, the lordship over the existing is oppression and boredom, productive modification that accumulates only paper certainties and papier-mâché images. Truth moves within the one, in an unalterable zone where quality cannot be read, it is not the power of love that overcomes the opening but the deception and concealment of the will. The mutilated world is not recomposed if not with chatter and reassurances of completeness, only a passive beauty is reflected in it, filtered by explanations that distort the liberating view, that reduce freedom to a length of chain. If I advance in the truth I am no longer mutilated and an aggressor, I am free and I am qualitatively one, I am life itself and the path I trace out for myself is continually renewed, it opens in the rarefaction of truth and does not close in front of cinemas and supermarkets.

Let us first reconsider - Heidegger states - the name of the goddess Truth, that is, unveiling. Surely, for the sole fact of having noted that in Greek the linguistic designation of "truth" sounds "ἀλήθεια", we still know nothing about the essence of truth, as little as we know about the horse by sticking to the Latin word equus. If, however, we translate ἀλήθεια as "unveiling," and in doing so translate ourselves into the indications provided by that word, we no longer stop at a linguistic designation, but are faced with an essential context that claims our thought in a radical way. Following the four indications provided by the name ἀλήθεια translated as "unveiling" we learn something about the initial essence of truth thought in a Greek way. Understanding and letting go are two extreme points of the same relationship. Understanding is strength and distinction, penetration and memory. Letting go is grasping and intuition, weakness that renounces not for lack of strength but for a different kind of strength, the kind that renounces control and examination imposed by the will. Even the penetrating eye that investigates, often loves shadows and tries to hide itself from the too much light of the obvious. This penetration contains within itself the open denial that renounces going within, and this is an immense force that comes out of insomnia and coercive doing. The mourning that surrounds the modification reverses unpredictably into joy, the making reverses itself into itself. It does not seem like a great modification, and in fact it is not, but it is an opening that looms on the horizon, suddenly traveling on another intensity. This opening in concealment is not an overcoming, it does not take away, but it is a transcending, it does not open elsewhere but in the absolutely other which is an internalization in the truth, a search that puts aside will and cries out to scandal.

Heidegger insists, pointing out, first, that unveiling refers to veiling. Veiling thus dominates the initial essence of truth. Secondly, unveiling refers to the fact of being torn away from veiling and being in conflict with it. The initial essence of truth is conflictual. The question remains as to what "conflict" means here. Thirdly, in accordance with the previous determinations, dis-veiledness refers to an area of "oppositions" within which "truth" is situated. Since the conflictual essence of truth becomes visible first of all from the "contrasting" essence of unveiling, we must reflect more deeply on the question of the "opposition" in which truth is situated. In Western thought, non-truth is considered the sole opposite of truth. Non-truth" is assimilated to "falsehood" which, understood as incorrectness, represents the manifest and conspicuous opposite of "correctness". We interpret this opposition as the relationship between correctness and incorrectness, but truth as "correctness" does not have the same essence as truth as "unveiling". The opposition between correctness and incorrectness, validity and non-validity, may well exhaust the conflicting essence of truth for later thought, and especially for that of the modern age, and yet with this nothing is decided about the possible oppositions to "unveiling" as thought in Greek. The nerves are stretched and all sensations become more acute, but the intensity of intuition does not correspond to the increase of attention, the two movements are divergent. Letting go cannot be tied to the greediness of the will. The sinking must be sudden and unexpected, although a thousand voluntary movements, a whole education, may provoke it. The game of determinations never comes to fruition, the pieces of the event never coincide, I am suddenly inside an unknown territory and I still think I am completing the game of my pieces, but it is not so. The extraordinary power of this sinking assigns me horizons that I do not know and that shock me.

We must therefore ask, Heidegger continues, how the opposite of "unveiling" presents itself in the initial thought of the Greeks. Reflecting on this we get the surprising result that, along with ἀλήθεια, there occurs, as their opposite, τὸ ψεῦδος, which we correctly translate as "the false". The opposite of unveiling is therefore not veiledness, but falsehood. The word τὸ ψεῦδος has another root and says nothing immediately about veiling. This is strange, and it is strange precisely insofar



as we assume and emphasize the fact that the initial essence of truth is precisely "unveiling", since in this case, in the opposite which corresponds to it - that is, which here contradicts it - something like "veiling" should still emerge. But at first we find nothing of this, since from the beginning, at the same time as the word ἀλήθεια, the word τό ψευδές is already pronounced as its opposite. One could therefore conclude once and for all that the essence of truth is not determined at all by unveiling and veiling. Perhaps, however, this conclusion is too hasty. We indulge too thoughtlessly in the prejudice of the long-standing opposition between truth and falsehood, in which case we are not at all shocked by the diversity of names that designate it and that we constantly, without much care, use as a distinctive formula for our judgments and sentences. However, if we assert that, in view of the pre-eminence of the ψεῦδος, the origin of the essence of truth could not in any case be unveiling and veiling, perhaps ours is not merely too hasty a conclusion. Perhaps here we are not at all in a field suitable for "deductions," but in a field that demands that we open our eyes and observe with the right eye. Such "shrewdness" certainly allows us to see that in the experience and in the saying of the Greeks the word opposite to ἀληθές is not missing at all, and even less so the word from which this privative formulation derives, ἀλήθεια belongs to the verbal root λαθ- which constructs the verb I am veiled, I am hidden. The truth is in me but I find it unreconcilable, indeed the unreconcilable. If I want to fix it in the void of memory I can't, I panic in my secret. The quiet kills me, but the restlessness attends my life all the same. I feel urged on from two sides, opposing sides. These forces scare me and I try to cope with them by showing muscle. Laughable strategy. It is not a matter of dissent or appeasement, but of love of life, of joy that transcends any well-meaning boundaries.

Modern man, says Heidegger, who stakes everything on forgetting everything as quickly as possible, should certainly know what forgetting is. Yet he does not know. He has forgotten the essence of forgetting, assuming that in general he has ever thought about it, that is, he has thoroughly considered the essential scope of forgetting. But this indifference towards "forgetting" is not at all due only to the superficiality and precariousness of modern man's way of "living". What is happening here stems from the very essence of forgetfulness, that is, from the fact that it subtracts and veils even itself. Excess is also a limit if it is seen as a goal to be reached, but then what is excess? Is it breaking the quiet? Or is it putting an end to restlessness? The insomnia that pushes us to do, the immense matter to unearth, the world to create, are not excess, they are still arithmetic, algebra of quantity. Ending it with the repository is something else, it is the breaking of the imprisonment, the entering of the forest, the infinite patience of always returning to the same path, until the last drop of blood in the veins.

It could also be, says Heidegger, that the invisible cloud of forgetfulness itself, the forgetfulness of being, has enveloped the entire globe and its humanity in such a way that not this or that entity is forgotten, but being itself, a cloud that no airplane, no matter how great its tangency, would ever be able to cross. It is for this reason that in due time an experience of this very forgetfulness of being could also arise as a need and become necessary, that is, it could happen that in the face of this forgetfulness a thought of remembrance (Andenken) should be awakened that thinks of being as such and only of it, insofar as it thinks deeply about being itself, being in its truth: the truth of being, and not only, as every metaphysics does, about being in relation to its being. But for this there would first need to be an experience of the essence of forgetfulness, that is, of what is hidden in the essence of ἀλήθεια. The void that fills the productive modification is the structure of the useful that is explicitly communicated but cannot be known to the full, to completeness. The secret of this emptiness, which fills the eyes, lies in the bottom of the heart, in that bottom which I never want to come to light, otherwise it would show its weak point. In the light of day, I gather all the

conditions that allow me not to go down too far, to maintain a certain well-being, a peaceful coexistence of a scoundrel consumed in all the tricks of the trade. However, at the same time, I am always ready to respond to the call that comes from the forest, from the desolation of absence, to the call that resounds in the voice that has been driven out of all the repertoires of words that have meaning. I am not consecrated to darkness, but nevertheless it is here that I move best, that I fight desperately not to succumb to the monstrous machination of accumulation. I don't want to free myself from the slavery of light and enlightenment that glows in the darkness, that's why I fall into the darkness and there's nothing I can do about it. Saying yes, that's the way, accepting to start the negative critical excavation, otherwise it would be vain chatter. Here is the game of the daily compulsion of the world. I stand, I who suffer from vertigo, on top of the world and I am certainly not the goddess of truth. The obsessive continuity of production imprisons me and reproduces me always identical, available and united, eager only to collect and complete. My perfect desire for quantity is systematically belied by fate, by my destiny. I refuse to give in to what Nietzsche called the idolatry of fact. I am not a twilight sparrow. But the gods don't like poetry, not even Plato. Denying the evidence is always possible.

The Greeks, Heidegger insists, experienced forgetting as a happening of veiling. In order to clearly establish the essential references within which the Greeks grasp the essence of  $\psi\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ , it will first be appropriate to reflect briefly on our understanding of "the false". For us "the false" means first of all the falsified thing, as in the case of the "false coin" or a "false Rembrandt". In this sense the false is the inauthentic. But also an assertion can be "false". In this case the false is the not true in the sense of incorrect. The incorrect assertion is often also conceived as an erroneous assertion, insofar as incorrectness as error is contrasted with correctness as truth. Nevertheless, not every false assertion is an incorrect assertion. If someone, for example in front of the judge, gives a "false testimony", it is not said that he is mistaken, on the contrary, just in that case he must not be mistaken at all, but, in order to testify the false, he must know the "true state of facts". The false here is not the erroneous, but the deceptive, the misleading. The false is therefore firstly the inauthentic thing, secondly the incorrect assertion, which in turn can be an erroneous, that is, errant, assertion or a misleading assertion. Truth devours itself in the unity that is the nothingness of its being all. This nothingness is the intuitable place of the coming into being of the world. The solitude of the whole does not belong to me and I do not grasp it; the suspicions I advance are hypotheses I derive from the world in which I live, usually sets of sets and other quantifications. The appearance of the world is not the intuition of truth, the two movements diverge, even though they both belong to the logic of immediacy. Neither does negation push me towards openness, in fact it too is description and specification. It is not with the word that I see the opening to truth, even if I am then able, with the word, to recall the action. But this remembrance is always immediate life, even if it describes movements of the whole, solitary and hostile as only quality is, but it describes them in terms of compassion, never detachment. I reach the highest level of depth in my reflection by abandoning as much as possible the control of the will, by deceiving it, that is, by finding myself in an intuitive condition of great ignorance and, within certain limits, of labyrinthine falsehood. The absolute nothingness of truth could be fully grasped with a reduction to absolute ignorance, but this privileged condition of depth is not attainable with an effort of will. Truth is not absolute nothingness, but this in the vacuous fullness of the world can be seen as true fullness by the other, which is thus absolutely different from the world.

We, however, Heidegger continues, also say "false" a man, we say: "The police caught the wrong man". In this case the false is neither the falsified nor the errant, nor even the misleading, but the "wrong" man, who is not "identical" to the one sought. This "false man," who is indeed so

insofar as he is the wrong man, may nevertheless be equally "without falsity": that is to say, there is no need at all for him to be a "false" man in the sense of one who, underhandedly and on every occasion, both in his behavior and in his attitudes, has devoted himself to deception. "False," in the sense of devious, we also say this of an animal. All cats are false. Das Katzenhafte, the "cat", is the fake, so in German we say Katzengold, fake gold, and Katzensilber, fake silver. The truth turns its back on me questioning it and I insist on not understanding that it is not to it that I direct my questions. A concrete answer would be the end of human adventures in the realm of possibility, a reset. The resulting silence would have no significance for me and for truth, it would be indifferent even to the indifference of totality. The union definitively achieved between quality and quantity would zero out everything, including the world. On the other hand, the resonances in my restless heart that respond to the indifference of truth are an open discourse, an aid to proceed further in modifying experimentation, to use other means and find other goals. Listening to these resonances is what I am trying to bring to light here, an impervious task that goes beyond my ignorance. Is there a trace in the forest? A small light in the darkness? There are many, infinite, and it is because of this multiplicity of signs that sometimes we follow the most evident and therefore most connected illumination, that is, immediacy. But evidence is incapable of questioning, it ignores the movement that accelerates luminosity and diminishes the capacity to dissolve ties. Separation could refer to an unexpressed inseparability, but this is not always the case. I can work in this sense and then I untie the processes one by one, entering my own universe and depriving it of its separateness. What comes out is a series of possibilities that unfold the incomprehensible thread of nothingness that mirrors itself.

[2004]

## Karl Jaspers

Karl Jaspers develops in his *Philosophy* (tr. it., Torino 1978), the problem of truthfulness, and he does it in the chapter on the forms of objectivity, that is in the section dedicated to *The existence in subjectivity and objectivity*. For him, objective duty is like everything that pertains to the sphere of mere objectivity and its isolation, structurally subject to doubt, and this is precisely where it makes itself known as an ethical command, which mostly takes the form of prohibition. These commands remain equivocal, so this is where the example of "thou shalt not lie" comes to the fore. (*Ib.* p. 841). "Not only does everyone agree on the principle that one must not lie," Jaspers continues, "but everyone feels inwardly that he is being called into question by a truth. But then objective arguments immediately intervene that place limitations, such as: it is permitted to lie when the lie is necessary and indispensable in the interest of the other, for example, to save his life. Lies in favor of the homeland are not only permitted, but in certain concrete cases, even required. To always tell the truth is immoral. When silence is telling, not only can one keep silent, but one must; indeed, one must even lie when a higher interest demands it." (*Ib.*). These are invalid assertions, and Jaspers himself admits this without reticence. Indeed, there are arguments that objectively limit, if possible, the obligation to "not lie." Putting aside "the good of the fatherland", which is clearly a trick to send people to be killed in wars, there remains the problem of "the life of the other" in which one should suspend any statement of truth, precisely because one would be jeopardizing an objectively determined value. But this does not escape considerations of arbitrariness and reluctant obedience. On the one hand, one places the concept of truth before the arbitrariness of a judgment of inclusion or exclusion; on the other hand, one faces the humiliation of a "loss of dignity" before oneself by agreeing to lie, even if for the best of intentions.

From the "absolute requirement of a precept as just as the one that prescribes not to lie can be", there emerges in this way "an inevitable sense of guilt", a sort of shipwreck that makes one see the intrinsic existential quality of the choice. That is, in the perspective of existence, either the purity of disaster or the guilt of lying is given. This landlocked alternative shows the impracticability of "being absolutely sincere", and the lie underlying the peremptory statements of those who profess to be sincere without fail in their exteriority and continue to struggle in the intermediate negotiations of lies. Jaspers notes that who declares himself faithful to the precept of not admitting falsehood falls more easily into insincerity, in fact: "Absolute sincerity does not belong to the forms of objectivity: it is not possible to recognize the absolute sincerity of existence on an objective level, that is, only on the basis of external actions". And he continues, "who objectively does not want to lie resorts to endless sophisms, justifications, explanations, forgetfulness and mental reservations that, like a fog, extend over his whole being. On the other hand, he who truly does not want to lie, avoids these tricks, and with a radical inexorability, imposes on his own conscience, as his first and last duty, that of never lying to himself or to his friend". (*Ib.*, p. 844).

The forms of non-truth derive from man's inability to "stay in suspension" (in dem Schweben sein) by accepting the dialecticity of truth, its tension and its restlessness, "doing as the peasants at the foot of Vesuvius, who bring to maturity their wonderful fruits under the constant threat of lava". (*Ib.*, p. 845). The "fanatics of truth," i.e., those who believe that truth is revolutionary, claim that falsehood is definitively surpassed by truth; they refuse to admit that "the surpassing is such that it does not prevent falsehood from presenting itself again under another form, so that their truth, instead of being absolute, total, and unrepeatable, is always particular, partial, and multiple." (*Ib.*, p. 842). The rigors of certain religious fundamentalism are almost always entrusted to puns or double morals, as in the case of the Jesuits. But philosophers such as Rousseau or Kant also remained prisoners of these logical obstacles. It is enough to think of the Kantian example of the last condemned man left alone on the desert island who must nevertheless serve his sentence until the last day.

There is an existential foundation of truth, Jaspers insists, that cannot be fully realized without implying a terrible contradiction. So here is the recipe that Jaspers suggests and, as is evident, I do not agree: "with those who are hostile to me I use cunning, with those I know superficially, silence, and with most, the mutual exchange of conventions that are often untrue. Paradoxically, "truthfulness demands that we recognize as a fact that everywhere we lie, and that in certain situations lying can be a sincere attitude, without the generalization of such an attitude being true". (*Ib.*, p. 843).

The nagging for sincerity derives from an insecurity of self, from a disgust for others, around oneself and within oneself, and from the need, violent and radical, to free oneself from them. At the same time, the idealization of absolute truth, of the allegedly revolutionary foundation of truth itself, indicates, at the highest level, the need for the other and the fear of not being able to make oneself loved. It is the relations of reciprocal correspondence that make one think of truth as the only way forward. Absolute transparency, hence the objective duty "not to lie" evokes, in Jaspers' book, the opposite image of the "fog", a defensive smokescreen that, thanks to the rhetoric of sincerity, in other words, thanks to sophistry, justifications, and all the strategies of ostentation and dissimulation mentioned above, attests to the fear of isolation and contempt from others, exactly corresponding to my isolation and contempt for them. Sincerity is thus seen as the only prospect for building a friendly horizon. "It is always demanded that the human being," Jaspers continues, "as a reasonable being and possible existence, transform itself to establish different and, if possible,

even friendly relations. Among men, in fact, the need for reciprocal relationships is irrepressible." (*Ib.* p. 844).

The binding necessity of the law that obliges to tell the truth is addressed to the past, it considers a retrograde condition, it affirms to have to fulfill a pre-existing order, to have to obey a command already fixed once and for all in an ethical code, to have to respect a provision already issued, in fact Jaspers speaks of a "dutifulness that expresses and presents itself as something already constituted". But, again according to Jaspers, necessity can also be progressive, that is, directed to the future, to a kind of overcoming ("the necessity of freedom is the necessity of liberation from necessity"), that is, to the construction of a symmetrical communication, or rather of a friendly relationship between men, facts that have yet to be encountered, which in order to come to light require concrete behavior, a particular situation. "Objective necessity is a mere repetition of what is already there. Existential necessity is an anticipating necessity, a being-yet of the not-yet." (*Ib.*, p. 845).

Jaspers denies a double morality, one valid for those who are our friends, with respect to whom we keep the truth, and one with respect to strangers, not to say enemies, with respect to whom we are cunning. Thus he writes: "Objectively, there is only one true ethical conduct which, in its general rules, is recognized by all men in the same way; it prescribes not to lie, not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, etc. It is composed of precepts which are externally valid and which, in the end, are not binding. It is made up of externally comprehensible precepts, which in history do not change arbitrarily, because, within the limits of their variations, they express the validity of some universal human aspect. If they are often denied, they reappear spontaneously, in all their evidence". (*Ibid.*). In any case, there is no single way forward; if that were the case only one could live by these rigidly absolute rules. There is not just the shortest way to get somewhere. Freedom requires different paths, all practicable, although with different levels of courage and effort. Jaspers says: life is a continuous clash "of the objective with the subjective and of the objective with itself". (*Ibid.*). And elsewhere he concludes: "Therefore, if I adhere to objectivity I do so in the same way as I would adhere to the rules of a game or role, without being thereby conditioned by the rules of the game or role, and thus without considering objectivity as the condition of the meaning of reality". (*On Truth*, tr. it., Brescia 1970, pp. 220-221). And, more incisively: "Even if there were only one morality, against objective universality there would be the exception. The exception, being by essence ungrounded, is not only uncertain from the objective point of view but, since it is opposed to objectivity, it is also absolutely problematic. By taking risks, the exception experiences two things: the truth of the authenticity of the self and the guilt due to the impossibility of objectively justifying itself." This exception, Jaspers insists, "does not announce itself voluntarily to anyone and does not want imitation. It cannot objectify itself in a general principle that allows to establish in which cases it is right to do this or that, because no limit can be drawn to it". Therefore, "the exception acts at its own risk and assumes responsibility without referring to models or general norms. Should it manifest its behavior outwardly, it would find itself in contradiction with common sense, social rules, and criminal laws, and would be mocked, marginalized, and punished for the arbitrariness of its decisions that are absolutely forbidden to men in society." (*Philosophy, op. cit.*, pp. 845-846).

The exception is emphasized as essential to human life, and Jaspers dwells on it in his book *La filosofia dell'esistenza* (*The Philosophy of Existence*, Rome-Bari 1995, p. 45). The characteristic of the exception is that it is "problematic", "frightening", "fascinating", it is contrasted with authority as "the fullness of what sustains me, what makes me safe, what gives me peace". It is man himself who "is an exception against the general being, whether this appears in customs,

ordinances, the laws of a country or the health of the body, or in any other form belonging to normality." (*Ib.* p. 42). If the exception is observed in depth, it appears ambiguous, contradictory, not explainable in all its forms and profound aspects. It understands itself only through its shipwreck, the experience of exclusion, that is, in its wanting what it is not, that is, the universal. Through the exception, man is indeterminable, he is unique. Trying to express what is of the exception, Jaspers specifies: "the term means to fix the concept of a possibility that is an origin of the truth, which runs through all the modes of the embracer and escapes any possibility of definition. It is like an embracer that embraces everything, which however as such does not approach us as an absolute but in a historically concrete form and, illuminating us, at the same time repels us and sends us back to ourselves. Therefore, we cannot examine it in its totality, nor can we distinguish it objectively or use it as the principle of a demonstration. The exception becomes visible to us in the collision - which we experience - of its truth against our abstract consciousness of the truth, and it becomes invisible at the same time, however, when I want to take it into account as something known. Every objective realization of the exception is as ambiguous to us as it is to itself." (*Ib.*, p. 44)

The particular decision is therefore, for Jaspers, the essential characteristic of man, his refusal in the face of homologation and transformation into an adequate response to the norm. Thus he concludes, "I think that the most truthful and authentically existential actions are precisely those that possess a trait of this inobjectivity which, if it is not felt, is only because it does not come into direct conflict with objective law." (*Philosophy, op. cit.*, p. 846).

Doing is always in relation to what has been oriented, directed towards quantity. This relationship is constituted by doing and develops in the latter, in its constructibility, the elements of artifice and measurable concreteness. This assemblage correspondence is a law of solidity that maintains the world's load-bearing lines, which are not wanted by me in their completeness, but produce effects that I treasure. It is a traitorous harmony that strives to reproduce an elsewhere in the manner of fictitious concordances, it grasps, or claims to grasp, what it cannot grasp, it testifies to a whole that it does not even know and whose remembrance is nothing more than a fairy tale. More than anything else it undermines harmony, it irritates perfect correspondence, it plays around with relating to something that cannot be filled, it is measure and claims to operate transformations that deny measure.

The passage to action, where I am filled with truth, seems to be a threshold like all the others, first I am in the world and then I am in action, I leave immediacy and I find myself in diversity, but it is not so simple. Upon reflection I realize that I am not able to fix the passage in a determinate way, Jaspers would say in an objective way. Every threshold is indistinct because it receives in full the afflatus of action, because it is too exposed to radical diversity. Every habitual representation is out of place, every adherence to the rules is truth that reeks of cheating, there is always an element that does not fit, that does not respect the coordinations.

A delaying effect in bringing me closer to the truthful decision is given by the binding conditions that manifest themselves in the field, where the rules stand before me like a stone summoner admonishing my imagination and cooling my desires for freedom. Here there is an antinomian force that brings me closer to action and at the same time keeps me bound to the conditions of security that confirm me in the claimed objectivity of not being able to do without "telling the truth." The weight of this tradition binds me to a root that regenerates reflection while keeping it in the obligatory coordinates of modification, where it reappears changed and always the same. I understand this weight and its consequences well, less so the consequences on openness. Certainly, there is a relationship between traditional components of my immediacy and different movement

in action. I entrust myself by abandoning myself to action, I allow a different reality to permeate me and thus penetrate my traditional bearing as well. The dominant reason no longer works, the terrain that I am penetrating reveals itself irreducible to any determination, to precisions of a historical nature. The module of truthful determination is blinded by its excessive illumination. Waiting for the courage of involvement I ask for more light, Goethe's invocation is emblematic, more and more light. The city of miracles is there hosting me and, at the same time, engulfing me. The afternoon sun traumatizes me but does not reduce my restlessness. The architecture of this city reminds me of the prison walls that surround me as I write these lines. The solemn faith in logic dazzles me and I am forced to stare intently at the sign, certain that it will eventually tell me something different. But this seduction does not materialize, I remain waiting and when a new sign appears I am caught in sleep. Waking up is my normal condition, I am a seducer seduced by my own charm, I wrapped myself in the warm blankets of security while remaining still in the garden of suffering, where the tree of restlessness grows. It's just that sleep comes at the most inopportune moment and shadowy areas come forward to promise different territories where the charm of diversity insists.

[2004]

## Max Stirner

The clash between the individual, the unique, and the educational principles that govern society is radical, and is radically highlighted by one of the most radical books ever written: Stirner's *The One*. As I have long dealt with this author in this same series (*Max Stirner*, No. 6 in the Thought and Action series, and *Theory of the Individual. Stirner and Savage Thought*, No. 7), I will avoid dwelling too much on Stirner's thought in general and devote myself only to the problem of "always telling the truth." He writes: "Morality confers on the person who asks that question the right to expect the truth, but I do not: I recognize only the rights that *I myself* confer. If the police intrude into a meeting of revolutionaries and ask who is speaking his name, everyone knows that they have the right to do so, but they do not have it *by concession of the revolutionary*, because he is an enemy: he therefore gives a false name and deceives her, lying to her. But on the other hand the police are not so foolish as to rely on their enemies' love of the truth; on the contrary, they certainly do not take that answer at face value, but try to "identify" the person in question. On the contrary, the State always behaves by lending little faith to individuals, because it recognizes in their selfishness its natural enemy: it absolutely demands a "document" and those who cannot prove their identity fall into the hands of its investigative activity. The state does not believe and does not trust the individual, and with this it already places itself from the same point of view as the individual: the *point of view of lying*: the state trusts me only if it has *assured itself* of the truth of my claim, which it can do mostly only by making me swear. This, too, clearly shows that the state does not rely on our love of truth or our credibility, but on our selfish *self-interest*: it relies on the conviction that we do not want to incur, by perjury, the wrath of God." (*The one and his property*, tr. it., Edizioni Anarchismo, Catania 2001, p. 221). Stirner does not admit clutter or lack of clarity. He knows that the truth is a luxury that those who fight against power can not afford. In fact, he continues: "Imagine a French revolutionary in the year 1788 who, while talking to friends, let slip the words that later became famous: 'The world will not have peace until the last king is hanged with the guts of the last priest'. At that time the king still had all his powers and, when that statement became known by chance, without any witnesses being produced, the accused was asked to confess. Should he confess or not? If he denies, he lies, but goes unpunished; if he confesses,

he is sincere, but is beheaded. If the truth matters to him more than anything else, he must die. Only a cheap poet could attempt to write a tragedy about his end, for what interest can there possibly be in seeing a man succumb to cowardice? But if he had the courage not to be a slave to truth and sincerity, he might ask himself: why should the judges know what I have said among friends? If *I had wanted them to know*, I would have told them, just as I told my friends. I don't want them to know. They expect me to confide in them without my having called them for it or having made them my confidants; they *want to know* what I *want to hide*. So come closer, you who want to break my will with yours and show what you can do! You may torture me, you may threaten me with hell and eternal damnation, you may bend me over backwards to make me swear a false oath, but you will not get the truth out of my mouth, because I *want to lie* to you, because I have given you no right to expect me to be truthful. God, "who is the truth", may he look down upon me with a threatening air, may the lie be hard on me: I nevertheless have the courage to lie and, even if I were tired of this life, even if nothing seemed more desirable to me than the sword of your executioner, I still do not want to give you the joy of finding in me a slave of truth whom you would have led, with your priestly arts, to betray his own *will*. When I pronounced those words that expressed a high treason, I wanted you to know nothing about it; this is still my will and therefore I will not let myself be frightened by the curse of the lie". (*Ib.*, pp. 221-222). The land of understanding, where the fruits of truth grow, is only a stage towards the desert. I can build illusions, but not for long, even though fear can dwell in my heart for a long time and remain there unseen. I can adhere to the forms that justify quantity, but I cannot do it in such a way as to remain satisfied, sooner or later I am centered by the need to be free. To narrate thought means to court it extensively, to lure it into traps that hide its compressed and suasive face. Life is not a matter of balances, it does not conceive agreements or compensations, life is a burning fire, it is not known, it is not an intellectual construction. This way of being is not knowable, it escapes any intellectual conquest, any face that stiffens and wants to shape. The known (*Gewusst*) is a priori project that chatters its teeth in the cold, recognition that begs outside the halls of the prince. Thought dresses itself in clothes that represent reality, but it is also conditioning and pacification, it brings results together and marries them in a way that alleviates the afflictions that surface. Life, however, cannot be exhausted in intellectual understanding, its deep being refuses representation, there is no aspect of life that loves appeasement, everything in it is a cry of joy. Even extreme pain or misfortune is a shout of life, and it is pain that we long for when it is gone because misfortune and the worst possible experience are still life and, in the end, are a shout of joy. The beginning of the end is in life, once again, a shout of joy that denies and rejects what was foretold. In this way, I freeze every fixity of death. I write these lines in horrible conditions, one of the worst jails I have ever seen, and yet I am happy to be able to write them [June 2004]. I am alive and therefore, these cursed ones have not yet killed me.

I would be committing an injustice not only towards those who are my friends, but I would also be impeding the very struggle against my enemies, contributing to weakening my own strength, foolishly putting it at risk, and not in the name of an abstract principle, that of "always telling the truth". Here's how Stirner continues, "It is first of all a question of whether it was I who gave others the right to trust me. If my friend's pursuer asks me where my friend has run off to, I will certainly point him in the wrong direction. Why does he ask me, the pursuer's friend? In order not to be a false and treacherous friend, I prefer to be false to the enemy. I could certainly answer, with the courage of good conscience, "I don't want to say it." (this is how Fichte resolves the case); in this way my love for the truth would be saved and I would have done very little for my friend, because if I do not give the enemy the wrong indication, he may by chance take the right road and my love



for the truth will then have ruined my friend, since it has prevented me from having the courage to lie. He who has in truth an idol, a sacred principle, must *humble himself* before it, putting aside courage and boldness, he cannot oppose its demands or resist courageously, in short he must renounce the *heroic courage of lying*. In fact, to lie requires no less courage than to tell the truth, a courage that is usually lacking in many young men, who prefer to confess the truth and to go to the scaffold for it, rather than to damage the power of the enemy with an impudent lie. For them the truth is "sacred" and the sacred always requires blind veneration, submission and self-sacrifice. If you are not impudent mockers of the sacred, it means that you are its docile servants. If you put just a grain of truth in the trap, you will surely fall into it: here are the fools caught! You didn't want to lie? Well, then fall victim to freedom and become - martyrs! Martyrs - for what? For yourselves, for your own individuality? Certainly not, but instead martyrs for your goddess: the truth! You know only two kinds of *service*, only two servants: the servants of truth and the servants of lies. In the name of God, therefore, serve the truth!" (*Ib.*, p. 224). Stirner shows himself to be a truly remarkable philosopher right here, setting himself in opposition to all the truth ethics that have preceded him in the history of Western thought. He makes mincemeat of Kantian rigorism and Fichte's philistinism, just as he denies validity to the duties tempered by rights of which Constant speaks, so that he does not even take much account of Schopenhauer's necessary lie. He merely states that: "Others do love the truth, but they love it "with measure" and make, for example, a great difference between the simple lie and the lie under oath. Yet the whole chapter on oaths is the same as that of lying, because an oath is nothing but an affirmation reinforced by an assurance. Do you consider yourselves authorized to lie as long as you do not swear? But to be rigorous, a lie is to be judged severely and condemned exactly as a false oath. An ancient and controversial point has been preserved in morality, which is usually treated under the name of "force majeure lying." Those who hold this view cannot then, if they wish to be logical, reject the "oath by force majeure". If I justify my lie by force majeure, I must not be so mean as to deprive the lie I have thus justified of its most powerful reinforcement, namely the oath. Whatever I do, why should I not carry it through to the end and without reservation (*riservatio mentalis*)? Once I lie, why not lie completely, in full awareness and with all my energy? If I am a spy, I must be able to swear, if the enemy asks me to, to every false statement I make; if I am determined to deceive him, why should I suddenly become cowardly and indecisive in the face of an oath? In that case I would be in the beginning a spy and a failed liar, for I would voluntarily give the enemy a means of capturing me. Even the state is afraid of perjury due to force majeure and does not make the accused swear for that reason. But your behavior does not justify the State's fears: you lie, but you do not perjure yourself. If, for example, you have done good to someone and do not want him to know that you were his benefactors, you will certainly deny it if he suspects it and asks you to his face; if he insists, you will answer, "No, indeed!" but if you were asked to swear, you will refuse, because for fear of the sacred you always remain halfway. *Against* the sacred you have no *will of your own*. You lie - with measure, just as you are free "with measure", religious "with measure" (the clergy must not "pass the measure", as they say in this very undisciplined polemic that the university is conducting against the Church), monarchists "with measure" (you want a monarch limited by the constitutional charter), *moderates* for good, lukewarm and insipid, half of God and half of the devil". (*Ib.*, pp. 224-225). These theses of Stirner are the only honest answer that it is possible to address when faced with the problem of the false. My veins and wrists do not tremble at the problem of "telling the false", I certainly do not tremble in the face of the enemy who pretends to make me say something that would harm not only myself, which could also be a relatively easy way to escape a complex situation impossible to face with dignity, but my comrades and all the

revolutionary work we are doing together. To tear down the monsters is to erase the obscene from the normality of the world. Fear makes me do gestures I would never dream of doing. After the leveling normalcy has been restored, I sing, the poet raises his head and smiles at the liquefied world. Wonder has been sent back, encapsulated and codified, now it no longer wonders, now it disgusts. Not even living with the monster is acceptable. In this case I have to tame it, make it answer my questions correctly, point out with pride, with my pride, my achievements that for it are rags. No, not even then is the monster saved, and with him the extreme truth of things. Easier to kill him. Virtue that saves from excess. To mediate is the destiny of doing, to accept by modulating balances so that suffering is equally distributed. Referral to the truth is done in such a way that it does not disturb, the will controls and does not miss an opportunity to keep excesses at bay. It revokes concessions to diversity so that there are no serious imbalances; it is gradual and provisional, dogmatic and possibilistic. I refuse to be castrated, I don't want to accept the uniform of lamb, but I am not a rebel. My desire has never been for the victor of the dragon. I have never been afraid of the monstrous, not even morbid desire to observe it. Observation of the monster is distance and distancing, an attempt to keep it at a distance, to reclaim it. The fanatical destroyers of monsters are monsters themselves, they want to dominate the recesses where they fear to get lost. The dragon cave attracts them and makes them afraid. For me it is a hunt of little interest, I do not want to overcome the reluctance to be catalogued, I am myself a catalog deserter and I cannot help but have a radical sympathy for all those who renounce domination. Inquisitive processes repulse me, and I often find a new form of cowardice in pursuing poor frightening creatures. We are all monsters, and those who don't know it are more monstrous than others, in the end salvation is not possible. I have discovered nothing, I have gone out into the world and come back empty handed. What I have collected I often don't know how to interpret and it withers in my hands. I don't win and I don't lose, I don't hold in my arms because I don't know what to hold. Figures appear and then disappear, plunge into a horizon of endless fog. They leave clues, this is true, luminous traces, but I cannot follow them, their interrupted message is projected into silence. Excess could lead me to them, but there is no excess in the prison where I find myself, even if everything on the surface sounds excessive and unpleasant, inhuman. But it is precisely this prison that is normal, where I find myself, that harbors the most orthodox obtuseness. No sociological explanation will ever be able to understand the origin of this masterpiece of horror. The agreements between what I say and what happens are not fixed, they modulate in a thousand ways and, in the end, give life to an endless dream, the one that passes itself off as a description of the truth. Predicting boundaries and organizing relationships is the task of the word, but it is based on the dream of completeness that innervates every relationship of all the negligible ants that populate the world. There is no one who can testify to the truth, there is no accusation that holds up in the face of the tangle of relationships that are produced by modification. The serpent of ritual wraps the world in its coils and suffocates it. There is no way to get out of these coils with a further wrapping, it is necessary to break and give different signs, different interpretations, different gifts. But I cannot want to give a gift, the gift would be impoverished and would not take me with it, and it is with the gift that we must leave, with the gift of the opulent summer not of the poor winter.

If the false is the weapon of power, on a generalized scale to control and oppress, in the individual sphere it can become the ultimate, and radical, weapon of resistance against power. When Tommaso Campanella answered to the inquisitors with the phrase: "Six white horses", he did it to escape the sentence to the stake (a madman could not be sentenced to death) and to continue in the future (in his case after more than thirty years in prison), his revolutionary activity.

"I have founded my cause on nothing." (*The One and His Property*, *op. cit.*, p. 270).

[2004]

## The two extremes of the same thesis

Among the many theses developed around the problem of forgery as an instrument of struggle, in 1978 two antithetical positions emerged, clearly in contrast, supported one by Franco Leggio, with the article "I falsari della rivolta a...narchica", and one by Franco Lombardi, with the article "Ancora sul falso e sul problema della comunicazione", both published in nos. 23-24 of "Anarchismo", which we reproduce here. In the meantime, many other forgeries had spread, not only in Italy, and the subject, now, would deserve a deeper research that I do not think appropriate to develop here.

Franco Leggio writes: "I happened to read a cyclostyled on the "false calls to arms" that a "Collective of Counter Power" is spreading to claim "the use of false as a political tool" as well as logically "the spread of false calls to arms" that give "as a political action of struggle against the military structures". After "music", "sex", "drugs", "miniskirts", "wooden clogs", "anguish", "Zen", "tarot", "esotericism", "magic" and other such crap, the Fake is becoming fashionable. In the great capitalist-statolatrous shit where the false (the real false) is imperative for survival, a pissing of false (really false false) "revolutionary" who knows what kind of blaze ... goliardic will give the world and humanity! We shall see.

"Meanwhile, our people from the "Counter-Power Collective", in an extended introductory note come to explain to us that: "This kind of struggle is important because it achieves a twofold result: on the one hand, power is forced to deny itself, revealing its own nature; on the other hand, the credibility of institutions is undermined [...] to the point of making any official news implausible." If they had thought of it before! The "ours" continue: "Moreover, people are provoked in a shocking way, *forcing* them (the underline is mine) to think of things that would have left them indifferent...". And as if that were not enough (and yes, revolution is not a simple and easy thing!), they add (i.e., they insinuate) that "since always (sic!) revolutionaries (who? where?) have also been forgers". And, warning that "this instrument of struggle must be perfected", they launch the decisive broadside: "It seems that the security services have been shaken by so much boldness (it's no less than the Ministry of Defense)!" These arguments are so fascinating and definitive that, it seems, many militants - even anarchists - are going to enroll in the new school and plan to practice the "new method" on a large scale and already anticipate such amazing results to obfuscate, ridicule, annihilate any use of truth, the search for truth, truth as a method of propaganda, struggle and individual and collective revolutionary action.

"The "thing" is not of little importance and I am also very puzzled by the fact that no one - anarchist or revolutionary, libertarian or militant of the movement - has found to object. Does it mean that the whole movement (and in particular I refer to the anarchists) is already aligned on the line that supports the "false" as a "method" and "tool" of political struggle and revolutionary so valid and effective to take it and make it their own, propagating and practicing it? Is it possible that all anarchists have reached such a degree of paranoia as to consider the method of the false consistent and consequent with anarchism and propaganda and the struggle and action that anarchism postulates against the State and the Monsters and the False and Lying Gods? If by damn hypothesis it were so, I, perhaps to be the only one, I still want to publicly express my total dissent and rejection of this "method" because I consider it deceptive, deviant, counterproductive, dangerous, ridiculous, contrary to the affirmation of perspective, contrary to the affirmation of identity that the anarchist revolutionary militant must forge and consciously assume.

"It seems to me that the enthusiastic supporters of the fake as a method of struggle and revolutionary propaganda do not take into account that to assume it as they do - but also objectively - is a demonstration of impotence and incapacity ("I can't do it any other way, I fall back and adopt this other one, which doesn't harm me either, and then makes people laugh").

"At this point recalling the tale of the shepherd boy and the wolf seems more than appropriate.

"It may seem (and perhaps it is) puerile, but I am convinced that the false is always easier to be well manipulated and exploited by private and state scoundrels, priests, magistrates, the military and exploiters of every kind and color, all of whom, as unscrupulous as they are, have taken, take and will take advantage of it and power and ferocity. Should we anarchist revolutionaries compete with these pigs and murderers?

"It is one thing to falsify one's passport, one's personal details, one's residence or hiding place, one's movements, one's physiognomy, one's name, one's habits, one's clothing, and quite another to adopt falsification as a method, as propaganda, as a tactic, as a struggle. It is one thing to circulate, to propagandize, the false news that Standa (or Corel, or Bata, or one of the many supermarkets of multinationals) distributes for free the goods of their warehouses and another thing entirely to propagandize or better to practice expropriation, proletarian expropriation. In the first case the people, the proletarians, would see themselves deceived and mocked, taken for an ass. In the other... perhaps they will wait for the good opportunity that revolutionaries must study to create, to realize. It is one thing to point to a false objective to attack and destroy what you have really decided to hit and blow up, and quite another miserable and ridiculous account is to play with the... "false calls to arms." It is one thing to falsify the ways and means of transporting and circulating a newspaper, a leaflet, an "unauthorized" pamphlet, printed in the bush, and quite another stupid and idiotic thing to fill them with fakes (it would be better to circulate "L'Unità", or "Il Popolo" or "Il Corrierone")! It is one thing to spread the false rumor that you can travel for free (but who would be the idiot that before running to the station or airport would not make a phone call to confirm this?), and it is quite another thing to convince and push railroaders and drivers that instead of making yet another fake strike that may be able to stop all the trains but that the more trains will stop the more annoyance, damage and irritation it will cause to thousands of workers and working class people (and they are the ones that travel on trains!), it would be more productive, more effective, more revolutionary to practice non-collaboration, that is to say, by making the trains run (without the "first classes" and by blocking the luxury and freight trains) and not asking for tickets from the travelers, on the contrary, in solidarity with them and perhaps covering all the cars with red-black flags. Of course it's a little more difficult, more complicated, more risky than circulating fake news. You don't play... with war and the.... Monsters. Either you have the strength, the courage, the ability and the balls to jump on the enemy's neck, to distribute machine-gun fire, to blow up dynamite charges and incite, set fire and burn and organize for all these things or it is perfectly, truly a lying and deceitful imposture to replace them with the false as a method-instrument of struggle and propaganda. It is perfectly useless, indeed it is terribly idiotic, to run after the ... R.B. and mimic their actions and warfare (these are real!) with fakes. It would only bring credibility and new fighters to the R.B. (i.e. to Stalinism, to military barracks communism or to the late Christian convent). And on the other hand, it would be denigrating truth and anarchism, ridiculing them, emptying them of that charge that neither time nor the fiercest repressors have succeeded in completely coercing and destroying.

"Before closing I want to return very briefly to the Ciclostilato of the "Countervailing Power Collective". The specific action so exalted in the cyclostyled seems to me that contrary to what you want to say does nothing but ridicule and empty of content the anarchist antimilitarism, the

total conscientious objection of the comrades who to practice it are in jail. And furthermore, to take it as a method, to propagate it and practice it would accustom people not to fight against but to play with the monsters who are very well at games so harmless and false so laughable, always keeping ready to paw repressive or murderous. And in addition, it would end up annoying the people who would see themselves taken for an ass and deceived. And they would end up turning their backs on us..."

Franco Leggio

"Since the article of Comrade Bonanno: "The false as an instrument of struggle", which appeared in No. 20 of "Anarchismo" [is now in the book *Chi ha paura della rivoluzione? Ricominciamo d'appapo*, second edition, Catania 1986, pp. 108-115], in addition to having evidently captured an emerging reality (in this same issue we give account of two examples of actions in which the comrades have in some way made use of the false), it also begins to arouse a certain debate and since the subject seems interesting to us, not being confined to the pure skies of theory, we feel we should say something about it.

"We will refer first of all to Comrade Leggio's article that we are publishing, also because it constitutes so far the only contrary voice that has reached us (but we are certain that those positions are not only his), even if it is to be regretted that the same comrade, clearly and sincerely concerned by actions that, according to him, would damage our movement, lets himself get a bit carried away and sometimes ends up by insulting more than criticizing and almost comes to assume his turn as an instrument, mutilating and distorting the truth, according to him, would damage our movement, lets himself get a bit carried away and sometimes ends up insulting more than criticizing and almost comes to assume in turn the false as an instrument, mutilating and distorting in their sense the statements of the comrades of the Collective of Counter-Power.

"But, beyond these polemical excesses, Comrade Leggio's writing is interesting in that it allows us to deepen the discussion on a proposal of struggle whose contours are perhaps not yet clearly defined.

In fact, if there is something we feel to make our own in what Franco Leggio has written, it is the fear that the instrument of forgery will turn into a kind of fashion, that is, it will be assumed and consumed uncritically by the fellows for its appearance, without thoroughly checking the substance of what they want to communicate through that means. If this method is used as an amusement for its own sake, it ends up becoming a harmless toy, a pastime that power will certainly have no difficulty in granting us, and it is to be feared that an abuse in this sense will end up emptying of meaning even a more appropriate and incisive use of "false".

"It seems to us, however, that Comrade Leggio's concerns are directed in the wrong direction. In fact, it seems that for him it is a problem of credibility of the revolutionaries and not instead a problem of credibility of the mechanisms for the acquisition of consensus by power, which are precisely those that the use of falsehood should disarticulate and make no longer credible, that is, unserviceable. Evidently there are misunderstandings that it will be useful to try to clarify.

"We think, first of all, that no one has ever thought of replacing by the use of falsehood all the activity of the revolutionaries, and that the only one who has confused ideas about this is Comrade Leggio himself ("Either one has the strength, the courage, the ability and the assholes - ?! "The assholes?!, comrade?" - to jump on the enemy's neck, to distribute machine-gun volleys, to blow

up dynamite charges and set fire to them and burn them and organize for all these things, or it is perfectly, truly a lying and deceitful imposture to *replace them* with the false...").

"It seems clear to us that Comrade Leggio, in his polemical eagerness, has unfortunately mistaken fireflies for lanterns. Examine the problem with a little attention and you will realize that no one thinks of substituting falsehood for courage and dynamite, but that it is much more simply a matter of finding a way to intelligently add a new instrument alongside others that cannot be substituted.

"And it seems to us that he does not even realize that the examples of action he proposes as antitheses to the false are in fact not at all antithetical, but complementary, even if at times his proposals seem to us, in reality, rather simplistic and thrown out at the least worst.

"The real problem, perhaps, is that Comrade Leggio doesn't seem to realize that neither the machine gun nor dynamite (nor even less the "assholes," fortunately) are universally valid and self-sufficient instruments, even if indispensable (apart, again, from those mysterious "assholes"), for conducting the class war, which has far broader and more articulated fronts than those imagined by those who would like to resolve it with a coup de grâce by the "fighting party."

"If it is true that power makes use, in order to keep the immense majority of humanity subjugated, not only of the weapons of its thugs (to which it is necessary to oppose the weapons of revolutionaries), but also of a generalized and constant use of falsification, managed through the channels that have assumed with billions of people a credibility of a religious kind, then it is undoubtedly necessary not only to turn the weapons against the "masters of war", but also to turn them against those who manage the means of mass indoctrination.

"The heap of bullshit, of shameless falsehoods, that a leaf like "L'Unità" administers daily to its numerous faithful are assumed by them as sacrosanct truths simply on the basis of the dogma that "L'Unità" (or television, or radio, or the "Official Gazette") cannot lie.

"Now it is not a matter, as Comrade Leggio seems to misunderstand, of countering this heap of lies with an equivalent heap of anarchist-branded lies. It is not a matter of providing us in turn with a further mystified view of reality to create our own personal crowd of believers, convinced that "Anarchism" or "Umanità Nova" can not lie, but instead to put people in a position to realize that even "L'Unità" (or RAI-TV or porcodiddio) says the false.

"It's not a question of implying that at Standa, or anywhere else, one can serve oneself for free (which, after all, would be absolutely right and therefore, in this sense, not at all "false"), but, instead, of concretely confronting people with the reality of the daily theft perpetrated against them by capital, and forcing the latter to throw off the mask of economic mystification that hides its essence.

"Can the use of forgery serve many of these purposes? We believe it can.

"Is this the only tool that is appropriate to use for these purposes? Certainly not.

"Starting with these terms we think the discourse can still be developed.

"It is well known that there was a period when some comrades thought that through a massive use of counterfeiting paper money, they would come to make capitalism collapse and therefore they devoted all their forces to this activity. This was, evidently, an excess of simplism.

"It is, however, undeniable that having at one's disposal a certain quantity of skilfully counterfeited banknotes, besides causing relative damage to the complex monetary system, makes it easier to solve some of the problems which confront every exploited person on a daily basis.

"In the present domain of absurdity and appearance, there are thousands of possibilities that are sanctioned by pieces of paper much more easily reproduced than banknotes. In addition to the various documents, cards, passes, etc., it is enough to think that the posting of a poster headed and

signed in a certain way is enough to automatically set in motion social upheavals and mechanisms of very wide scope (calls to arms, payment of various taxes and duties, strikes, demonstrations, etc.).

"It is enough to read on a wall that "The Mayor orders that the mule tax be paid" or that "The Union calls on the workers to demonstrate" for a flood of mule owners or metalworkers to set out to carry out the order.

"Or again, it is enough for a news announcer to state that 'the general strike called for tomorrow has been called off as a result of the agreements reached...' for the working masses to feel automatically relieved of any need for struggle.

"Under such conditions, it is clear that the management of power starts to reach optimal levels, in which the mechanism of domination works and perpetuates itself on the basis of a relationship of faith with its subordinates. In this case the instruments of repression can be totally dedicated to the treatment of limited cases of subversive and criminal deviance, easily justifiable as inevitable pathological phenomena to be eradicated.

"When decimations are no longer necessary to send the proletarians to slaughter, but the precept card suffices, the firing squads can carefully devote themselves to the extermination of revolutionary minorities. That's why we believe that the carrying out of these instruments of control of mass behaviors based on the "public faith" is not a simple goliardic pastime or an afterthought, but instead constitutes an unavoidable necessity for revolutionaries.

"What is the sense of crippling a servant of power and then claiming and explaining the action by a leaflet which will be systematically ignored by the media, so that not only will practically no one learn of it, but everyone will be fed a false and distorted version of the facts which will almost always be taken for grist? There remains, no doubt, the sense of having eliminated or put out of action an enemy, but all the potential for indication and incitement that such an act contains remains unexpressed.

"Nor on these levels can we hope to involve the cowardly so-called "authentically democratic" forces in a campaign of counter-information: the Moro case should have taught us something about this rabble. These "democratic" forces, the so-called "left-wing" press, are by now permanently enlisted to provide cover fire for the anti-revolutionary assaults of Dalla Chiesa's marines.

"If in 1970 this jumble of careerists, piecemeal intellectuals and peddlers of progressive idiocy had made the calculation to conveniently take the side of the counter-information managed by the comrades, in order to victoriously carry out their private war against the opposite faction of imbecilic right-wing scribblers, today all these people are just waiting for the veils of the anti-terrorist appeals drawn up by the Viminale or the Botteghe Oscure to affix their little honored signatures.

"So, revolutionaries today must (finally?) reckon with only their own forces to counter the rising tide of lies daily cooked by the centers of power, seasoned with leftist intellectuals token and served on the silver platter of the great press. If these forces must be limited to the few "guaranteed" spaces that the power gives us to save the liberal and democratic facade, then we will be forced to a futile pitched battle, conducted on land predetermined by the opponent and in which we have no chance of success.

"It is therefore absolutely necessary to be able to combine the ability to strike the enemy with the intelligence to be able to manage information about our action.

"This means, first, being able to remove credibility from institutional lies and the channels through which they are transformed into dogma and then spread, and second, knowing how to exploit every possibility that exists to generalize the spread of our truth. This truth does not lie in

the fact that we have been anointed by some infallible ideology that makes us immune to error, but in the social significance of our actions, far more than our words.

"A well-known slogan of the French May warned that when the finger points to the moon, the imbecile looks at the finger. We believe, knowing him, that comrade Leggio is anything but an imbecile, and therefore we can only be surprised that he has not understood that the falsification that is proposed concerns the finger and not the moon, and has thus ended up distorting even the meaning of the action of the comrades in Turin, which we believe instead constitutes the most interesting indication among those produced so far in this field.

"We do not have and, as far as we are concerned, do not even intend to have, any liturgy to be preserved uncontaminated, any social reason whose good name should be preserved. We are even frightened by the hypothesis that someone will follow us, because our name "means trust", like the famous cheeses. And therefore we are not afraid to get our hands dirty with instruments that strike people's susceptibilities or respectability because, we repeat, our purpose is not to form an army of believers to bamboozle, or to deceive, but rather to show the exploited where the enemy lurks, with what external form he cloaks himself, through what mechanisms he perpetuates his domination and thus trigger a process of widespread attack that could tend to result in an insurrectionary event.

"There is no question that this attack will have to be handled individually and collectively by the exploited themselves and certainly not by some trustworthy specialist (even the most anarchist of anarchists) outside of them.

"And again, we are surprised that Comrade Leggio hints at dusting off the now familiar problem of the relationship between means and ends, wondering how one can "consider the method of false coherent and consistent with anarchism", just he who a few paragraphs later launches into a panegyric of the irreplaceability of dynamite, machine gun and "assholes", all means that have little coherent and consistent with the ideal vision of anarchism.

"It is a subject that has already been dealt with extensively in these pages and which, above all, has found its own precise definition in the practice of the revolutionary movement, today and yesterday. It would seem to us, therefore, an insult to our intelligence and that of comrade Leggio, to return to repropose it in its familiar terms. The important thing is to avoid that what is, and must remain, a simple tool, somehow becomes a content and instead of being controlled by us, it takes over our initial will.

"If what we say, what we do or what we propose is substantially correct, that is, it goes in the sense of attacking the system of domination, it has little relevance whether the envelope that contains it and serves to transmit it is more or less "false."

"Today, people are effectively and continually "taken for a ride" precisely because they swallow a heap of idiocies and lies on a daily basis, taking them for granted only because they believe that the envelope containing them is absolutely worthy of faith. It is up to us to overturn the terms of the question, without getting entangled in absurd moralisms of any kind".

Franco Lombardi

## **Giacomo Leopardi. The universe has no cause outside itself**

Moral Operettas: XIX.

## **Apocryphal fragment of Straton of Lampsaco**



This Fragment, which I have translated from the Greek into the vernacular, is taken from a pencilled codex that was found some years ago, and perhaps still is, in the library of the monks of Mount Athos. I call it an *apocryphal fragment* because, as anyone can see, the things that we read in the chapter *on the end of the world* could not have been written until a short time ago, when Straton of Lampsacus, a peripatetic philosopher, called the physicist, lived three hundred years before the Christian era. It is true that the chapter of *the origin of the world* agrees with what little we have of the opinions of that philosopher in the ancient writers. And so one might believe that the first chapter, or perhaps even the beginning of the other, is really Straton's, the rest having been added by some learned Greek not earlier than the last century. Let the learned readers judge.

## **About the origin of the world**

Material things, as they all perish and have an end, so they all had a beginning. But matter itself had no beginning, that is to say that it is by its own power ab eternal. For if from seeing that material things grow and diminish and ultimately dissolve, we conclude that they are not of themselves, nor ab eternally, but rather began and produced, on the contrary, that which never grows or diminishes and never perishes, we must judge that it never began and that it comes from no cause whatsoever. And certainly in no way could it be proved that of the two arguments, if this one were false, that one were also true. But since we are certain that the one is true, we must grant the same for the other. Now we see that matter is never increased by even the smallest quantity, and that not even the smallest part of matter is lost, so that matter is not subject to perishing. Therefore the various modes of being of matter, which are found in those which we call material creatures, are transient and transitory; but no sign of transience or mortality is universally discovered in matter, and therefore no sign that it has begun, nor that any cause or force outside itself is necessary or required for it to be. The world, that is to say the being of matter in such a way, is a thing begun and transient. Now we shall speak of the origin of the world.

Matter in the universal sense, as in particular plants and animate creatures, has in itself by nature one or more forces of its own, which continually agitate and move it in the most diverse ways. These forces we can conjecture and even name from their effects, but not know in themselves, nor discover their nature. Nor can we know whether those effects which we refer to one and the same force really proceed from one or more of them, and whether, on the contrary, those forces which we designate by different names really are different forces or even one and the same. For, as in all mankind a single passion or force is denoted by various words, so that, for example, ambition, the love of pleasure, and the like, from each of whose sources derive effects which are sometimes simply different, sometimes even contrary to those of the others, are in fact one and the same passion, namely, self-love, which operates differently in different cases. These forces, or should we say this force of matter, moving it, as we have said, and agitating it continually, form innumerable creatures out of it, that is to say it modifies it in the most varied ways. These creatures, understanding them all together, and considering them as distributed in certain kinds and certain species, and joined together with certain such orders and certain such relations that come from their nature, are called world. But because the said force never remains to operate and modify matter, those creatures which it continually forms, it also destroys, forming from their matter new creatures. Until such time as the individual creatures are destroyed, the genera and species of the same are maintained, either all or most, and that the natural orders and relations of things do not change either in whole or in part, it is said that this world still lasts. But infinite worlds in that infinite space of eternity, having lasted more or less time, have finally come to an end, having lost

those beings and those species from which those worlds were composed, and having lost those relations and those orders which governed them. Therefore matter has not been lost in any particle of it, but only in those modes of being, succeeding immediately to each of them another mode, that is another world, from hand to hand.

## **About the end of the world**

This present world of which mankind is a part, that is to say, one of the species of which it is composed, how long it has lasted up to now cannot be easily said, nor can we know how long it will last from now on. The orders which govern it seem to be immutable, and are believed to be so, because they do not change except little by little and with an incomprehensible length of time, so that their changes hardly fall under the knowledge, not that under the senses of man. This length of time, however long it may be, is nevertheless less than the eternal duration of matter. We see in this present world a continual perishing of individuals and a continual changing of things from one to another; but since destruction is continually compensated for by production, and kinds are preserved, it is believed that this world neither has nor is to have in itself any cause by which it must nor can perish, and that it shows no sign of decay. Nevertheless the contrary may be known, and this from more than one indication, but among others from this one.

We know that the earth, because of its perpetual turning around its own axis, fleeing from the center the parts around the equator, and therefore pushing towards the center those around the poles, is changed in shape and continually changing, becoming around the equator every day more full, and on the contrary around the poles more and more depressed. Now therefore it should happen that at the end of a certain time, the amount of which, even if it is measurable in itself, cannot be known by men, the earth is flattened by water and by the equator so that, having lost all the globular shape, is reduced in the form of a thin round table. This wheel, though continually circling around its center, attenuated however more and more and dilated, in the long run, fleeing from the center all its parts, will succeed in piercing the middle. This hole being enlarged to form a circle from day to day, the earth, thus reduced to the shape of a ring, will ultimately fall into pieces; which, having left the present orbit of the earth, and having lost its circular motion, will fall into the sun or perhaps into some planet.

In confirmation of this discussion, one example might be given, I mean the ring of Saturn, of the nature of which physicists do not agree. And although new and unheard of, perhaps it would not be an improbable conjecture to assume that the ring was at first one of the minor planets destined to follow Saturn, then flattened and then pierced in the middle for reasons similar to those we have said of the Earth, but sooner and sooner, perhaps because it was of a rarer and softer material, it fell from its orbit into the planet of Saturn, from which, by the attractive virtue of its mass and center, it was held, as we see it to be, around its center. And it might be believed that this ring, still continuing to turn, as it does, around its midpoint, which is likewise that of the globe of Saturn, grows thinner and thinner, and that the interval between it and the aforesaid globe always increases, although this happens too slowly for such changes to be noticed and known by men, especially at such a distance. These things, either seriously or jokingly, are said about Saturn's ring.

Now that change which we know to have taken place and to take place every day in the figure of the earth, there is no doubt that by the same causes it does not take place similarly in that of each planet, although in the other planets it is not so manifest to our eyes as it is in that of Jupiter. Nor is this true only of those planets which, like the Earth, revolve around the Sun, but it is also

true of those planets which, by all accounts, are believed to revolve around each star. Therefore, in the same way as has been described with regard to the earth, all the planets, at the end of a certain period of time, reduced by themselves to pieces, fall one into the sun, the others into their stars. Stars such as these manifest that not only some or many individuals, but universally those genera and species which are now contained in the earth and the planets, will be destroyed even, so to speak, by the lineage. And this by chance, or something similar to it, was in the minds of those philosophers, both Greek and barbaric, who affirmed that in the end this present world must perish by fire. But since we see that the sun also revolves around its axis, and therefore the same is to be believed of the stars, it follows that the one and the other in the course of time should no less than the planets be dissolved, and their flames dispersed in space. In this way, therefore, the circular motion of the worldly spheres, which is the principal part of the present natural orders, and almost the principle and source of the preservation of this universe, will also be the cause of the destruction of this universe and of these orders.

When the planets, the earth, the sun and the stars have ceased to exist, but not their matter, new creatures will be formed from them, divided into new kinds and new species, and by the eternal forces of matter new orders of things and a new world will come into being. But the qualities of this and those, as well as of the innumerable that already were and of the infinite others that later will be, we can neither conjecture nor merely guess.

## Notes

This hypothesis on the end of the earth, a sphere flattened at the poles destined to get flatter and flatter, and finally to take the shape of a disc (Hercules says "a wafer"), and then of a ring, and finally to divide into fragments, should be emphasized because Leopardi thinks it is due to a disintegrating force, so as to implicitly deny the existence of God.

There is no need to say that insofar as he seems to adhere to the conception of Heraclitus and the Indian (barbaric) philosophers, Leopardi's Straton, as he himself noted in the *Preamble*, does not have the connotations of the true Straton, it is a name used by him to give an archaic flavor to his lucubrations, nothing more than a name. It should be noted that in the *Zibaldone* Leopardi spoke, in 1827, of the "system of Stratone da Lampsaco" as a system that he "explained in an operetta a posta", insisting, even in a notation that he wrote only for himself, on fiction.

He too now has "something to say" and he also knows "how it should be said" (Letter to Giordani, November 20, 1820). As for the vanity of it all, this does not frighten him; if anything, it encourages him not to waste time. But it is necessary to reflect on the language, on the style to be used, on the way to deal with the subject and the ideas, and these, mind you, "as they are today, not as they were at the time of the innate ideas". (Letter to Giordani, July 13, 1821). And less than fifteen days later, on July 27, he would set the program of his project in the well-known pages of the *Zibaldone* on the "weapons of ridicule" in the "lucianee novelle ch'io vo preparando".

Against the background of a lost and longed-for golden age - the one represented by the society of the ancient republics - the total, paradoxical and extremist contestation of the "inconveniences belonging to universal morality", that is the contestation of the orientations belonging to a millenary tradition and that of its religious and spiritualistic prejudices, the refusal of the beliefs on the limited perfectibility of man and society, their negation and repulsion, takes shape in an age marked by the internal conflicts of the same bourgeois society. And the very man who had said reason is the torment of our life, will make it the sharp weapon of his solitary polemic. Transformed into satirical decision and rebellious bitterness, reason is actually the great force that sustains the

construction of the *Operette*. Thus Schopenhauer: "I have left to the Enlightenment its sphere, where in its own way the solution of all enigmas can come to it, without crossing my path or having to polemicize against me. Nevertheless, very often, at the basis of rationalism may be an enlightenment in disguise, toward which then the philosopher looks as toward a hidden compass, while, by his own admission, he adjusts his path only to the stars, that is, to the objects that exist outwardly and clearly, and takes account only of these. This is permissible, because such a philosopher does not set out to communicate incommunicable knowledge; rather, his communications remain purely objective and rational. This may have been the case with Plato, Spinoza, Malebranche, and a few others; but it is a matter of no one's concern, for it is a matter of the secrets of their hearts. On the other hand, the clamorous appeal to intellectual intuition and the shameless description of the content of it, all accompanied by claims to objective validity, as is the case in Fichte and Schelling, is something shameless and contemptible." (*On philosophy and its method*, in *Parerga and paralipomena*, vol. II, tr. it., Milan 1983, pp. 19-20).

Brutus Minor - "The works of genius have this in common: even if they represent the nullity of things, even if they clearly demonstrate and make one feel the inevitable unhappiness of life, even if they express the most terrible despair, however, to a great soul that finds itself in a state of extreme discouragement, disillusionment, nullity, boredom and discouragement of life, they always serve as consolation, they collect enthusiasm, and by not dealing with or representing anything other than death, they make it, at least momentarily, that life it had lost". *Zibaldone*, October 4, 1820.

As in the sky without end of existence, where destruction is accompanied in perpetuity by recreation, as in the extreme consolation of Plotinus to Porphyry in which he declares that despite the established vanity of everything, even suddenly the things of man resume their appearance not showing unworthy of some care, so, perhaps without reason but with truth, in the eternal flow of time and of what exists, the certain desert of life does not cease to be lit by the fire of hope, and if the mind has no hesitation in recognizing it for what it is, vanity powerless to change the conditions of the universe, the heart is ready to welcome it as a comfortable illusion. More than from a contradiction, man's life and its realization in art seem to come from an absurdity. Represented, vanity is annulled. "Controversy," Schopenhauer points out, "the dispute on a theoretical subject can, without doubt, be very fruitful for the two parties involved if it corrects or confirms the thoughts they have, or if it awakens new ones. This is a friction, or collision of two brains, which often causes sparks to fly, but it is analogous to the collision of bodies, also because the weaker will often have to suffer from it, while the stronger will be at ease with it and will do nothing but sing victory. For this reason it is required that the two disputants are, at least to a certain extent, each equal to the other in knowledge, intelligence and ability. If one lacks the first, he is not au niveau and therefore remains inaccessible to the other's arguments: he is, so to speak, out of range. If he lacks the second thing, the fury that for this reason will soon make itself felt in him, will induce him little by little to resort in the dispute to every kind of dishonesty, sophistry and loopholes; if then all this is demonstrated to him this will even make him become coarse". (*Logic and Dialectic*, in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38).

But to be able to go that far, to be able to disprove Homer's intuition about man as the prince among the unhappy (*Iliad*, XVII, 446-7), to be able to make life out of death, it was necessary to overcome materialistic mechanicism not only on a poetic level, but also on a logical-scientific one, it was necessary to give voice to the discovery that man has created himself through his own work and without the intervention of transcendent powers. This is what Marx and Engels did: "If man is - in the materialistic meaning - not free (i.e. if he is free not because of the negative force of

avoiding this or that, but because of the positive power of asserting his true individuality), necessarily one must not punish the crime in the individual, but destroy the antisocial places of birth of the crime, and give everyone the social space for the essential extrinsication of his own life". Leopardi remained extraneous to this issue, a prisoner of the old materialism. For it, the existence and activity of man had in fact a pure character of object, such that it could be overcome only by the grace of an arbitrariness, thus setting up a subjectivistic and therefore abstract ethics. In the same way we could use the statements of Schopenhauer: "How little the human intellect is usually suitable for philosophical reflection is seen among other things in the fact that even today, after all that has been said since the time of Descartes, idealism continues to quietly oppose the realism with the naive claim that the bodies as such would not only be in our representation but would really and truly exist. But this very reality, this mode of existence with all that it contains, is that reality of which we affirm that it is present only in the representation and cannot be found outside of it; since this reality is only a certain necessary ordering of the connections of our representations. In spite of what the idealists, and in particular Berkeley, have previously taught, it is only with Kant that one becomes profoundly convinced of this, because he does not dismiss the question in one fell swoop, but enters into the details, separates the a priori element, takes account everywhere of the empirical element. But once the ideality of the world is understood, the assertion that it should exist even if no one represented it appears truly absurd; for it sets forth a contradiction, since its being present means precisely nothing other than its being represented. Its very existence resides in the representation of the subject. This is precisely stated when it is said: it is object. For this reason the noblest and most ancient religions, the best religions, therefore Brahmanism and Buddhism, place idealism at the foundation of their theories and therefore dare to demand recognition even from the people. Judaism, on the other hand, concentrates and consolidates realism. - In the expression "I" is inherent a sophism introduced by Fichte and current in universities since his time. In fact, the noun form and the article transform what is essentially and absolutely subjective into an object. Since, in truth, "I" designates the subjective as such that therefore can never become object, that is, it designates the one who knows as opposed to, and as a condition of, all that is known. The wisdom of all languages has expressed this by not treating "I" as a noun: this is precisely why Fichte was forced to do violence to language in order to achieve his goal. An even more shameless sophism, still by this same Fichte, is the shameless use he made of the word "porre," an abuse that instead of being blamed and refuted is still frequently committed by almost all philosophers, following Fichte's example and by virtue of his authority, as a constant aid to sophistry and fallacious doctrines. "Porre", ponere, from which propositio, has always been a purely logical expression, which means that, in the logical nexus of a dispute or any other discussion, something is assumed in advance, assumed, grasped, thus provisionally conferring on it logical validity and formal truth. But with all this, its reality, its truth and material effectuality remain absolutely undecided, are not questioned. Little by little Fichte succeeded, however, in bringing into this posing a real, but naturally obscure and nebulous meaning, which fools have taken for granted and sophists use all the time, since, that is, the "I" has posed itself and then has posed the "not I," posing is equivalent to creating, producing, in short, putting into the world one does not know in what way; and everything that one would like to assume without reason as existing and give to others to drink, is precisely posed, and so it subsists and is there, really really. This is the method still in vogue today in so-called post-Kantian philosophy and is the work of Fichte." (*Thoughts concerning the intellect in general and under every relation*, in *Parerga and paralipomena*, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-55).

Having said that, the strength of Leopardi's ethics must be acknowledged, and it basically consisted in always looking outside one's own personal boundaries, outside one's own ego, in destroying the capricious and spiritualistic romantic subjectivism wherever and in whatever form it appeared, in making the mechanistic and materialistic doctrine a condition of man rather than a truth and, finally and above all, in constantly fighting the attacks of returning spiritualism in defense of the positions conquered by eighteenth-century materialism. Exactly Schopenhauer: "In the same way that of the globe we know only the surface but not the great and solid mass of the interior, so of things and the world we do not know empirically except their appearance, that is the surface. The exact knowledge of this is physics, taken in its broadest sense. But that this surface presupposes an interior, that it is not purely surface but has cubic content is, in addition to deductions about its structure, the subject of metaphysics. To want to construct the essence in itself of things according to the laws of mere appearance, is an enterprise to be compared to that of one who wanted with mere surfaces and their laws to construct the stereometric body. Every transcendent dogmatic philosophy is an attempt to construct the thing in itself according to the laws of appearance, which ends up as an attempt to make two absolutely dissimilar figures coincide, something that always fails since, in whatever position they are placed, now this or that angle remains out". (*Some considerations on the contrast between thing in itself and appearance*, in *Parerga e paralipomena*, *op. cit.*, p. 120). Leopardi's absolute refusal of resignation indicates in him a vitality of thought that, however one judges it, only poses possibilities for evaluation. In an excellent page, Giulio Bollati (*Giacomo Leopardi e la letteratura italiana*, Torino 1983) has even hinted at the possibility of hearing in Leopardi's voice that of a "pioneer of the Great Refusal".

In any case, it is a fact that the poet was able to transform his own vision of the world into an important motive for action. In this respect, as is well known, the relations between knowledge and human praxis had their most explicit formulation in Greek ethics. "He who does not know," says Epicurus, "what the nature of everything is, but suffers suspicious fears from mythological fables, will not be able to dissolve his fear on matters of extreme importance. In his own way Leopardi attempts this scientific study of nature, as shown by his notes on matter, those on the relative as the foundation of a new metaphysics, those on the relationship between the real and the possible, etc.. The progressive approach to the positions of Paul-Henri D'Holbac shows it. Well, from these perspectives, from his supreme conviction that "things are as they are and not otherwise", Leopardi was able to draw an equally supreme ethical teaching: the need that man must feel to dominate his own life, placing his feelings in a hierarchical scale in which a single value plays a role: whether these feelings favor or hinder man's self-control. Thus Schopenhauer: "If we look outwards, where we are presented with the immensity of the world and the infinity of beings, our ego, as a mere individual, is reduced to nothing and seems to disappear. Dragged precisely by this preponderance of mass and number, it is thought, moreover, that only philosophy directed outward, therefore objective philosophy, can be on the right path: the most ancient Greek philosophers did not even think it possible to doubt this. If, on the other hand, one looks inward, one finds first of all that each individual has an immediate interest only in himself, indeed he cares more about himself than all other things put together; - and this results from the fact that the individual knows immediately only himself, and everything else he knows only indirectly. If we add to this the fact that conscious and knowing beings are thinkable only as individuals, those without consciousness on the other hand have a halved and only mediated existence, then it turns out that all true and proper existence resides in individuals. If, finally, we still reflect that the object is conditioned by the subject, and consequently that immense external world possesses existence only in the consciousness of beings who know, then it is linked to the existence of individuals who

are endowed with it in such a decisive way that, in this sense, it can even be considered as a mere attribute, an accident, of consciousness, which is always individual: - if, I say, one sets one's mind on all this, one comes to the opinion that only philosophy directed inward, philosophy that derives from the subject as from the immediate datum, thus the philosophy of the moderns beginning with Descartes, is on the right track, and therefore the ancients neglected the main thing." (*On philosophy and its method*, in *Parerga and paralipomena*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28). Therefore, he not only had to reject the religious needs of the ego, however sincere they might be, not only had to deny them any transcendental solution, any fulfillment in the beyond and consider them, rather, even as something negative, evil that produces other evil (up to that form of ultimate cowardice that has its outlet in hypocrisy and philistinism), but to involve in this judgment the same stoic morality, that is, the kind of wisdom to which, despite everything, he was always particularly fond of. If happiness cannot be attained and unhappiness cannot be avoided - he writes in the *Preamble* to the translation of the *Manual of Epictetus* - "it is proper to great and strong spirits to obstinate themselves no less than to anxiously desire and seek them [the ends of pleasure], to oppose, at least within themselves, to necessity, and to make fierce and deadly war on destiny, like the seven at Thebes... Proper to weak spirits... is to yield and conform to fortune and fate."

"It is peculiar to great and strong spirits....". This radicalism is both positive and negative. On the one hand, in fact, it presupposes a destiny, a fate, a universal condition that is absolutely unchangeable and irreparable; on the other, it does not give up the desire to modify and repair it. While on the level of concrete historical action there is no way out, there is one on the ethical level. By making man aware of, or at least trusting in, his own autonomous vigor, we admonish him to make his life a life of struggle and his actions a struggle in which we can at least hear the cry of the rebel. Here is the positive aspect. The more the strength of the antagonist appears icy and invulnerable, the more heroic and human the face of the one who challenges it appears. Nor is it, at this point, simple voluntarism. Certainly Alfieri's influence on Leopardi was not lacking, but it mainly concerned his adolescence, the formation of his heroic ideals in the closed prison of Recanati, their formulation in the letters sent at that time to Giordani. Thus the tragedian of Asti: "In tyranny, it is a crime to say no less than to do". (*Works*, vol. II, Milan 1940, p. 394). What clearly distinguishes Alfieri from Leopardi is the presence, in Leopardi, of a firm conception of the world, materialistically founded and polemically turned not only against a dominant current of contemporary thought, that of liberal Catholicism, but also against a whole tradition of European thought. Vincenzo Gioberti's theses, for example, which can be summarized in this quote: "Whoever wishes to form a genuine concept of the Christian realism of the Middle Ages must begin its history from Anselm of Aosta, who was its true father; from whom came those two rivers of Bonaventure and Thomas, which, sharing between them the rich unity of their precursor, represent the duality of intuition and reflective thought, disjointed yes, but not yet enemies; For those who, like the Rosminians, confiscate the doctrines of these two great thinkers, and think they are boasting of the latter, putting it in contradiction with the former, are greatly deceived and ignorant of what true realism consists in. The problem, which today must be proposed by the Italian philosophy, is to unify these two orders, and to reconcile the Platonism of Bagnorese with the Aristotelianism of Aquinas, reconstructing the Pythagorean unity of Augustanism, and proceeding, not to empirical and critical analysis, according to the use of the eclectics and of the vulgar conciliators, but to the synthetic and a priori, by means of a principle, which overlaps all systems and includes in its multiple unity the intuitive order with the discursive one, tuning them together, without confusing them, and distinguishing them, without separating them. Now this principle is that of creation, expressed by the ideal formule; which is the only conciliator of the apparent

contrarities of the orthodox systems, and bears in the history of philosophy the same harmony which the realization of this formule produces in the world; so that the real with the knowledgeable is brought together. The formule thus constitutes a sublime and universal science, apex and base at the same time of the encyclopedic pyramid; sublime, because it dominates every discipline, and generates it, like the chimney, from which the projection of a spire moves; universal, because it potentially includes all knowledge and supports it, like the nut, which supports and embraces the sharp and skyward-pointing mass". (*Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*, Milan 1939, vol. II, pp. 305-306). After 1821, according to what Bruno Biral wrote (*La posizione storica di Giacomo Leopardi*, Torino 1974), three fundamental ideas in the history of mankind were destroyed in Leopardi's thought: God providential, good nature, civil society necessary to men. We could add that Leopardi had thereby made himself available to that act of "apostasy" and "renegation" which he delivered in fact, in December 1821, to the song *Bruto minore* and, a few months later, to the *Comparazione* which was to serve as a premise. And more than ten years later, in response to Henschel's remarks: "My feelings about destiny are still those I expressed in *Brutus Minor*". Milton had already stigmatized this position: "Many are those who blame Providence for allowing Adam to sin. Oh foolish tongues! When God provided him with reason, He made him free to choose, for reasoning is nothing but choosing, otherwise Adam would have been a mere automaton, one of those Adams we see in puppet shows." (*Areopagitica. Speech for the freedom of the press*, tr. it., Rome-Bari, 1987, p. 38). Therefore, these positions are anything but ephemeral or suggested by a literary ambition, but rather took root in him in the fire of experience. Think of the attempted escape and the consequent letter to Count Saverio Broglio: "I have always been afraid of virtue: what I wanted to do was not a crime: but I am also capable of guilt. May they be ashamed that I can say that virtue has always been useless to me".

After little more than two years Leopardi will say. The virtue blasphemed by Brutus and the detached warning of Theophrastus dying to the disciples are the two sides of a single and irrefutable truth: that the world is but vain shadow, deceptive and fraudulent. Thus Giorgio Colli: "Schopenhauer betrays the talent that in philosophy is not allowed. He has the best virtues of modern man: sincerity, honesty, love of truth. Telling the truth is for him the most important thing. Independent spirit. Still a teenager, he has to decide on his life. He has not borne the burden of a long and pedantic school curriculum. Therefore, he does not bear the marks of humanistic and philological specialization (like Nietzsche). Open to the natural sciences, to a non-traditional education. Culture for him is unitary, without watertight compartments. Self-taught, in a certain sense an amateur. He is free from scholastic tradition. Extraneous to historical erudition; with respect to historical tradition he is Burckhardt's model: he draws directly from the sources. Damaged by the early and bursting development of his originality. He has to hastily build up his foundations, taking them somewhat at random. Unable to start from nothing, he begins to build with the first valuable elements that present themselves to him. Excessive importance of Kant, Lambert and the English empiricists. Neglects wrongly the mathematical sciences. Brilliantly but hastily constructed theory of knowledge. Myth of truth arrests its development. What has been intuited and thought with great intensity cannot change. In his maturity he did not rationally deepen - and he could well do so, he had time - the weak points of his system. Poor knowledge of the Greeks, with a certain pedantry. He lacks adequate information but above all congeniality. An exception is Plato, whom he deeply intuited on certain sides, but did not understand in its complexity, it comes to him muffled. He has neglected Aristotle. Its modern character and the nature of its development (bursting forth, founded on a small number of elements, and then closed) do not allow him a vital approach to Greekness. Concepts of which he is a *prisoner*: loneliness of



genius; uniqueness of the true and therefore rigorous systematicity; indifference to any associated life, therefore to education and the realization of a cultural aristocracy in life. Scurvy, aggressive. Rancorous and resentful temperament. Stingy, and not only with respect to money. He expected something more from life, something he had to give up from a young age. As a boy he perhaps hoped a lot from Goethe and hid the disappointment. Frustrated, but not by the banal impotence of a man of books. In his withdrawal into himself, in his cynicism towards women, in his exasperated polemics, there is the reflection of an aspiration, which never reached his conscience, to find himself and live aristocratically among equals. But he prefers to console himself by saying that this is the destiny of genius, that it is not possible otherwise, and exalting himself (childishly) with the exclusive possession of the truth, and in a more ridiculous way, with the glory of posterity. Childish side of Schopenhauer." (*La ragione errabonda*, Milan 1982, pp. 105-106). His very reason for existing, for Leopardi, is nothing but existence itself. Wanting to give it a meaning is not only madness, it is cowardice of heart and intellect, it is arrogance and hypocrisy. It is hiding the truth. It is reality. In short, it was a question of giving laughter a positive value, one of regeneration, while at the same time not hiding its illusory nature. However, a virtue was implicit in laughter: the unmasking of millenary prejudice, of traditional opinion and, finally, of the very morality founded on such prejudices and opinions. Laughter could thus become an enthusiastic interweaving of sentimental provocations. Setting out to seek only the truth, as he wrote to Giordani in the middle of his work on May 6, 1825, Leopardi ended up discovering that in his new worldview moral values and cognitive values coincided. These turned traditional knowledge upside down, revealing its falsehood, as well as its poverty. Those highlighted its arrogance, presumption and hypocrisy. Thus Nietzsche: "The problem of the actor has long worried me; I was uncertain (and sometimes still am) if only from it one could reach the dangerous concept of "artist". Falsehood with a good conscience; the pleasure of simulation that turns out to be power, pushing aside, flooding and sometimes extinguishing the so-called "character"; the fervent yearning for a role, a mask, an appearance; an overabundance of adaptive capacities of all kinds that are no longer content to serve the next, narrowest usefulness: isn't the actor, in himself, all this? Probably this instinct has developed especially in the families of the people, whose members have always had to live among alternating pressures and coercions, in a state of profound dependence, have always had to take the step according to the leg, adapt to new circumstances, constantly pose in a new way, gradually learning to hang their cloak according to the wind and to become almost themselves a cloak, masters of that innate and incorporated art of the eternal game of hide-and-seek that in animals is called mimicry: until in conclusion this ability, accumulated from generation to generation, becomes despotic, unreasonable and unstoppable, learns to command from instinct the other instincts and generates the actor, the "artist" (especially the jester, the liar, the clown, the madman, the clown, but also the classical servant, the Gil Blas: it is in such types that we find the prehistory of the artist and, quite often, also of the "genius"). Even in higher social conditions, under a similar pressure, a similar man is born: only that in this case the instinct to act is kept at bay by another instinct, for example in the case of the "diplomat": after all, I would believe that it would be possible for a good diplomat to be also a good theater actor, if "it were possible". As far as the Jews are concerned, the people who have excelled in the art of adaptation, we could see in them from the beginning, following this reasoning, a world-historical organization for the breeding of actors, a real incubator of actors, and nowadays this question is very topical: which great actor is not at the same time... Jewish? Jewish? Even the Jew as a congenital scholar, the true dominator of the European press, exercises his power on the basis of his acting skills: in fact, the scholar is essentially an actor who plays the part of the expert, of the competent. Finally, women. Let us

reflect on the whole history of women: should they not be first and foremost actresses? Let us listen to the doctors who hypnotized them and, also, let us love them, that is, let us be hypnotized by them! What does it turn out to be? That they "give themselves" even when... they let themselves go. Woman is so artistic." (*The Gay Science*, V, 361). With his *Operette*, Leopardi thus succeeded in overcoming the negative of a part of his thought and, with laughter, in plumbing the possible future of humanity.

*Copernicus or of the moral world* - The first drafts of the *Operette* indicate with sufficient clarity that Leopardi intended to take up with them certain ideas that had already interested him when, as he had written to Giordani in 1817, all his "original writings were translations from French", he had not yet converted to the fine arts and had wasted his time "in the trace of the most pilgrim and recondite erudition". Among these ideas, in the precise distinction between "error" and "prejudice" as we read at the end of *Saggio sopra gli errori popolari degli antichi* (*Essay on the popular errors of the ancients*), were the denunciation and condemnation of man's anthropomorphizing tendencies of nature and of his anthropocentric claims. And this was true as much for the ancient philosopher as for the modern. In the tenth chapter of the *Saggio*, for example, Leopardi finds that the belief in making the stars as many animals did not die with antiquity, but continues to this day even after a period of reawakening. Albert Thibaudet wrote about Bergson: "Moments of our existence in which we have opted for some serious decision, moments unique in their kind, and which will not be reproduced any more, just as, for a people, the vanished phases of its history do not return. The free act is, therefore, the act of which I alone have been the author. But precisely these acts are rare. The cause of most of our acts is extraneous to our real self, and must be sought in automatism, habit, or imitation. And again, here, what applies to us applies to the whole of life: life develops as a path to freedom, but a path strewn with obstacles, in which failure, in the form of death, is the rule, for species as well as for individuals. The automatism of matter lurks at every step." (*Fisiologia della critica*, Florence 1988, p. 43). Hence Leopardi's interesting conclusion that errors are like comets, they have a period. After a few centuries, when they have ceased to show their foolishness, they reappear in new guises. Always eager for discoveries, men return to embrace what they had rejected. Even more than the deduction of the illusory nature of progress "in infinity", youthful anticipation of one of Leopardi's most radical convictions, in the quoted passage is striking the observation on the difficulties that the achievements of science meet in becoming common opinion, achievements on which we should also work for further and well-founded research. What is striking, in short, is the importance of the error that turns into prejudice. Similarly, Nietzsche's great page: "No, we do not love humanity; on the other hand, for some time now we have not even been "German" enough, in the common sense that is attributed to this word today, to put ourselves on the side of nationalism and racial hatred, to be able to rejoice in the mangle that poisons the hearts and blood of nations and that causes the peoples of Europe to lock themselves within their borders, as if in quarantine against each other. We are too unscrupulous, too wicked, too spoiled, too cultured, too globetrotting; we would much rather live in the mountains, on the sidelines, "out of date", in past or future centuries, as long as we are spared the mute fury to which we would know ourselves condemned as eyewitnesses of a policy that makes the German spirit squalid, because it makes it vain, and moreover it is a small policy: does it not need, so that its creation does not immediately collapse, to root it between two mortal hatreds? Must it not want the eternity of this division of Europe into little states? We without a homeland are, as regards race and origin, too multifarious and mixed, as "modern men," and therefore little tempted to participate in that lying self-admiration and racial lust which is observed today in Germany as the hallmark of German feelings and which seems doubly false and unseemly to the

people of "historical sense." We are, in a word - let that be our word of honor! we are good Europeans, the heirs of Europe, the heirs extraordinarily rich but also extraordinarily burdened with the duties of millennia of European spirit: as such, we have outgrown Christianity and are opposed to it, precisely because we come from it, because our ancestors were Christians of absolute Christian rectitude, who willingly sacrificed to their faith possessions and blood, social class and homeland. We - do we do the same? But for what? For our unbelief? For all kinds of unbelief? No, you know better, my friends! The yes hidden within you is stronger than all the no's and maybes with which, in your time, you are sick; and if you must take to the sea, you emigrants, it compels you to do so - a faith! ...». (*The Gay Science*, V, 377). "The world is full of errors," Leopardi had written on the principle of the *Essay*, "and man's first care must be to know the truth. Here he makes his own Epicurus's position already mentioned, for which only a scientific knowledge of the world is able to give us a just scale of moral values.

Investigated as the history of his errors, the history of man thus leads to the history of prejudice. Leopardi is of course unable to understand (to remain with the example given above) that, if certain errors return, this happens because societies that develop from previous ones are not always able to ideologically bear the weight of certain scientific conquests, as happened with the Copernican revolution that was attempted to be neutralized by resorting to the old theory of the double truth. However, he is perfectly capable of understanding the transformation of error into prejudice and of feeling committed to a just battle to free man from the chain of false superstitions. Paul Ricoeur wrote: "Destruction," Heidegger states in *Being and Time*, "is a moment of every new foundation, including the destruction of religion, insofar as it is, according to Nietzsche, a "Platonism for the people. It is beyond "destruction" that the question arises as to what thought, reason, and even faith still mean. Now all three clear the horizon for a more authentic word, for a new realm of Truth, not only through the medium of a "destructive" critique, but through the invention of an art of interpretation. Descartes triumphs of doubt about the thing by the evidence of consciousness; of doubt about consciousness they triumph by means of an exegesis of meaning. Beginning with them, understanding is a hermeneutic; to seek the sense no longer consists henceforth in spelling out the consciousness of the sense, but in *deciphering the expressions*. The comparison should therefore be made not only between a triple suspicion, but between a triple cunning. If consciousness is not what it thinks it is, a new relation must be established between the patent and the latent, which would correspond to that which consciousness had established between the appearance and the reality of the thing. The fundamental category of consciousness, for all three, is the hidden/shown or, if you prefer, simulated/manifested relation. Let the Marxists get stuck in the theory of reflection, let Nietzsche contradict himself by dogmatizing the perspectivism of the will to power, let Freud mythologize with his "censorship", his "guardian", and his "disguises": the essential thing is not in these difficulties and aporias. The essential thing is that all three create, in the way that is possible for them, that is, with and against the prejudices of time, a mediated science of sense, irreducible to the immediate consciousness of sense. What they attempted, all three of them, in different ways, was to make their "conscious" methods of deciphering coincide with the "unconscious" work of putting into cipher that they attributed to the will to power, to social being, to unconscious psychism." (*Della interpretazione. Saggio su Freud*, tr. it., Milan 1967, pp. 47-48). And it is precisely this struggle against any kind of anthropomorphism that is the basic theme that governs the project of the *Operette*. This is revealed, for example, in the drafts of the dialogue between two beasts and that between a horse and a bull. It is in fact a very important direction: the one that takes up the radical formulation of Xenophanes' sentences, recalled moreover with consensus in the II chapter of the *Saggio*. It is well known how anthropomorphism

is not only one of the supports of every religious vision of the world, but also constitutes the core of myth, and therefore of poetry and art, at least in their initial phase. On the other hand, the elaboration of the specific categories and methods of science implied - and historically implied - an increasingly resolute struggle against any form of personification, hence that mutual hostility between philosophy and poetry which was, as everyone knows, one of the most singular features of Greek culture. But Galilei was much clearer: "It increases the unbelievable, to those who more firmly discern, to be inescapable what must be the solidity of that vast sphere, in whose depth are so tenaciously welded so many stars, which without point varying site between them, agreeably come with so great disparity of motion brought at a time: Or if the heavens are fluid, as is most reasonably to be believed, so that each star wanders through them by itself, what law regulates their motions and to what end, so that, viewed from the Earth, they appear as made by a single sphere? And finally, for the seventh instance, if we attribute the diurnal conversion to the highest heaven, it must be made of such force and virtue, that it brings with it the innumerable multitude of fixed stars, bodies all very vast and much greater than the Earth, and moreover all the spheres of the planets, although both these and those by their nature move in the opposite direction; And in addition to this it is necessary to grant that the element of fire and the greater part of the air are likewise enraptured, and that the only small globe of the Earth remains contumacious and resistant to such virtue: which seems to me to be very difficult, nor would I know how the Earth, a hanging body hovering above its center, indifferent to motion and stillness, placed and surrounded by a liquid environment, could not still yield and be carried forward. But we do not find such obstacles in making the Earth move". (*Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo*, in *Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. II, Turin 1980, p. 128). Leopardi, who remained in some way a prisoner of this contrast, never thought of giving in to error, no matter how suggestive it might appear. Above all, however, he was an enemy of prejudice, and in his more mature years he fought it with the same weapons of poetry, with the *Canti*. He was not at all an enemy of science and reason. He gave them their rightful place in the history of the development of the human spirit, and he "hated" them, if anything, for their negative character, for their destructive power towards man's aspirations to happiness, so necessary though illusory. The *Dialogue of Nature and an Icelander*, in which it is usual to see a decisive turn of Leopard's thought towards the so-called (and clumsy) "cosmic" pessimism, is but one of the many moments in which the writer compares the anthropocentric claims of man with a natural reality that is not able, by its constitution, to satisfy them, to bear them. The Icelandic-Jacob tells the story of man in the world, his frustrated aspirations and his bitter sufferings, unjust even before than senseless from his point of view. The following remarks about Schopenhauer can excellently apply to Leopardi. "It would be one-sided, however, not to observe that [Schopenhauer's] philosophy is at the same time determined by a deep moral spirit. Already the rejection and execration of the world have a strong moral sense, and deep moral demands are at their foundation. And when he regards asceticism as the most sublime activity, he places the ultimate value of existence in a moral fact. When, therefore, I add one more specifically qualified as moral to the enumerated motives, I have in mind above all Schopenhauer's conviction that the world has a moral meaning. In the final analysis the key to the interpretation of the world is found by him not in the aesthetic sphere, much less in the physical, but only in the moral sphere. Existence has its fundamental character in a "non-doer-being" in an original metaphysical guilt. The moral distortion in the original foundation of the world imprints its mark on the whole of existence. The Schopenhauerian interpretation of the world is a metaphysical-moral pessimism, sometimes approaching a Satanism. Thus his ethics also have metaphysical roots. Schopenhauer's two virtues, justice and love, signify the metaphysical overcoming of the

multiplicity and separateness of individuals; and he who from virtue passes to the highest form of morality, to asceticism, reaches the final liberation from existence. I believe that almost all the characteristic aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy can be traced back to the fundamental thoughts stated and become understandable through them. It is clear: the complex of his world of thought is rich and abundant. One will not be surprised, therefore, if from the combined action of these manifold motives one sees arise a set of heavy contradictions. However much this may be so, it is equally true on the other hand that all the motifs enunciated have condensed in Schopenhauer's powerful personality into a unified feeling of life. And just because his thought is totally resolved in the combined action of these fundamental thoughts and only in it comes to being, so it may also remain not obvious to him clear-cut and manifest contradictions, which are present in the necessary development of his thoughts. The critic sees them more easily: he has not experienced with him the impulses that constitute the soul of Schopenhauer's philosophizing and can therefore easily show those contradictions, which Schopenhauer, whose energy of thought consisted precisely in taking up these motives together, allowed to escape. One can even say: if one wants to expound Schopenhauer's philosophy and argue about it, the mere denunciation of the contradictions is the easiest and simplest part of the work. But the denunciation of the contradictions must be joined by an understanding of them from the various impulses operating on his thought and personality and an appreciation of the greatness and truth present in it despite the contradictions." (Johannes Volkelt, *Arthur Schopenhauer. Seine Persönlichkeit, seine Lehre, sein Glaube*, Stuttgart 1907, third edition, pp. 57-58). Nature, by virtue of the theory, so to speak, of the infinite possible worlds all obedient to the perpetual circuit of production and destruction, not only can justify its indifference to the pain of man, but demonstrate that it is useless and senseless, so that the final question and always: "Who can benefit from the continuation of the existing?", is revealed, as well as impossible to satisfy, vain delusion. "It is the infinite vanity of everything". And it is precisely from this ruthless awareness that reason and science have rightly brought to maturity that moves the Leopardian effort for the conquest of a new poetry, no longer "imaginative" like that of the Homeric centuries, but "sentimental" and almost rather a philosophy and an eloquence, extremely difficult conquests (*Zibaldone*). Without further insisting, we will only add that in September 1823 Leopardi also spoke of an "enthusiasm of reason", as well as of poetry and philosophy. It is on the basis of parallel considerations that I come back to Volkelt's reflection on Schopenhauer: "If one indulges in reliving the fundamental directions that we have enucleated of Schopenhauer's philosophy, one must confess that, apart from the attitude to be taken towards the logical coherence of his thought and its content of truth, an exceptional and highly significant humanity is expressed in it. We find ourselves before a spirit, which is moved by a sublime, grandiose, solemn thought; a spirit, which in its clear rejections, in the discovery of shocking depths has its characteristic trait, but which is also capable of luminous impulses of faith, full of enthusiasm; a spirit, to which the irrational, or at least the element that appears irrational in the world, says much more than the logically penetrable, but which in many respects partakes of the most rigid rationalism; a spirit, in which the violent elementary affirmation of life goes together with the aspiration to the peace of negation; a spirit, which lives natural existence with as much force as the ecstatic world of thought: Which has refined in itself the free aesthetic disposition towards the world as much as the most rigorous moral conception of life." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 59-60).

Leopardi's orientations are interesting for several reasons: in relation to the historical and concrete problem of the *raison d'être* of poetry in the contemporary age, in relation to the poetry that he himself gave us from 1828 until his death, and finally, and this is important here, in relation to the genesis and the fundamental satirical inspiration of the *Operette*. It is obvious that Leopardi's

declaration that he wished to use them as "poetry in prose" should be received with attention, even if it should not be rejected. In fact, the book was born as much as a battle against prejudices, as well as a need of the heart to renew that imagination of the ancients in whose vigor, even if illusorily, consisted the very happiness of existing and acting. This double inspiration can be read in the first of the *Operette*, the *Storia del genere umano* (*History of the human race*) which is to be considered as the preamble of the work. In order to punish men for their inauspicious desire to know, Jupiter sent on earth the Truth in which they could see, as in a mirror, all their desperate condition: the triumph of reason and knowledge. To sweeten this state of affairs, however, he lovingly renewed the lost illusions of returning to the mythical state of adolescence. Art is the true consoler. Nietzsche, on the other hand: "Now, if the Christian, as we have said, has fallen through certain errors, and therefore through an erroneous and unscientific interpretation of his actions and feelings, into the sense of self-loathing, he must notice with extreme wonder how that state of contempt, of remorse of conscience and in general of displeasure, does not last, and how sometimes there come hours when all this is as if swept away from his soul and he feels free and courageous again. In truth, the pleasure of self, the well-being of one's own strength, together with the necessary softening of all deep excitement, have won the day: man loves himself again, he feels it - but it is precisely this love, this new self-esteem that seem incredible to him, and in them he can see only the wholly undeserved descent of a splendor of grace from above. If before he thought he saw in every event warnings, threats, punishments and all sorts of signs of divine wrath, now he interprets his experiences in the light of divine goodness: that one event appears to him as full of love, that other as a helpful indication, that third, and in general the whole happy disposition of his soul, as a sign of divine mercy. If before, in his state of distress, he falsely interpreted above all his actions, now he falsely interprets above all his experiences; in his state of consolation he sees the effect of a force acting outside him, and the love of which he basically loves himself appears to him as divine love; what he calls grace and prelude to redemption, is in reality grace rendered to himself, redemption of himself." (*Human, Too Human*, I, 134). Cioran wrote: "pity and consolation are not only useless, they are also offensive". In fact, Leopardi, in line with these reflections, speaks of another kind of consolation.

In this, even more than contradictory, irresoluble perspective, it goes without saying that irony cannot assume its Socratic form, that is, a serene and comfortable knowledge in itself. Instead, it is tinged with a desperate and polemical laughter, it becomes the garment of a knowledge that can only be resolved in rejection. But in a "no", mind you, which is the product of reasonableness. Going back to Schopenhauer: "Schopenhauer's philosophy is the first to set as absolute the conditioning of intellectual functions by affective functions; the first to consider as superficial and as "fiction" any thought whose terms want to remain on the plane of logical coherence and of "objectivity". "All that is operated by the medium of representation, that is, of the intellect - even if developed to the point of reason - is but a joke in relation to what emanates directly from the will." The philosophy of the will inaugurates the era of suspicion, which searches for the profound beneath the expressed, and discovers it in the unconscious. What claims to emanate from the pure intellect is precisely what the critical analysis of secret motivations will apply to. Strictly speaking, there is no intellectual movement that can be understood from itself: it demands to be interpreted from a new point of view, which is the question of origin. This shift in point of view is the precise place of radical divergence in relation to Kant's philosophy which Schopenhauer without having sufficient awareness of the revolution he introduces stubbornly undertakes to perpetuate. No relationship, whatever he might have thought about it, between the "world of things in themselves" and the world of the will. Schopenhauer is not, as he believed, the last of the classical philosophers,

but the first of the genealogist philosophers." (C. Rosset, *Schopenhauer philosophe de l'absurde*, Paris 1947, pp. 32-33). In any case, irony and refusal, mockery and repulsion, laughter and desecration are the weapons that the new sage, the rebel, gives himself to fight, much more than error, prejudice. Again Nietzsche's sharp thought: "[Man against the world] has had its latest expression in modern pessimism and an older and stronger one in the doctrine of the Buddha; Christianity also contains it, certainly in a more doubtful and ambiguous way, but no less seductive for that. The attitude of "man against the world," man as the principle "denying the world," man as the measure of all things, as the judge of the worlds who weighs existence itself and finds it too light: we have become aware of the monstrous lack of taste in this attitude, which seems to us repugnant; we already laugh when we find "man and world" placed side by side, separated by the sublime arrogance of the conjunction "and"! But how! Is it not just so that we men of laughter have only gone one step further in the contempt of man? And also in pessimism, in contempt of existence knowable to us? Is it not just so that a suspicion has arisen in us that a contrast exists, a contrast between the world in which we have hitherto been at home, with our reveries, and another world, constituted by ourselves: an inexorable, substantial, extreme suspicion of ourselves, which more and more and more harshly takes hold of us Europeans and could easily place the generations to come before this terrible aut-aut: "demolish your generations or - yourselves!" The latter would be nihilism, but wouldn't the former be nihilism too? This is our question mark." (*The Gay Science*, 346). For this part, I would say that Leopard's laughter has a decidedly Enlightenment character, as intrepid and free as that of the avenging angel. This is particularly evident in Leopardi's attack on anthropocentric theories, in which, however disguised, he rightly sees the foundation of all spiritualistic superstition. It is not by chance, on the other hand, that his father, Monaldo, would have wished that Ptolemy would return to relocate the Earth at the center of the universe since the dream of every reactionary, even if expressed less trivially, does not live of different aspirations. Giacomo, on the contrary, has no hesitation to place himself on the opposite bank. Already in one of his first notes of the *Zibaldone*, in 1819, he clearly sees how scientific discoveries can revolutionize the world of traditional thought and how the Copernican system is destined, together, to lower and sublimate the idea of man, discovering "new mysteries of creation, of the destiny of nature, of the essence of things, of our being, of the omnipotence of the creator, of the ends of creation, etc. etc.". The reading of the *Entretiens* of Bernard de Fontenelle and of course that of Lucian's works allow him to represent in an ironic way the absurdity of a claim that, although refuted by science, kept almost intact the strength of superstition. Philosophical idealism had placed almost a ban on drawing legitimate consequences from the new objective knowledge of the world.

It is known that the first artistically elaborated attack to anthropocentrism is found in the *Dialogue of an elf and a gnome*, written between March 2 and 6, 1824 (the *Dialogue of the Earth and the Moon* is from the end of April, the *Copernicus* from 1827). In all of them, differently configured, dominates a tone of fable and astral distances, especially in the first two. The first opens indeed as on an immense scene of silence. With their foolish and vain actions men have all destroyed themselves. What can now be heard are only the voices of the spirits of the air and of the abyss. Grotesque reversal of a past of apparent common sense, their words draw the tremendous reality of things, tremendous, of course, with respect to what was believed to be. All the behaviors of men - their actions as well as their truths, their institutions as well as their projects - are presented to the eye of truth (which pushes its impassive gaze into the future) as extreme forms of transience, ephemerality and nothingness. Nietzsche again with his razor: "At the time of the Enlightenment the meaning of religion was not done justice, there is no doubt about that: but

it is equally certain that, in the reaction that followed that period, they went far beyond justice, treating religions with love, indeed falling in love with them, and recognizing them as an example of a deeper understanding, indeed the deepest understanding, of the world; an understanding that science would only have to strip of its dogmatic vestments in order to possess the "truth" in a non-mythical form. Religions then - as all the opponents of the Enlightenment claimed - expressed *sensu allegoricus*, taking into account the intelligence of the masses, that ancient wisdom that was the truth in itself, as every true science of the modern era had always led to it rather than away from it: so that between the oldest sages of humanity and modern ones reigned harmony, indeed identity of views, and a progress of knowledge - if we wanted to talk about such progress - did not concern the essence of them, but the way to communicate this essence. This conception of religion and science is totally wrong; and no one would dare to recognize himself in it today, if Schopenhauer's eloquence had not taken it under its wings: this lofty eloquence, which however reaches its hearers only after a generation. As certain as it is that much can be gleaned from Schopenhauer's religious-moral interpretation of man and the world for the understanding of Christianity and other religions, it is also equally certain that he deceived himself about the value of religion for knowledge. In this he was himself too docile a disciple of the scientific masters of his time, who all hailed romanticism and had repudiated the spirit of the Enlightenment; had he been born in our time, he could not possibly have spoken of the *sensus allegoricus* of religion; he would rather have honored the truth, as he was wont to do, with the words: no religion has yet contained, neither directly nor indirectly, neither as dogma nor as Parable, a truth. In fact, each of them was born from anguish and need, and has crept into existence by using the errors of reason; perhaps once, feeling threatened by science, it has mendaciously introduced into its system some philosophical theory, so that it could be found again later: but this is a theological stunt, which is performed when a religion already doubts itself. These theological stunts (which in Christianity, as a religion of a learned age, imbued with philosophy, were used very early) have led to that superstition of the *sensus allegoricus*, but even more than they have led to the habit of philosophers (especially of hybrid natures, of philosopher-poets and philosophizing poets), to regard as the fundamental essence of man all the sentiments which they found in themselves, and thus to attribute even to their own religious sentiments a significant influence on the construction of their systems of thought. Since philosophers, albeit variously, philosophized conditioned by the tradition of religious habits or at least under the ancient, powerful inheritance of that "metaphysical need," they arrived at doctrinal concepts that were actually very similar to Jewish or Christian or Indian religious concepts - similar as children are usually similar to their mother: only, in this case, the fathers were not well aware of that motherhood, as sometimes happens - but, in the innocence of their wonder, they fabled of a family resemblance between all religions and science. In fact, between religions and true science there is no kinship nor friendship, nor even hostility: they live on different stars". (*Human, Too Human*, I, 110). Laughter arises almost involuntarily and becomes mockery, as one laughs in front of an alleged masterpiece that suddenly reveals to the observer its irreparable weaknesses. The pompous frame does not deceive, but rather provokes the mocking criticism: "but their own events were called revolutions of the world and the stories of their people, the history of the world. In the face of presumption the comic even takes on meanings of a vengeful ananke.

Facing the only true certainty - the absolute lack of measure, the relative absolute - everything becomes big and small, true and false, good and bad, sensible and crazy. A new form of authorization is imposed in a world that rice has shown without guides and values. The Earth and the Moon talk to each other with careless indifference and know nothing but that life is



unhappiness. Destroyed the idealistic a priori, "the abstract and *antecedent* idea of good and evil", as Leopardi writes in an important note of the *Zibaldone* (September 25, 1821), and made absolute the relative, the overcoming of such truths (that mechanistic materialism makes more and more evident) can only be entrusted to the enthusiastic operation "against reason", to that "philosophical or passionate or poetic or other fury" without which the same man of genius will never be able to grasp the two opposite faces of the universe. So that, in the end, the negation of anthropocentrism is resolved in the celebration of man.

As he had written in the note of 1819, the Copernican revolution "lowers the idea of man and sublimates it", as he will repeat again on August 12, 1823 (*Zibaldone*), the fact that man can entirely understand and strongly feel his own littleness only demonstrates the great capacity of his mind; as he will finally say in the *Ginestra* and in the *Tramonto della luna*, the greatness of man consists precisely in the position in which he places himself in the universe, not wildly proud, not cowardly cowardly. Both with respect to the humanistic tradition and to the romantic presumption, this is a very different celebration.

The romantic presumption. As we know, it had its fulcrum in what was called the "irony", by virtue of which the subject, in its alleged omnipotence, could transform everything into everything, hovering over every content and governing it at will. Leopard's subjectivism - the only road that the poet saw open to the concrete action of man - has nothing of the ironic whimsy of romantic theories. On the contrary. The self does not represent the alpha and omega of universal life. The individual is but "one nth part of the globe" which, in turn, is but "a minimal part of one of the infinite systems that make up the world". (*Zibaldone*, August 12, 1823). Not only is it so, but it is felt as such. Leopardi's opposition to the romantic philosophical movement is irreducible in this respect. "Speculating profoundly on the theory of the arts," he writes in *Zibaldone*, October 5-6, 1821, "the Germans have lately given us the romance of romanticism, the highest system in theory, in practice, in nature, in reason, in metaphysics, in dialectics. Only Descartes, Galilei, Newton, and Locke have "truly changed the face of philosophy." Summer-autumn 1821. Leopardi fixes forever his ideas on universal relativism, on the infinite possibility of the existing, on materialism. On September 8 he reaches this important conclusion (*Zibaldone*): "My system introduces not only a reasoned and demonstrated skepticism, but such that ... human reason, for any possible progress, will never be able to divest itself of this skepticism". One may ask: is Leopard's heroic subjectivism compatible with such perspectives? Studying the *apocryphal Fragment of Straton of Lampsaco*, Bruno Biral has argued that the knowledge of the truth did not satisfy Leopardi at all. He reacted with all the impetus of his anguished rebellion and the conflict became irremediable. But it could also be argued that with his arrival at a physical-materialistic knowledge of the world, Leopardi - thus achieving a satisfactory form of knowledge (however painful) - posed the problem of man's responsibility for his own future, so that, having cleared the field of any possible return, his critical and negative thinking indicated the path of struggle, rather than that of renunciation. Jean Marie Guyau's reflections are indispensable: "In social theories, the links between ancient Epicureanism and modernism are much closer. First we find in Hobbes, and later in the 18th century, the ingenious theory of Epicurus that bases society on a contract. The Epicureans, always considering men essentially selfish and, consequently, enemies, have been throughout the ages led to search for an artificial means by which they could be brought together or brought closer together. The idea of a contract presented itself to the spirit as the most valid bond to chain men to one another. But Epicurus had conceived of this contract as a kind of primitive understanding between men, more spontaneous than rational. In his theory men approach one another and even before they are able to speak decide by gestures to live in peace and friendship. In Hobbes and his successors,

however, the conception of the social contract is no longer such. The primitive understanding of men seems to become for them a real contract, stipulated before witnesses with clearly defined and precise clauses. Such an imagination, which can be situated between the scholastic and the fictional, loses all historical value. On the contrary, the peculiar character of Epicurean sociology, as we see it exposed in Lucretius, is to be based on facts and to take its origin from history, and it is also on history that the most faithful successors of the Epicurean tradition are based in our days. For them, human societies were not born suddenly, as the result of an immediate act of individual wills; they were built slowly, thanks to a slow and gradual accumulation of habits, traditions, thanks to a gradual adaptation of individuals to each other: the concepts of justice and law, charity and philanthropy, instead of having created society, derive from it; instead of explaining it, they are explained through it. This is why Epicurean social morality is essentially historical and presupposes the concept of evolution and progress. In Lucretius we found expressed for the first time the idea of human progress. Helvetius repeats the same concept by applying it specifically to law and legislation; and it is this idea that is found in D'Holbach and in many other thinkers of the eighteenth century, Epicurean and otherwise. The idea of progress is the same as that of liberalism, and it is for this reason that it had to be sustained so strongly in the 18th century, on the eve of the great claim to freedom. In the movement that was then sweeping the spirits we have seen what an enormous contribution was due to the representatives of Epicureanism. In politics and social morality the Epicureans of the eighteenth century are much more convincing than in pure morality. Helvetius is decidedly liberal, D'Holbach is above all a radical, and indeed violently attacks sovereignty and the inconveniences that inevitably follow from it." (*La morale d'Epicure et ses rapports avec les doctrines contemporaines*, Paris 1878, pp. 286-287).

Although it is not possible, in Leopardi, to draw explicitly positive indications from the complex of his reflections (in the sense of trust and possibility), it is nevertheless true that the preclusions fundamentally concern the realm of duty to be, of utopia. Imagination, for example, so much defended by the poet as the source of action, is denied when it comes into conflict with science presumes to interpret the world in an arbitrary and capricious way. Like its vigor, it must also be aware of its limits, bronze like its own virtue. It could be said that the positive of Leopardi's conception lies in making men aware that the foundations on which they have erected so many of their beliefs are not only foolish but also fallacious, and that the ingenuity they possess, when misused, only contributes to perpetuating error and slavery to it. The result of his skepticism, in substance, is not the point of view according to which it is licit to forget everything because everything, in any case, has no value (thus having as an ideal the emptiness of consciousness), but that according to which both opinions and real relationships are recognized in their relativity and transience, never openly true and never openly false, but as they are understood in the circumstances that knowledge has reached in the given historical moment. Once their fallacy has been established, however, it will no longer be permissible to reconsider; nor will it be beneficial to resurrect the error in another form.

"We have already remarked," writes Cyril Bailey, "how much solidity and harmony the atomistic doctrine was acquiring in its transition from Leucippus to Democritus; with Epicurus its evolution is still more marked. The theory has now become a load-bearing system of interconnected parts, the connection between one proposition and another appears meditated, and various conceptual implications appear to have been ordered and organized according to the fundamental principles of atomism. This impression of greater order and coherence, offered, in the field of physics, by the theories of Epicurus, compared to those of the first atomists, is doubtless due also to the different ways in which the material on atomism has come down to us. In order to

have a more coherent view of the theories of the early atomists, we have had to collect scattered fragments, accounts of doxographers, and isolated criticisms of later philosophers; of Epicurus' doctrines, on the other hand, we are left with an account, compressed and rather confused though somewhat more neatly expressed, in a letter of his addressed to his disciple Herodotus, and the complete commentary on Lucretius' poem. From these passages we can see that Epicurus did not merely "adopt" the atomism of Democritus; he developed, modified, and improved upon the theories of his predecessors, attending especially to the correlation of all parts with the central principle of the infallibility of sense perception. In studying his system, one must precisely take into account this organic structure of its parts and the constant reference made to the principles of the Canon." (*The Greek Atomists and Epicurus*, Oxford 1928, p. 275). But Leopardi's critical thought has a strength which is difficult to dispute when it is placed in the history of contemporary thought: the tendencies, that is, of the renewed Catholic and spiritualistic tradition. Here, too, the attack on anthropocentric claims is the keystone of Leopardi's criticism, so much so that he felt the need, in 1827, to resume and deepen the controversy with *Copernicus*. In the wake of the best Enlightenment tradition, Leopardi composed an operetta as agile as it is amusing and bitter. The apparent carelessness of the amusement hides in fact a deep suffering since the writer knows well that, rightly sanctioning the end of the Ptolemaic system, he sanctions at the same time that of the mythology and poetry of the ancients. The enlightening mission of Leopardi's irony, however, demands this sacrifice, since truth revealed and error unmasked are too important to remain tied to dreams and illusions. All the more so since the Copernican system, as Leopardi had already noted in April 1821, fulfilled a lesson of scientific egalitarianism. In the operetta, these egalitarian implications are anything but hidden, opposed to the common and petty need that everyone feels to defend their alleged privileges. On the contrary, they appear as an essential goal of the new philosophy, whatever the consequences and difficulties that may arise.

[1988]

## **PART TWO. The obscene**

### **The ambivalent ferry**

The mask protects me and carries me back and forth, a ferry and makes me make those small movements that are so necessary to give me the illusion of getting out of myself, out of my imprisonment.

I am well aware that these are little walks, breaths of air in the prison yard, but I delude myself that the ancient smells of the forest fill my nostrils for a few moments. I am a man of normality, everyone can see that, but I give myself airs, they are almost always airs produced by innocent verbal games, linguistic bickering and stage daring, that's why the mask suits me.

My long association with the search for truth educated me to be rather skeptical. In the long run, I realize that the magnifications of limits were nothing more than reflections of the same walls. The scientific excellence of measurement grows with repetition, modulating itself in sometimes conflicting manners, avoiding direct lying but accepting reverie and dreaming. That's why the mask ferries me from the false, which I manage to smuggle under its cloak, to the obscene that is freed within me from the many ideological covers by laying bare my soul, even its poor muscular juxtapositions. The number controls and keeps alive the repetition functionally able to modify the world. The incognito of the false is not that of being certain of not suffering an uncomfortable

recognition in disguise, as much as that of being able not to suffer it. I sojourn among the beasts and do not care, but I do not care to stroke their backs either. I am not a follower of mantic, I do not record the shadows of the stars, I do not immerse myself in the observable regularities that build the supporting pillars of the aquarium where I live. I've seen man-eaters, by word of mouth, critical and hypercritical, turn out to be beardless children hugging a small bottle of beer as soon as the air got hot. I have seen women subverting the essential canons of the world by dribbling a lit match without deciding to give body to their destiny of igniting, albeit symbolic, that subversion which seemed so important to them just a few moments before. Manfully renouncing, in words, the agreements with the rest of the world is not enough, it doesn't guarantee anything, not even the miserable courage of the feast day, there is no autonomy of the sign that doesn't bring me back inside the modifying circle. Under the mask I no longer have a name, I know what it means, and I feel light, then someone kneels at my feet and wants a blessing, have they mistaken me for a priest? Or am I really a priest and didn't realize it? I need to move on, not wander around as a bad guest in my mind, trying to say the different word that can open the world. But this opportune word does not exist, there is no introductory speech to openness, I cannot imitate diversity. I end up being a prisoner of my own plots without untangling myself from the broken connections that continue to suffocate me.

The mask ferries me from the place of rules, where confining stakes are constantly configured in my heart, to the place of the absence of limits, of excess, where the desolate rarefaction of the absurd reigns, and where I can fall prey to the nightmares of no return if I am not careful to keep my sensibility awake. Neither the first nor the second of these places are marked by anything visible; the realm of death resonates only with the effort of work. Doing, where the first place is located, leads to death, and the second place is always a doing of death as well, duplicating reality at night in its aged and duplicitous brother is like turning the pages of a pornographic dream, one seeks a rarefaction of the eternally equal, a place where the useful becomes useless by freeing itself from the chains of quantity. Sade is the tutelary deity of this second landing, the ferry takes me to him, but he is a blind deity, he has never reached, in any of his performances, the perfection of quality, he has always remained a prisoner of quantity.

But I don't get ferried from the false to the obscene to find the pearl that isn't there, doing leads to death, it's always a doing of death. I can only do and I can only die. I make the journey of the mask to learn how to use tools, the same way I learned to shoot without dressing a means of death in festive clothes. The harmony of life is elsewhere, but it never reaches its own completeness, death does not complete, it truncates the incomplete that passes itself off as complete. The larva dreams and it is in the dream that the incredibly beyond is fulfilled, and on this dream an ephemeral quality develops that gives life its juice, that raises its gaze and sees far away, where no gaze has ever rested.

It is also true that underneath the mask, while this absurd ferrying from one cemetery to another is taking place, new forces seem to move within me. Dionysus was the god of the mask and the unleashing of women was covered by the nebride. Where to the other I am nobody I must be careful to put relationships, desires, calculations and words in their place. The god of mauling is mauled, in the same way as the Indian god of life is covered with the dust of corpses. Under the mask is the savage, the homo silvaticus of medieval iconography, covered in leaves and fleeces. While everyone expects who knows what intrigues from my masked attitudes, the condition of truth does not change as a result of my circumvolutions precisely because these, labyrinths included, have been carried out on the basis of a common language. The limits of my language only make my attempts to go further laughable, especially when seen from the point of view of

truth, but rather than seeking real differences I follow traces and negligible paths without evidence, in the end I end up discovering only modifying novelties. The truth includes my attempt to name the world by duplicating it in a thousand labyrinths like the adult the child's wiggling, these sounds are in the cultured idiom of the other even if they do not take on a body of meaning in it. In my speech I don't have the collocating discourse that closes every opening and makes dissonances coincide perfectly, but for this very reason it is a creative discourse, it invents the world and opens me to the restlessness of the insomniac.

The mask allows me, in ferrying myself towards the excessive repetitiveness of the obscene, to realize the obligatory repetition. In the mask, in fact, it is only me who sets new rules and who suffers mortally from the consequences that these rules encounter in a universe that is increasingly closed and traumatically, excessively repetitive. As a whole, the entire ferry, including the mask and my labyrinths that are not excluded, remains indifferent, gazing from afar. The excess lies in my tuning in to the correspondences and it is here that the seed of rebellion is born, not in a horrified leap backwards. The absolute part of saying doesn't belong to me, quality is far away, even if I'm looking for it, here I build tools and I try to use them, I lift the goat skin of the wild man and I have to fight with him if I want to survive, in fact it's not allowed to uncover the mask and then go back home quietly. Raising ghosts in well-ordered, politically correct cities is unhygienic; to do so is to be forced to get rid of them. Truth, for its part, ponders the end of my ferry, it cannot admit either the absolute identity of the tautology that afflicts it in the scientific modernization of the world or the incomprehensible Sadian desolation, where everything repeats itself like a clock equipped with puppet mechanisms. I alone take sides, I am in the struggle, I live in the struggle, even if my destiny offers me only the possibility of defeat. But it is precisely the consciousness of this defeat that brings me back to the struggle. The truth, sullen, one, immobile, understands this vain raving of the world but it does not overshadow it, it does not take action, it simply is. From my heated condition of conflict, this solidity one is less than nothing, yet I know that my defeat would be trivial failure without the glory of quality. The doing, my doing, so even this ferrying, is an affirmation of the part, it is I, out of fear, who gentrifies it, who encloses it in the burg of all-out defense, who makes the decision of control, who is captured by the will. As long as I remain a prisoner of truth, of the myth of truth, I may have more or less space but I will still remain a prisoner of fear, I will say this fear, it will be the signal of my reduced condition, cut, specified by orientation. The gaze of the word guards me after having captured me. A mutual recognition. The mask does not have a message because it does not have a language. It is I who lends it one and who reproduces the image of a sayable mask, existing in the existence that I see in the modification. I realize this coming and going, this constant ferrying of myself, but I am impatient to arrive at quantitative conclusions, I want to build, and because I have illusions in large I want to build unity. But I can't do it, the violence here is arrested by dabbling in futile, unconvincing ways. The sale of achievements takes my breath away, but it takes me a long time to realize that the world is too small for my need to complete.

Neither the false nor the obscene are landing points. I refuse to abandon the mask. Faced with the false, I wear the clothes of the truthful concreteness that is hidden inside the wrapping, Déjacque not Sartre, the dagger and the poison not any testament or the dance of the hours that pretends to return to justify the relativist theses of any Camus. Faced with the honor of some public whore, I take the side of free love and I detest not the pornographic act, of which a paradoxically almost true story is artfully constructed, but the offence of those public whores who have made a mess of their own morals for the trivial ridicule of personal interests, certainly not for the search

of "strong sensations". Politics is pornography before anything else, even that of those who do not even feel the stimulus of sexual pleasure, maliciously denied them by nature.

Neither in the face of the false (Sartre should have written the text of Déjacque!), nor in the face of the obscene (Pivetti could never have kept a diary like the one published here!), do I feel on the side of the censor. I don't really care. But the critical categories of the false and obscene take their strength from reality, from what Sartre really was, from the obtuseness and stupidity of his Stalinism, especially if commensurate with the analytical intelligence of some of his philosophical positions, from what politicians are in reality, regardless of the personal erotic uses to which they more or less consciously consign their bodies. Nothing of this concrete background pertains to the mask.

There is a way of sticking to the facts that can be seen as both false and obscene. And that is what has happened in these efforts put on the table here. So much for the disturbed respectability of so many revolutionaries.

I have always been an inhabitant of numerous regions of reality, inside a cell I have always felt like a prisoner. If I love the truth I am drawn into an endless whirlpool where my acquisitions, viewed critically, ridicule every attempt to approach the goal. All attempts converge to the maintenance of acquisitions, all except the one that takes into consideration precisely the restlessness. This special attempt runs away from the purpose, decrees its disappearance, that's for sure, but it engages in going away from its monotonous shell. The stepping aside in the face of the imperium of truth is an existence that feeds the dream, that provides no certainties on which to feed. The challenge of this stepping aside simply resonates in the face of doing; it is not worth cursing against control if one then proposes control itself as a method for coming out of doing. Sic et simpliciter I must find myself elsewhere, not want to find myself elsewhere, the two aspects are not identical. The immanence of doing is never acceptable, not even as a hypothesis. Truth and the world face each other because I move them reciprocally, justifying the struggle. Without my factual intention only the one remains, the unknowable to my non-intention. My dominion over the world is certainly unfounded, but this is what I have, I can start from this for a wonderful journey but I cannot erase it, this is where I found the mask and the ferry. I cannot push further the search for truth, I would show deep envy for a lack of possession, but truth cannot be possessed because it is other, absolutely other. I can no more subvert the foreignness of truth than I can subvert the remoteness of quality. The purpose of doing is not truth but only the illusion of truth. Peace is another matter; here in the world it is only a badly acted play.

[2006]

## **Introduction to the obscene**

I won't go into the merits of the obscene here, it doesn't seem necessary to me, I just need the sense that everyone gives to this word to develop my thesis. The obscene is therefore what each of us thinks it is, in any case. Already the sound of this word calls to mind two elements, not necessarily coexisting: the sexual sphere and the rejection of socially codified normality.

The history of obscenity could be studied starting from its repression by power, of any power in office. This is, of course, an unclear criterion, which admits too many exceptions to be accepted, but even this does not particularly interest the author of these notes. We are certainly not in the sixteenth century, when Aretino ran the risk of being stabbed to death on the night of July 28, 1525, nor are we exposed to the rigors of the Inquisition (or are we?).

After all, it is the obscene as an instrument of struggle against power that we want to talk about, an instrument that has fallen into disuse and is considered, by the revolutionary moralists who have suffocated us for decades, disreputable.

Below I present, by way of example, a non-binding excursus of erotic and pornographic literature employed as an instrument of political and revolutionary struggle. As you will see, I have limited myself to indicating almost only texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certainly the two most interesting centuries from this particular point of view.

In a booklet undated, but almost certainly dated 1791, entitled: *Catéchisme, libertin, à l'usage des filles de joie, et des jeunes demoiselles qui se décident à embrasser cette profession*, par Mme de Lamotte, a Cythère, et se trouve chez toutes les filles publiques, s.d. Often humorous, sometimes very obscene and always well written, this text is an instruction manual for Parisian prostitutes. It is not only an erotic book, but takes the form of a pamphlet of social criticism whose genre flourished during the revolution. *Catéchisme libertin* was presented as the work of mademoiselle Théroigne, who was then trying to organize a revolutionary feminist body. The text, with very quick twists and turns, served very well to settlements of accounts between opposing factions.

*La chasteté du clergé dévoilée, ou Procès-Verbaux des séances du clergé chez les filles de Paris trouvés à la Bastille*, a Rome, imprimerie de la propagande et à Paris, 1780. The list of names of clergymen caught with prostitutes during the revolution is authentic, the book is obviously a false police document.

Chavigny, called la Bretonnière, *Le cochon mitré, dialogue*, à Paris, chez le cochon 1689. In a conversation between Scarron, Furetière, Louis XIV, madame de Maintenon, the cardinal d'Estrée et Le Tellier de Louvois, archbishop of Reims, Scarron reveals that his wife had been the mistress of the maréchal d'Albret, and that she later became the king's mistress. This is followed by the story of the relationship between the archbishop of Reims and the duchesse d'Aumont, wife of his brother-in-law, the marquis de Créquy. Furetière concludes by saying that one could call the history of the bishops as the History porca, as it is said for the History augusta to speak of that of the emperors.

Pierre-François Guyot Desfontaines, *Le Grand mystère, ou l'Art de méditer sur la garde-robe, renouvelé et dévoilé par l'ingénieur docteur Swift. Avec des observations historiques, politiques et morales qui prouvent l'antiquité de cette science etc.*, trad. de l'anglaise, La Haye, 1729. The book deals with some philosophical reflections on shit and men. It is a forgery attributed to Swift, which is still reprinted today, the last edition, also attributed to the English writer, is of 2002. Its author is instead one of the founding fathers of French literary criticism, proud opponent of Voltaire.

Hippolyte Magen, *Les amours de l'Impératrice Eugénie avant, pendant et après le mariage*, Brussels but with the masked indication of London, s. d. A book listing the erotic details of the sexual relations of Eugénie María de Montijo de Guzmán, Countess of Theba, wife of Napoleon III, particularly with Madame Contades. Also by Hippolyte Magen, *Les deux cours et les nuits de Saint-Cloud: moeurs, debauches et crimes de la famille Bonaparte*, a new revised, corrected, and augmented edition of the biography of the Empress of the French. London-Brussels 1863. Despite the sentences to twelve months in prison and 3000 francs fine Magen will still publish: *Histoire satyrique et véritable du mariage de César avec la belle Eugénie de Guzman*, London-Brussels 1862. Together with Pierre Vénisier had published: *La cour d'une Espagnole*, Brussels 1871. *La femme de César. Biografie d'Eugénie Kirkpatrick*, London 1866. *Le Mariage d'une espagnole par Mad. U. R.*, London 1866, in which the empress's exploits are associated with those of her mother. The initials U. R. would indicate Marie Letizia Studolmina Wyse Bonaparte, wife of Urbano

Rattazzi, Italian minister. It is, in the latter case, also a literary forgery. Vésimier was sentenced to 18 months in prison. The book *Liebetollheit einer Kaiserin*, s.l. n.d. is instead an anonymous pornographic book as there were hundreds in which the characters, Napoleon III and his wife, are made to become actors in erotic stories devoid of any political criticism. The best known books are by Pierre Vésimier: *Les amours de Napoléon III. Par l'Auteur de la femme de César*, Genève-Bruxelles-Milan-Turin-Londres 1863, and *Les Amours de Napoléon III, ou le Lupanar Elyséen dévoilé, les orgies de Badinguet et de ses complices avec leur maîtresses*, Londres et Genève, ma Bruxelles 1871. A very violent pamphlet, again against Napoleon III, had been published by Vésimier in 1863 in London under the title: *Histoire du nouveau César*.

Albrecht Schöne wrote an eight-volume novel about the erotic affairs of Frederick William II, the heir to Frederick the Great: *Dreyerlei Wirkungen. Eine Geschichte aus der Planetenwelt*, Wien und Dresden 1789-1792. Erotic writing with political criticism. Another booklet of fierce political criticism is the erotic pamphlet against the king himself: *Der Jesuit auf dem Thron oder das neue Felsenburg*, Berlin und Leipzig 1794. Also on the same subject, but even more spicy is: *Saul, der zweite genannt, der dicke König von Kanonenland*, Berlin und Postdam 1798.

The Benevento Niccolò Franco, contemporary of Aretino, wrote a collection of poems, *La Priapea*, 1541, where resorting to pornography is not limited to criticize Aretino, but also the Pope Paul III, the Farnese, the entire Council of Trent, Emperor Charles V and Pope Paul IV. He will die hanged in 1570 for a poem against Pope Paul V. However, the century does not have many examples of the kind, evidently this road was very dangerous.

Antonio Gavin, a Catholic priest from Zaragoza who converted to the Anglican religion, wrote several pornographic books in London animated by nuns and monks. *The Frauds of Romish Monks and Priests with Observations on a Journey to Naples*, London 1691. *A Master Key of Popery in five parts*, London 1725-1726.

Christian Friedrich Hunold, in *Der Europäischen Höfe Liebes- und Helden- Geschichte*, Hamburg 1705, provides in-depth details of the amorous activities and related true and invented stories that were rampant throughout the courts of eighteenth-century Europe.

Gregorio Leti, a man of letters of the mid-seventeenth century, wrote, among many erotic works, a ferocious pornographic satire of the life of the Roman clergy in the book: *Il puttanesimo romano o vero Conclave generale delle Puttane della Corte per l'elezione del nuovo Pontefice*, s. l. 1668. Certainly one of the most terrible attacks on the Catholic Church conducted by the system here indicated of the use of pornography.

About the erotic activities of the Countess of Lichtenau, mistress of Frederick William II: *Biographische Skizze der Madame Ritz, jetzigen Gräfinn von Lichtenau*, Paris-Liepzig 1798. Much more detailed and daring another pornographic booklet, called of the "secret papers": *Geheime Papiere der Gräfin von Lichtenau*, Charlottenburg-Leipzig 1798, of this last one the author is known: Heinrich Husen. Of a third booklet, presented as *Confessions of the Countess*, entitled: *Bekennnisse der Gräfin Lichtenau*, Cöthen 1798, the title says that it was written by the man with the red cap (vom Mann mit der röten Mütze) with obvious phallic reference.

On Louis XIV, King of France, material abounds, as is only natural. The Power of Tyrants lends itself greatly to pornographic criticism. *Nouvelles amours de Louis le Grand*, Paris (but printed in Holland) 1696, is one such document. In Gatién Sandraz de Courtitz's book: *Les conquêtes amoureuses du Grand Alcandre dans les Pays-Bas*, Cologne 1684, his loves with Vallière, the Marquise de Montespan and Fontanges are recounted.

I libelli contro Maria Antonietta, moglie di Luigi XVI, sono sterminati. L'intento con essi di colpire la corona è abbastanza costante. *Mémoires justificatifs de la Comtesse de Valois de la*



*Motte*, Paris 1789, dedicate alla relazione con il cardinale Rohan. J.-P. Brissot de Warville, *Essai historique sur la vie privée de Marie Antoinette d'Autriche. Queen of France*, Paris 1789. Anonimi invece: *Entrennes aux fouteurs ou calendrier des trois sexes*, Paris 1790. *Uterine fury of Marie Antoinette. Au manège et dans tous les bordels de Paris*, Paris 1791. *The royal brothel. Followed by a secret meeting between the Queen and Cardinal Rohan*, s. l. e d. *Bordel patriotique, entitled by the Queen of the French*, Paris 1791. Il resto della vastissima produzione è semplice pornografia senza scopi politici.

## Untitled

G. Faldi, *La scultura barocca in Italia*, Milano 1958, p. 77: reproduction of the sculptural group named "Estasi di santa Teresa" by Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

Scrolling through the pages of the above text in the library, I found inserted, right on page 77, some sheets written in minute handwriting, on almost transparent tissue paper. My surprise was great, reading them, noting that it was a return of the old model of political criticism used with great results during the reign of Napoleon III and having as a theater the erotic exploits of Eugenia. I thought that pornography as a means of political criticism was completely abandoned, but it wasn't true. That's why I quickly took possession of the sheets and here I reproduce them for future reference.

In memory of the Christian martyrs of the  
Vendée  
slaughtered by revolutionary barbarism

### Short notice to readers

Strange as it may seem, the publication of this *Secret Diary* is not to be connected with the recent events that ended with my removal from the office of personal advisor to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Irene Pivetti.

No regrets for this decision, due exclusively to technical reasons that were imposed on the President by political necessity and not by personal resentments towards me.

I believe that President Pivetti, for whom I still have the utmost respect, is one of the most intelligent women in the recent and less recent history of our country. The fact that this *Secret Diary* deals with issues of an intimate nature, has not hindered my intention to apologize and illustrate the character and personality of the President. On the contrary, it was the reading of some passages, certainly rough, that prompted me to publish the whole thing, just to show how Irene Pivetti is, even before being President of the Chamber of Deputies, a woman with her own life, her autonomy of conscience, her own political and religious conception. In short, a model for many Catholic women who look to her with respect, but also with curiosity. Having these pages available now, where Pivetti's humanity is radically laid bare, will be for Catholic women, as for all the other readers who will have the book in their hands, a reason for edifying reflection and healthy planning of Christian and Leghist life.

R. F.

May 12, 1991

Lord my God, today I decided to take the most important step of my life: I went to see a Bossi rally. A handsome man, no doubt about it, but he is married. A great speaker, his words slid all over my body, I felt them penetrate me. Few concepts, to tell the truth, a great confusion of ideas, but the sound of his voice, croaking, and the high and low of the treble, got under my skin. I will not easily forget it.

### **May 20, 1991**

Last night I woke up around two o'clock and couldn't get back to sleep. I had had a terrible nightmare. I saw myself surrounded by several men looking at me as if they wanted to undress me. I often feel observed in this way, which is why I carefully hide my body, trying to turn off the sexual urges of everyone I casually come in contact with. It is an exercise in contrition that I always offer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who continues to keep me from evil. Then the heat kicked in. This year the temperature rose higher than usual. The room seemed to shrink. I stroked my breasts. I usually calm down after a few minutes. I couldn't. I shouldn't tell you about it, but in the bond of mutual secrecy that unites us, a bond I know for sure neither of us will ever break, I confess that I touched myself right there. Tomorrow I will speak to Don Ignace about it. He will absolve me. He always does, although in the last few months, when I walk away from the confessional I feel his eyes on my body, penetrating me from behind through my robes. How to get rid of this, my God, let the blood of the Holy Martyrs descend upon me, making me pure once more, forever.

### **May 23, 1991**

Walking into a League office increasingly has a strange effect on me. There's something similar to the parish atmosphere I've been used to for years, but also different. The kids are more or less the same. Only some of them, among the older ones, having other political experiences behave differently. They have a richer and more colorful language, they get away with those words that I blush to write here. They don't go to church on Sundays and I often catch them looking at my legs which they find beautiful in their comments. I never know how to act. They constitute, they tell me, the backbone of the party, but I don't believe it. We don't necessarily need these handsome men. An ideal like that of the League stands on its own, it finds its origins and its strength among ordinary people, those who dream of nothing but order and prosperity, a free state in a free Christian and Catholic society. Bossi thinks differently. He is giving too much space to those political levers coming from parties and small parties of the left. Around him hover, as shadows of bad counselors, youngsters who remember the ancient years of the eskimo and molotov cocktails. How is it possible that a shrewd politician like him does not realize the danger and the discredit that comes from them? Yesterday I discovered by chance that at least two of them have tried more or less openly to have relations with his wife. I don't know if they have convinced her, but having known her, and having understood the not-so-religious character of her way of behaving, I am certain that sooner or later they will succeed. May God forgive them. Of course, they are nicer than those good little souls in the parish who keep keeping their eyes on me. Sooner or later they will try to lay their hands on me too. What will I do? How will I find the strength to resist them? What if they try to use violence on me in a deserted room at one of our locations? I am sure they are capable of this and more. Saint Maria Goretti, help me.

### **May 30, 1991**

I went to Pontida today. A spectacle. My legs were shaking. All screaming and excited. A continuous hubbub of heated beasts in the spring sun. Bossi was shouting without most of us understanding anything. He was screaming and that was enough. Being in the front row I was constantly being pushed from behind. At some point I stopped paying attention. The Chief's words, choppy and sloppy, but as persuasive as they were capable of reaching deep into my heart and

bowels, were overwhelming me. What I could hear wasn't much, but the music of his voice was so compelling. I don't know how to explain this phenomenon. I felt almost transported to a different condition. My body had heated up. My face was red and my temples were throbbing. My heart was ticking on its own and I couldn't control my breathing. Suddenly I felt someone caressing me from behind. My God! A hand, in the crowd, was lightly caressing my hips. It had never happened to me that I didn't know how to react instinctively and violently to a situation like that. As a rule, when someone touches me, I clam up. I make it a matter of ethics and violence suffered. But that day the heroine of female purity was no longer there. The hand kept going down, until it rested, steady, securely, right there. You can imagine where. But it wasn't a foreign hand. I didn't experience that moment as a violence endured, but, on the contrary, I felt through that physical contact a greater interpenetration with the environment all together, with the ungrammatical screams of the Chief and the voices of the people, with my body slowly opening to a new experience. My goodness, how to say this? I really don't know, but I decided to be honest to the core. To not hide anything from you. I got wet without restraint. I'm ashamed of it now, but I didn't feel shame in that moment. I was experiencing a kind of transfiguration of reality. The faces of those around me, in truth largely ebony and imbecilic, received a new light of beauty. I don't know if it was the Chief's words or the hand caressing me that caused the phenomenon. For the moment, it is enough for me to note it. What is sin? We should ask Saint Augustine.

#### **June 6, 1991**

The pizza was there in front of me but I didn't feel like eating it. For the past few minutes the Chief had been giving me the heave-ho. Yes, that's right. The big Boss. I never would have thought it possible. In our pizzeria in Sesto, under the table, like any high school student, the greatest living politician, the man who is beginning to change my life, for a few minutes had been brushing my leg with the foot that he had first freed from his moccasin. I couldn't believe it. I didn't know what to do. It seems easy on generic and superficial occasions to propose a form of behavior. This is what Don Ignace gives the impression of not understanding. I am not approaching a man like any other. The Boss is always the Boss. When he asks, one must adapt to his wishes. It is a way of being close to him, of repaying him for his sacrifices and efforts that he undergoes for all of us, for the people of the League, but also for the Italy of the future, the real Italy, that Italy of the North that will be born only through his guidance and under his heel of a strong and far-sighted government. What could I, a small and defenseless woman, do but spread my legs a little to facilitate the rise of the Leader's foot? Could I have opposed it? Could I get up and leave? Could I have made a row? How would I have looked? Would I not have shown myself unworthy of such an honor? For this reason, God forgive me, I opened up as far as I could. My foot went up to its maximum. Now I could feel it between my thighs. Bossi, seated in front of me, continued to talk with Maroni (who, incidentally, is impotent and therefore makes a virtue of necessity in these matters), with Formentini (who is a pig, but walks with his lady watching him on sight), and with other friends of the League whose names I don't remember. My vision was getting blurry. Bossi had lowered himself a little in his chair, as if he wanted to stretch his legs and rest. By now his foot had stopped at the apex of my thighs and he was titillating me just in the right spot. I know that it will not be easy to talk about all this with Don Ignace, and that's why before I do I talk about it with you, who are basically my true and only secret confidant. The orgasm came almost without realizing it and I had a hysterical cough that I couldn't stop. Bossi got worried and quickly put his shoe back on and changed the subject with his interlocutors.

#### **June 15, 1991**

What was supposed to happen happened. They should not have left the door ajar. Last night in the Varese headquarters the discussion had ended very late. The Chief had entertained us on the immediate programs of the federalist political project. Also present was that imbecile Miglio who every time he opens his mouth reminds me of my grandfather when he tried to woo the maid by reciting Pascoli's poems. I don't understand this Federalism business very well, but it has a great effect on all of us. We must first separate from the unitary and centralist state, and then create a federation of smaller states, where each state will have its own administrative, political and legislative autonomy. I don't care much about all this, but I have been told by Bossi that this political and theoretical thesis is fundamental and I believe it. Otherwise I would not be a League member and I would not be a believer. A basic faith is necessary, and it is the Christian one, then others can be added. The leghist one completes my Christian and Catholic formation, with a nice program of selection of the best strata of the best population. I don't know what I think about this point, but it seems to me that things should go like this: first we take over the government, then we separate the richest part of Italy, that is the North, we make it an independent state, and we send the southerners and all the rest to hell. In short, all that part of Italy that lives off the land and does not want to work. The richest are necessarily also the best, and the most Christian, because, of course, they are blessed by God. But these reflections, which I was making to myself, with Miglio's latest pamphlet in my hands, had distracted me from what was happening in the office. Little by little, everyone had left. Miglio had been taken home, because he would never find his way back on his own; the others had gone to the bar or the pizzeria. I was left alone. Then I noticed the light filtering in from the boss's room, the inviolable room where I always enter with a knot in my throat, the place everyone wants to visit like a sanctuary. From the room came strange bellowing sounds, as if someone was feeling ill, or complaining of who knows what unmentionable pain. I approached the door and saw that poor man Maroni on the floor on all fours like a beast, wearing only garters and panties. Behind him Bossi with a whip in his hand was hitting him making him whine slowly. The spectacle, new and unexpected to me, had nothing attractive about it. Maroni looked like a boiled redfish naked, but the immense stature of the Chief, towering over him, raised him to heights unattainable for such a dwarf. Whatever Bossi does, he is still a great man, even with a whip in his hand. I left without disturbing them further. I was not aware of such practices within the League. I think we have other purposes than those in use in parishes for boys and girls, where they are used for the purpose of educating to mortification of the flesh. Perhaps it is a practice of political mortification. But, then, what purpose did the garter belt serve? This Maroni is definitely a bad guy! If the Boss wasn't around, everything would go to hell. I will pray for him tonight. May God enlighten his decisions.

### **July 15, 1991**

Day of unlimited joy. The Chief kissed me in his room. It happened so quickly and suddenly that I could do nothing but open my mouth and accept the unusual gift. To tell the truth, Bossi's breath smells horrendous because he can never wash the prosthesis properly, while his tongue felt more like a piece of cloth in my mouth, but the experience was sublime. I can't even talk here without feeling all underwhelmed.

That's just the way he is. He calls you, he says to you: - What's up, Irene, what are you doing with your parishes? This is his way of joking. He always throws it on a kind of formal anticlericalism that then, scratch that, is also faith, as the great saints teach. But he wants to keep his distance, he wants to remain in the solitary and sunny spaces where his political greatness has by now permanently placed him. Usually, after a few jokes about my skinny dress and well-ironed, or my friends of the parish on the corner, it passes to reasons of propaganda, statistical calculations

of future votes and dreams without limits of government of the country. Not this time. He stood up, held me in his arms, which look like two collapsible oars because of how strong and bony they are, and kissed me. Then he stopped immediately and immersed himself in reading Baget Bozzo's latest sociological report, which I recommended to him myself. I left with my contentment to lock myself in the toilet. What can I say, my dear, unique and discreet confidant, sitting on the toilet I looked at my legs and found them very beautiful. I passed my hand right there as I urinated. I need to make up my mind to find a replacement for Paul, I think getting back into intercourse is a good idea. Taking a virginity from scratch is just not for me. I don't want that kind of style. I will be open to all experiences, but only in private, following the example of my Leader, while in public I will try to appear the heroine of the new puritanical and fundamentalist Christianity. I have realized that politics cannot be run by starting from a single truth. As the Church has been teaching for millennia, there are two truths: one for the weak and the poor, the other for the strong and the rich, in short, for those who rule, and I, sooner or later, will be able to find a place among the latter.

### **July 22, 1991**

I bought myself a red guêpière but I don't feel like it's suitable for wearing under a dress. It's hot and I can't go out too covered. In transparency it would be noticeable. For the moment I don't have anyone to show it to. What strange choices I'm making these days. I started reading a book by Franco Cardini. I can't concentrate. After all, all this nonsense about the Middle Ages is repugnant to me. There would have been no need for any re-evaluation of the Church's activity against heresies if we had not dedicated ourselves in the past years to a senseless critique of authority and dogma. Vatican II has done immense damage. The ecclesial magisterium had to remain intact. The "Syllabus" should still be applied today. Before going to bed I tried on my garment. It doesn't look bad on me, with a pair of black fishnet stockings I could even look like a prostitute of a certain level. What images come to mind! I must keep the flame of my faith high to save myself from the flames of hell.

### **July 25, 1991**

At the sea I met Maurizio, the sun, the heat, the sweat, did the rest. He took me to his cabin and laid me on the floor. He undressed showing me a very respectable arnese. Then he penetrated me. I felt like I was anesthetized. I felt no pleasure at all. Several times I thought about what the Chief would have said if he had caught me under this guy, even though having a hard-on he could be part of the League, while he is just a young brute of the Youth Front with an empty head and full balls. It's a good thing I wore my diaphragm, which was bothering me after not using it for so long. But we of the League, are we against fascists? Bossi says yes. At the end of the day it doesn't matter who we are against, what matters is that we know who we are for. You don't conquer power with confrontation, but with agreement, with political agreements, of which Bossi is a master, and with promises of power sharing and control. The rest is just talk. The fascist kid had a swastika tattooed on his ass. It didn't look good. But I didn't see it until later. What to do? I advised him to get a cross with the Heart of Jesus tattooed on the other cheek.

### **August 15, 1991**

No news these last few days. Absolute tedium and chatter in the sun. Miglio got drunk. Maroni tries a bit 'everywhere to find compliant boys to pay, but with poor results. Formentini has escaped from his wife's custody a couple of times, and now he is being blackmailed by two transsexuals whom he had mistaken for whores. A sadness. The absence of the Chief hovers over everyone. Without him we are lost. I read a book by Vittorio about Jesus. Very nice. But Christ is something else. Even as a man. Who knows how he made love? And with whom? Maybe with John? So many ideas come to me. But I don't know how to realize them. We'll see. For the moment I just pray for

the League's political results, which are inescapable, according to Bossi. And he knows what he's saying.

### **August 28, 1991**

Bossi said at Pontida that the League has it tough. A shiver of complicity and satisfaction ran down everyone's spine. The young males were beaming. The women just hoped for the best. As far as I'm concerned, this whole toughness thing isn't important. I understand the metaphor (and who wouldn't?), like all of the Chief's rhetorical devices, it is meaningful and significant, but I cannot get the image of Moroni on all fours out of my head. Perhaps Bossi would do well to get rid of these perverted homunculi that sooner or later will end up harming the cause of the hardness of the League. If I had to command I would reconstitute the white-gold legions of the Vendée, who fought in the name of the victory of Christ against the revolutionary hordes bearers of disorder and violence. Homosexuals deny the will of God, the order of His holy laws, therefore they must be lumped together with all the great sinners, the Jews who killed the living Christ, the women who abort and all the other species of degenerates who plague today's society.

### **Christmas 1991**

Don Ignace officiated at Christmas Mass in the usual little country church where my family and I gather every year. He came all the way from Milan just to do me this favor. My father was radiant. He would have been a little less so if he had known the cost of the operation. The good priest got me a meeting with Cardinal Martini. He had been acting as his intermediary for a long time. I will see him tomorrow. The family celebration was not particularly happy. My parents feel that I am a stranger, and I feel distant from them. By now my real father is the Boss, the man who increasingly occupies the space in my life. Father, husband, lover, in short, everything. But I haven't slept with him yet, and maybe I never will. Great men don't mind these little things.

### **Saint Stephen 1991**

I met Cardinal Martini at the Archbishop's Palace. I expect to have to get used to this kind of meeting, and also to the places where they take place: large halls, silent and cold, antechambers with carpets and curtains, candelabra and chandeliers. I have to get out of the provincial dimension and prepare myself for my great adventure as a probable deputy of the League. The Chief is making us attend specialized courses to prepare us in every way. The Cardinal was not long in coming. He entered the room almost immediately and led me without wasting time to his work room. A rather small table, covered with papers, a small open door at the end of the room, through which one could glimpse a neat and sober little bed. Topic of the meeting: my purported lefebvreism. I refused to accept this label. I have nothing to do with schism. It is true that my ideas, like those of many Italian Catholics, do not coincide with Martini's reckless progressivism, but I am not a schismatic. If anything, he is the schismatic, but I was not there to tell him that. Then the conversation softened. The eminent personage, almost certainly the future pontiff, came up to me and, taking my hand, said: "Blessed child, how can you not understand that I think like you, and with you, and with me, all the hierarchies of the Church think in the same way? But one must be alert. One must run in line with the times. I too am for a reassessment of the Holy Inquisition and the Vendée. But I cannot say it. I'm like a prisoner of the party game. And if you want to move forward, you too must keep in mind this great game that keeps us all connected and mutually useful. We have to be progressive today. We must recover and use what the disappearance of real socialism has left in our hands. An immense patrimony of political consensus, of obedient subjects, of fervent believers. Tomorrow, when the victory of the Church and its high hierarchies is consolidated, we will be able to speak differently, more clearly. And, continuing to speak, as if to give a more intimate and convincing foundation to his words, he led me into the little room behind. Here, after closing the

door, he pushed me on my knees, as if he wanted to bless me, then, suddenly, with a quick and practical gesture, grabbing my head with one hand he put his cock in my mouth forcing me to suck it. What could I do? How to refuse a service to the future pontiff. Then, certainly not to give scandal, the cardinal came into my mouth suggesting me to swallow everything in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I had no choice but to reply: - Amen, but it didn't seem appropriate. Maybe those are the rules of the palace. If I'm honest, and with you I am all the way, the prelate's sperm didn't taste bad.

### **June 30, 1992**

We all went to Naples together to celebrate the election to the Italian Parliament. The idea of the celebration was born controversial. In some ways, marching all together on Montecitorio, under the high leadership of the Chief, we were like many fish out of water, but then, as often happens in these cases, we got used to it. In just a few weeks, we had realized that our role was not that of protesting, but rather that of sharing, as much as possible, the cake of power. So the party, in Naples. Here we were divided into groups by the exceptional organizer Mrs. Mussolini, a strong and lively woman, a bit eccentric in her speech, but all in all pleasant. Maroni was entrusted to the local organizations adhering to the Fronte della Gioventù, where there are quite a few able-bodied young men who are sure to make him happy. Formentini, intelligently separated from his bodyguard, spent the night playing scopone with Bassolino in the name of the ecumenical openness of the new right, but also following repeated promises to let him meet a beautiful brunette he had spotted at the Garibaldi station: a promise regularly broken by the comrades of the Neapolitan Quercia. The brunette later turned out to be once again a very sad femminiello of Spaccanapoli. I went, along with Mussolini, who wouldn't stop telling me about her grandfather's musical virtues, to Sophia's house, where a very expensive ring of call girls and compliant ladies of the Neapolitan high society is kept up, eager to buy Annabella's furs without affecting the always shaky finances of the family ménage. Bassolino's wife is one of these. Sophia, always beautiful, with her legs still presentable despite being sixty years old, began to speak very freely, in her flowery and extrovert dialect, which is not noticeable in the dubbing of her films, of many problems and of what was done at home to solve them. The plot that led from Cirillo to Gava, she told me, passed exactly in the middle of her bedrooms, because it was there that the decisive meetings had taken place both to free the imprisoned councillor and to construct all the details of the investigation that would sooner or later make possible the arrest and dissolution of the party of Neapolitan notables. Mussolini said she was happy with what Auntie was doing, and also with the way she was able to collaborate by giving substance to her own sexual fantasies. Mussolini loves to be taken against the tide and for a long time, so it is not easy to find suitable subjects for this purpose. Among the local fascists, not even to speak of. Better performances could be found among the negroes who now abound everywhere in Naples and the surrounding area, almost always directed to pick tomatoes, but it seems that there are racial preclusions. With all this chatter, by now the night was getting late, and many guests were arriving, some of them with their spouses in tow. Gava and Mrs. Gava, both accustomed to watching and keeping silent. Questore Improta and Prefect Parisi, who together with Prefect Pastorello of Civil Prevention and some officials of the Ministry of the Interior, had created a group of masochists devoted to innocent pastimes with the whip. Minister Scotti has the same vice as Maroni, and so he comes fully equipped, locks himself in the room Sophia has reserved for him, and everything ends there. The party, as you can tell, was not very merry. Everyone had their own needs to satisfy. Mussolini was waiting improbably for her sodomizer. Loren seemed to be interested in me, but you couldn't really tell where she was going with it. In the end, the national Sophia, with a phallus of gigantic dimensions and a truly

unsuspected art, managed to solve her niece's problem and mine as well. After all, what do we need men for when we can manage among ourselves? It's been a long time since I've had such a nice evening. I will try again.

### **September 10, 1992**

I haven't talked to you for a long time, in the privacy of these pages, but my commitments have become more and more pressing and aggressive. In the evening I return to the hotel very tired and I can't wait to fall asleep. The political events of these last months have become more and more entangled. By now, the Di Pietro star is reaching considerable levels and everyone is talking about the judge of "Mani pulite". They have also tried to frame Bossi with an absurd story of two hundred million, but they will not be able to destroy him, his political ability is too great, and then the country needs the League and its leader. I met Di Pietro in Milan, at Formentini's house, and he seemed to me the classic nerdy policeman, capable of working hard but understanding little. Maybe I was wrong. In any case, he lacks that sanfedist streak that a true prosecutor of the State should possess. His virtuoso fervor as a police dog is not exalted by a faith in something higher and greater. He is not, in short, a great inquisitor. He is neither a Gui nor a Torquemada. The category comes out almost vilified. I have to try to talk to him personally. Not being to all intents and purposes a layman perhaps I can convert him to my cause.

### **October 20, 1993**

Disappointment across the board. Di Pietro is unassailable. He was not even impressed by my legs, which, as I am discovering more and more in the last few months, attract a lot of attention. I saw him once again at Formentini's house, who was having a hard time convincing his wife that her latest misadventures with a streetcar driver disguised as a Benedictine nun were only occasional and not voluntary. We argued, then he drove me home in his car and escort. This was the first time I felt the thrill of sirens being blown and armed men standing near me. Everyone was watching us go by, and that alone was enough to make my briefs wet. At home, Di Pietro went right up at the first invitation. A kind man, a little rough and short on brains, but thoughtful. He let me into the elevator first. Once I was seated in the best chair in the living room, I offered him a drink, then went across the hall to change and give myself a rinse. You never know what to do with these lawmen. When they jump on you they don't go straight to the purpose, but linger to consider the matter from all points of view, so you must find yourself prepared. I went back to the parlor, but the judge was gone. He had left me a note on the table. An urgent call from the Palace: they had to decide on Craxi's arrest for sure. Once again, I couldn't understand what could be gleaned from this man on whom all the initiatives of the "mani pulite" pool were identified.

### **October 31, 1993**

A final word on Di Pietro. He is a fascist and belongs to the circle of that fag Fini. I think he is very close to Colombo. They are always together and often walk around hugging each other. But it is not just the two of them who have certain tastes. The other members of the pool also share Di Pietro's choices. Borelli, for example, I am told is a connoisseur. The only woman in the group was marginalized in a remote room. Perhaps she disturbed the loving balance of the other members.

### **November 14, 1993**

I stopped fucking Giulio. I found out that he's involved with Father Todeschini. To prefer a Jesuit to me is the ultimate in contempt. It's best not to talk about it.

### **November 15, 1993**

I note a correction to what I wrote yesterday. It is not only Todeschini who is skewering Giulio, but also Father Livio Fanzaga, whom I know little about but who must have received such advice



from the organizers of the blue trains to Fatima, who specialize in paid rail amplexes between miraculous people.

### **November 30, 1993**

For the second time Bossi kissed me. But what is he waiting for to go further? An innate respect for authority prevents me from taking the initiative.

### **Christmas 1993**

Don Ignace sanctified Christmas in the usual little church. This time he didn't make himself look for me, but phoned me first, fixing every aspect nicely. In payment for his prompt attention to me and my family, he demanded a blowjob. Done.

### **Christmas outing 1993**

Formentini, fasting for who knows how long, tried to sodomize me without succeeding.

Despite helping him in every way I could, he lunged at him before the final lunge. At this point our relationship was not remediable. I was offended in my pride. That the League doesn't have it as tough as the big guy claims? I cannot feed this doubt. Formentini must be the exception that confirms the rule. I fall asleep dreaming of Bossi's big phallus hovering over my head. He envelops me under his calming shadow, he cradles me, he soothes me. I dream that I am in a dewy meadow, where a horse and a mare are making love. Guiding the animal's monstrous contraption is the skilful hand of Bossi, who with dexterity first manipulates it as necessary and then guides it with a sure and swift gesture. The two horses bolt, break out violently, then calm down under the watchful eye of the great pile driver. I wake up all sweaty in the early morning.

### **February 28, 1994**

We're heading into the election. It's going to be a great success, says the Chief. I believe it too. We have allied ourselves with Berlusconi and with the fascists of the femminiello Fini. We will see. I met the Cavaliere yesterday. A handsome man. Interesting. In many ways he deserves a separate citation, but now I'm tired and I'll postpone it until tomorrow.

### **March 2, 1994**

Two days ago I was in Arcore, a guest together with Formentini and Bossi of Signora Veronica, Berlusconi's wife. A beautiful woman, without a doubt. She has her own way of crossing her legs that drove me crazy. I'm sure with her by my side, men would all end up looking at her legs and not mine. But this sort of competition doesn't concern me. I'm superior, me, to these petty things. Berlusca is playing big. He has brought to the table all the financial and intellectual forces of his economic empire founded, as everyone knows, on information. He will be a great ally for us in the League, and being at bottom a bit naive, like all those who dabble in politics but do not practice it as a profession, we will succeed in putting him in the bag.

### **March 5, 1994**

Messori let me know that he fucked Berlusconi's wife. The fact, absolutely first hand and secret, I am the only one who knows it, and now you do too, but I trust your absolute discretion. A curious aspect to record: Mrs. Veronica fucks with the photo of her husband in front of her eyes. She says that this way he doesn't feel like he's cheating on him.

### **Election as President**

I was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies. I do not mark the date in the Diary because it belongs to history. I can't tell you what I felt at the moment my name was pronounced in the Chamber. By now all my friends in the League were certain, but I was afraid until the last moment. As soon as I sat down in that chair where that slut Jotti had been sitting for so long, I almost fainted. The power was there, at my fingertips, visible, tangible. Now I could touch it. It was that armchair, that multicolored myriad of imbeciles at my feet. Even the big guy now had to bow his head.

Suddenly I had the exact knowledge of what I could do, and also the certainty that I was wrong about Bossi. After all, he is nothing more than a homunculus, an asshole worse than the others, a ferryman of exceptional intelligences like mine, a door opener to people who have their own ideal to realize here and now. And, deep down, I'm sure he's got one. I will no longer lower my gaze in front of a simple politician like him. Now I am in charge, I am the third office of the State.

### **Third day as President of the Chamber**

The personal apartment that was reserved for me at the House of Representatives is not very nice. I will try to adjust it to my style. I have thought about this for a long time. I must appear chaste and modest, the exact opposite of what I really am. I'm not chastened anymore. The last few years have helped me to open up in every way. Even under the sexual aspect. From the little foot that Bossi used to make me under the table, upsetting me from top to bottom, to Sophia's rubber phallus, to my Roman fuckings in the last few months with Rocco, water has passed under the bridge. I've become a woman of power, but also a woman who manages power for her own sexuality. I no longer feel the nefarious influence of an asshole like Bossi, from whose charismatic tutelage I have definitively freed myself. If he asked me to fuck, today I would send him to the cleaners. Rocco is something else. When I caress him, with that head of his that looks like a huge, prominent phallus, when his words enter me, stimulating increasingly extraordinary and perverse fantasies, when he tells me about his nocturnal visits to the Vatican and his secret relations with the Pontiff (the only thing John Paul II likes is to masturbate for hours, without ever managing to come), I feel deprived of strength. Rocco's last name is also erotic to me: Buttiglione. It reminds me of a big bottle, smooth and slippery, that enters inside me, that comes out and then goes in again, and so on and so forth, until I lose my mind, until I scream and go crazy, until I enjoy myself.

### **Look**

I decided on my look. A suit with a scarf around the neck, always tight, so that even the idea of a possible cleavage will definitely dissociate from me. The skirts, moderately short, can instead show a little of the knees, which by the way everyone considers beautiful. A style that maybe reminds of that old Nilde's shitter, but that I will be able to characterize differently. I've also noticed that the more chastely you dress, the more men look at you and try to undress you with their eyes. Especially if you're a career woman. And who more than me is a career woman? Who more than me represents the pinnacle of female ambition? I am the one who personifies the highest limit that all the dreams of feminists of every era had imagined. It's fine that other women, like Thatcher, have achieved greater heights. But those were women, with moustaches and fat as cows. Perhaps Bhutto could be a higher reference than me, but these are other cultures, completely different from ours. Certainly, in the Western world, I am the top, the reference point that all women look up to, the top of feminism. I therefore have my own responsibilities. I must be careful to maintain my double life: blameless on the outside, slutty indoors. This is also a message to all Catholic women: in sexual matters do what you want, but know how to do it. Keep intact the sacredness of the family, which is a purely formal affair. Go ahead and cheat on your husband, but don't let him notice. Let the milkman bugger you, but put a condom on first and don't do it on the stairs. But when you are outside, in front of everyone else, in front of the world that is watching you and judging you, keep your eyes down, respond in your own way, and do not venture opinions that are not in line with Holy Mother Church. After all, the Catholic religion has a secret that the others do not. It is enough to follow certain outward, purely objective rules, and everything falls into place. The Sacrament of Confession regulates the lives of us all like a purge. Periodically it puts the bowels back in place. We take it with confidence. For greater security I changed confessor. Also because I didn't feel like continuing to give blowjobs to Don Ignace. He was too old.

## **Escort**

The escort assigned to me by poor Maroni is composed of five policemen. They are all southerners and they seem smart to me. There is no sense of suspicion towards me at all, because of the theses that I advocate as a leghista. They are policemen and they know their job. They are also young and attentive to women. From that point of view they are blameless to me, but I can see very well how they look at other women when we drive around in the squad car. For the moment I never know what to do, not even where to sit. They are the ones who take care of everything. I just have to let them know well in advance and I can't mobilize them for anything. The little pleasures of yesteryear are stuff of the past. I can't go get ice cream anymore. It would cost too much in overtime. Of course, these guys are quiet and unobtrusive. When they accompany me to some place where I have scheduled one of my, shall we say, gallant encounters, they wait downstairs and ask no questions. Last time they saw Rocco but didn't bat an eye. The two agents who made up Buttiglione's escort didn't even look at each other. Among them there is a sort of handbook of unwritten rules. Everyone knows his job.

## **Escort fuck**

I let the whole escort fuck me. I know, it might have been crazy, but it's done now. Things went smoothly and easily. After one of the worst encounters with Rocco, who in recent times, perhaps due to the political concerns of the new Popular Party, has been getting more and more out of hand, I had my guardian angels come up to the room, one after the other. It wasn't a quickie, but a series of real fucking. Kind and obedient, they were immediately available and followed orders like so many good little soldiers. The only difference was that their gestures were a bit stiff and the whole thing seemed more like a sort of gymnastic exercise. I didn't manage to come even once. At the end, when the last one went downstairs, after having unloaded in his good transparent container, I wondered if there wasn't something else to do besides watching this parade of young and robust policemen. I then called them back up all at once. They told me that this was not possible, and that one of them at least should stay on guard. So I fucked four of them at once. I'm not going to describe to you how the whole thing went down in all its aspects. The guys were below expectations. If individually they were acceptable, all together they were a landslide. They definitely did not satisfy me.

## **National**

My adventure in the United States was indeed disappointing. I expected to play the same role as old President Pertini in Spain and I did not succeed. Poor Baresi's lob into the air was a real national disgrace, but mainly mine, as I had to limit myself to applauding Italy's second place in the World Cup, instead of a historic first place that would have placed my country's team on the highest roof in the world as far as football is concerned. And to think that the night before I had done everything I could to cheer up the players. I had gone to visit them at the hotel and, being completely unfamiliar with football problems, I had first taken Vittorio's advice to find out which were the most representative players, in short, those on whose feet we had to rely the next day for a victory. And since I am convinced that a woman can sometimes lift the morale more than anything else, I tried to be nice to Baresi and to poor Roberto Baggio who, as I had been told, had had psychological problems. These players are very strange beings. They have an iron physique but a boyish soul. Baresi, who seemed like a grown-up, seasoned man, as soon as I put my hand on the fly of his pants, he stiffened, not knowing what to do. When I pulled out his cock to bring it to a barely acceptable condition I had to work my butt off. But when you do something for the glory of your country, any sacrifice is never too much. So I continued to blow him until he came slowly, as if he was tired and dazed. It is better not to talk about Baggio. I would have expected

more from someone like him, who being a Buddhist should know who knows what techniques of intercourse, but nothing. He put himself in front of me in a yoga position and left me waiting for him to get it up. I could have waited all night. I left him masturbating in the memory of my ass. I didn't want to go into it with the other players for fear of going from bad to worse. Vittorio then explained to me that it was Sacchi and his senseless training that had broken them down. But I don't want to get into these problems, as I am completely unfamiliar with them. Messori knows about it, but he doesn't go any further. Undoubtedly, from this point of view, my sleeping bag years were better. At least back then I fucked quietly with my scout and freak friends, with fewer problems and less ambition. Glory has its price and I'm paying it.

## The Marquis de Sade

"A monument of human thought", so defined Guillaume Apollinaire the work of Sade, presenting, at the beginning of the century, an anthology of the writings of the Marquis. Given some congeniality of the two artists, we should not be surprised by the statement, further, deepening, it is the same scope of Sade's works, their same "negative" grandeur, their same destructive and iconoclastic animosity, their same enlightened reasoning, that make us reflect on Apollinaire's definition. Indeed, in front of Sade's creations, one feels that sense of bewilderment that is generally given by the vast literary constructions, the masterpieces we all know, only that Sade is known to not many people for the systematic work of concealment carried out during the nineteenth century, the same century that has built, instead, our current knowledge - still valid today in some respects - of the current masterpieces.

Very valid work, therefore, that of the marquis, and strangely in contrast with the character and the conquests of his times. He accepts part of the rationalism of the century of enlightenment, he elaborates its extreme consequences with great mastery, so much so that he can be considered one of the best connoisseurs of the "new times", but next to all this he lets the ancient fears and the ancient predilections survive. Next to reason, the witchcraft sabbath revives, next to reasoning, the bloody insult, next to the rational rejection of God, the sacrilegious invective.

So complex spirit and difficult to classify. Pierre Klossowski (*Sade mon prochain*, Paris 1947) was wrong in seeking a valid synthetic expression of Sade's work, and Simone De Beauvoir (*Privilèges*, Paris 1955) was equally wrong in attempting to overturn Klossowski's conclusion. Sade is not a thinker - and precisely for this reason he is not a utopian - he is simply a poet, an artist who dazzles his ghost from time to time on ever new plots, dictated by feeling even when the external structure is openly - and we might add formally - that, objective, of Enlightenment rationalism.

Admitting this starting point does not mean taking anything away from Sade, but rather not expecting to find in his work what cannot be there. Proceeding in this way, one avoids many surprises: what initially appeared contradictory, the expletives mixed with rational deductions - fall within the artistic justifiability of the product.

Obviously all this will have particular determinacy for the particular underlying problems, especially that of atheism.

Sadian naturalism is certainly one of the fixed points of his proceeding in the investigation of the human psyche. On this there have never arisen sufficient doubts to revoke, although there has been no lack of hesitation, such as that of George Bataille (*L'erotisme*, Paris 1957), in which there is mention of a real incompatibility between Sade's thought and the reasonableness of nature, or like that of Maurice Blanchot who curiously juxtaposes two contrasting judgments, one next to the other (*Lautréamont et Sade*, Paris 1949, p. 263). However, the value of the term of collocation

remains full and alive. Sade can be considered - in the same way as many other writers of his time - a philosopher of nature. It is only the laws of nature that govern the universe - and therefore primarily man - and not the superstructural laws of morality and religion. Blanchot rightly notes how the struggle that Sade leads against God is precisely carried out in the name of nature.

For Sade, the same argument that should be made for the other atheist writers of the time applies in the highest degree, the fascination of the battle to declare the idea of God expired ends up overwhelming the rationality of the evidence and procedures. The same thing happens in D'Holbach, as Henry Guerlac has specifically noted (*Three social philosophers of the eighteenth century: the influence of science on their thought*, in *Science and Culture Today*, Turin 1962, pp. 27-35), the same thing happens in Denis Diderot, in Jacques-André Naigeon, etc. Perhaps only Voltaire, helping himself with irony and satire, and not pursuing a real atheist thesis, comes to give us a philosophy of nature, thanks, in particular, to his closeness to Newton and Locke. Sade, along with the others, remains tied to a rhetorical naturalism, at times difficultly concionante, although unquestionably productive on the level of the elimination of the irrational and miraculous foundation of religion.

With these limitations and without various sweetenings that would end up completely transforming the philosophical essence of Sadeian thought, we can embark on the path toward examining Sade's atheism. We will need, first, just a few brief hints about the man. A nobleman, raised together with the prince of Condé, he led an increasingly dissolute and unrestrained life which led him to be sentenced to death in absentia and to spend several years in prison in various fortresses. His fiery temperament, sexually very complex, sadistic and masochistic at the same time, makes him acquire over time a considerable wealth of anatomical and sexual knowledge that he will use in his stories. On the other hand, his own life of intolerance to restraint and authority will lead him to dream of utopian social constructions based on freedom. Important, for example, the work of 1792 entitled *Idées sur le mode de sanction des lois*, in which he critically discusses the delegation made by the people to their representatives and the whole parliamentary system. He ends his days in the asylum not so much for a real mental illness as for a precautionary measure put in place by the police against the author of *Justine* and *Juliette*.

We have said that in Sade we cannot identify a strict consequentiality of thought in the vast complex of his work. This is especially true with regard to atheist research. Obviously we are not in the presence of a contradiction. His characters face their problems shaken by their passions and Sade does his best to demonstrate, for his part, behind the scenes, how the philosophy that animates the individual characters - a naturally materialistic philosophy - is not only inspired by those passions but also justified and governed by them. In other words, materialism is not called upon to perform its historical function of reducing theism to anthropologism; on the contrary, it is the typical measure of man, that is, the world of his passions, that holds the threads of reasoning and justifies the choice of materialism as the only consequent choice.

The two great conclusions reached by all the philosophy of the Enlightenment with regard to the religious problem are present in Sade: on the one hand religion is considered a series of crude mystifications, on the other hand the spring that holds up the world is identified in the interest of the individual. These ideas, codified among others by Claude Adrien Helvetius, are passionately carried by Sade to the extreme consequences, up to the religion in which poetic phantoms become valid in universal, eternal types that become part of a sexological dogmatics of which Sade seems the progenitor. This endeavor is truly interesting in that it frees Sade from the mechanistic superstructure of the Enlightenment and reduces his moral conception of the world to a true action of absolute freedom, a freedom that never loses itself, not even in the most extravagant customs of

life or the most aberrant sexual combinations. Man no longer acts as a machine conditioned by interest, in the sphere of his psychology the motives multiply infinitely, all this in clear contrast to the dominant ideology of the eighteenth century. One could conclude that the fierce persecution of which Sade was the object originated not so much from his illegal activities in the field of sexual perversion as from his contrasting stance towards mechanicism, while remaining in the same field of materialism.

An explosion of freedom, then, Sade's work reluctantly addresses the issue of limits. From this he ends up deriving his own intrinsic, insurmountable limit, the limit of his own atheism. Sade's atheism is an atheism of opposition, of punctual rejection of theism. This is the central point of his work and we will deal with it in detail later, for the moment we are interested in clarifying how this limit, dictated by the struggle and the same iconoclastic enthusiasm, ends up determining an impossibility of moral design. Ethics requires rules.

This is not a denial of freedom, since freedom itself is nothing other than self-determination, individualization, harmonious development, lack of limiting pressures but a simultaneous search for limits and relationships, a fraternal indication of efforts made in common. Even Sade had gone in search of an ethical rule: *The Dialogue between a priest and a dying man* contains the indication of this rule: "make others as happy as they wish and do them no more harm than they would like to receive it". But then, as his research deepened, that rule seemed to him insufficient, limited, bourgeois, and in any case unsuitable to govern a world of contrast, of rupture, of angry denial of God, of systematic rejection of the individual constructions desired by theism. The solution appears in the triumph of vice. *Les Infortunes de la Vertu* marks this point of rupture, a new point that Sade's art condenses with absolutely unthinkable meanings. Man receives the definitive liberation from the protection that had accompanied him in the past, protection desired and predetermined by ethics in the context of the boundless roads that depart from Kant's philosophy. If, on the one hand, one can logically descend from Kant to Nazi irrationalism, on the other hand, again logically, one can logically go back to Sadian irrationalism, impeccably built on the canon of possible freedom. The overcoming of the ethical phase of the *Dialogue* cost Sade the reflection of almost all his life. Although only five years passed between the *Dialogue* and the *Accidents*, Sade elaborated at length the drama of man alone in front of the infinite possibility of his own freedom, the eternal drama of the earthly adventure absolutely free once deprived of the ignoble illusion of religion.

But not everything is cancelled. The work of the total liberalization of man cannot be carried to completion if we prescind from the determining and self-regulating foundation of freedom. Destroying the idea of God, demolishing every earthly offshoot of this idea, is an initial liberating action; destroying earthly authority, undermining the subterranean relationships that bind religion to constituted authority, to the repressive system desired by the State, is the most immediate and obvious logical consequence. To continue on the path of freedom is the way indicated, even recently, by the anarchist philosophy, but all this does not mean locking the effort in an empty rambling irrationalism, does not mean relying on irrational subjectivism, does not mean denying your neighbor as you denied God.

This is the most important limitation of Sade's atheistic research, a limitation that, on the one hand, brings him closer to those who, shortly after him, will illustrate the religious system, such as that Joseph De Maistre who will constitute the contrasting inspiration of the future "Cursed Poets". It is not possible to follow Sade in his denial of his neighbor and in his inconsistent, implicit admission that to admit his neighbor is to admit God.

Another limitation, recognized by most as we have seen, of his atheism is that of the frequent sacrilegious form that it takes, of the trivially blasphemous or architecturally constructed form in opposition to the religious structures that it solidifies in works such as, for example, *Les 120 journées de Sodome*. Certainly at times this firm proposition ends up shocking the reader, ends up causing a conflict - albeit in a form not immediately perceptible - with those canons and those religious concepts that the reader's childhood in the vast majority of cases could not help but register and remember. Even in the well-provided for reader, in the convinced atheist, these trivial passions end up frazzling. We are faced with a limitation of little theoretical value, since, as we will show, the deep sense of Sadian atheism remains intact, but of great practical value, for the purposes of a profitable reading of the work in question. We must never forget, during the reading, that Sade is a true atheist, from this premise all the different manifestations of a tormented spirit find a precise framework. It is no longer a question of inverted atheism but of passionate and profound rejection.

A final limit has been traced in the persistent identification of evil, in the theological glorification of a force that finds a way to extrinsicate itself in all human manifestations. Saint-Fond is the high priest of this kind of religion, the death of the innocent finds its necessity in the happiness of the guilty, the old God of the salvific drama finds a way to emerge once again as a justification of evil itself. It is obvious that all this is pure fantasy of the critics who have worked cold on Sade's work. That evil is recognized as an agent in the world is a fact detectable from experience and traceable, through ideological canons of research, to specific reasons. Only that Sade does not pose this kind of problem, a problem that after him will pose currents of thought based on social criticism, for him the extreme action is implemented in practice, with the imagination, the rest is left to the logic of human events that alone moves and alone pushes everything towards its rational conclusion. To think, even for the sake of absurdity, as has been attempted by many (among others by Klossowski, *op. cit.*), that this attitude of Sade's is the last expression of the assault on God, from which the condemnation of the innocent and the absolution of the guilty finds legitimate consequence, means betraying, once again, Sade, even if for an indirect opposition to his mystifiers.

After Sade, another great artist will retrace this path which, from the faith in a Creator, who justifies and summarizes everything, gradually rises to an identification of Nature with the Creator himself, to then pass to a clear and immediate denial of the Creator and conclude with the wickedness intrinsic in Nature. "Everything is evil; everything that is, is evil; that each thing that exists is evil; each thing exists for the sake of evil..." will say Leopardi, coming very close to his French masters, Voltaire and D'Holbach, as to a reversed Blaise Pascal. In these cases, it is not possible to speak of an inconsistent atheism, but only of a poetic atmosphere in which the atheist thesis finds itself and where it ends up being affected by the inspiration and passion of the moment. This does not mean, of course, that the critic cannot, in retrospect, come to determine the atheist thesis in its clarity and precision.

The theorist of greatest diffusion and authority, in Sade's productive era, was certainly not D'Holbach, but certainly the work of the latter can be considered as the most representative of a general tendency towards atheism based on a specific scientific foundation.

In fact, the state of science at the time could have allowed for a greater exploration of the scientific justifications for atheism, only that the philosophers who devoted themselves to this work (Diderot, Naigeon, D'Holbach, La Mettrie, Helvetius, etc.) preferred to use very few of the new discoveries and latch on to the old rhetoric and Stoic philosophy. Of this passion for the Stoics is witness the *Vie de Sénèque* written by Diderot and published in 1799, while his follower Naigeon

gave birth to Lagrange's French translation of all the works of Seneca. Newton is kept in mind but considered as an acquired authority on which one can base oneself up to a certain point but not to be preferred to the wisdom of the ancient rhetoricians, in particular Latins. The same method of research of Newton does not appear present in the setting of the works of our atheists. That method will be largely present, instead, in the deist Voltaire and Montesquieu, as it will be present in a good part of the physiocratic production.

All this should not sound like a devaluation of the value of the writings of D'Holbach or Diderot, of La Mettrie or Helvetius. Only that their position, authentically skeptical, combative, polemical, had ended up finding much more effective weapons in Latin rhetoric than in the unadorned substance of the new science.

The way through which the wisdom and the Latin disposition of spirit reached the philosophers of the French eighteenth century was that of seventeenth-century Pyrrhonism spread in France since Montaigne. It is with Pierre Bayle that this skeptical current of thought finds a way to connect to the research of Helvetius, Diderot and companions. François de La Mothe Le Vayer is a notable example of this tendency, of this phenomenon of a purely individualistic elite, an author in whom this reflux of ancient wisdom into modern reflection becomes evident. In the work *Deux dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens* [1716] a subtle distinction is made between faith and reason, so as to arrive with great caution at the conclusion: "since of all the genres of philosophy only that of the skeptics instructs us in the truth of the sciences and teaches us to despise them with good reason, it follows that, as has been established from the beginning, it must be considered the most suitable for our true religion and the most faithful interpreter of our Christianity" (p. 146 of the ed.). (p. 146 of the 1922 French edition, Tisserand, Paris). La Mothe Le Vayer closes in this way a long discourse on the religious problem during which he had shown, on the one hand, the plurality of religious opinions and also the possibility of the absence, in certain peoples, of any religious opinion, and on the other hand, the atheistic philosophical current that, since remote antiquity, had consistently carried forward the doctrine of the absence of God. All this great work ends up, then, to have the final "cover" of the sentence that we have reported. Moreover, the times were not at all ripe for an open atheist profession and it did not take much to visit the Inquisition, even if it was the Inquisition of free France.

With the whole group of "libertines" La Mothe Le Vayer has in common a skeptical tendency and an erudite analysis of the details brought in support of the thesis. Science is barely glimpsed in the background. The philosophical story of Pierre Gassendi is relived by all these thinkers (in addition to La Mothe le Vayer we must remember Cyrano de Bergerac, Gabriel Naudé, Antoine Chevalier de Méré and others): on the one hand the great French philosopher accepted Galilei, fully evaluated the scope of the methodological discovery, realized that for the Italian the speculative confirmation of atomism had lost all importance, on the other hand, however, it is precisely the ancient Epicurean philosophy to center most of his care, his infanticidal activity as a humanist and to found his posthumous connection with libertinism. Perhaps Gassendi has fewer connections with the thinkers of the French eighteenth century, from a substantial point of view, but from the side of a deeper adherence to the method is to be considered one of the most decisive precursors.

Having established this derivation, we are left only to summarize the scientific ideas of Sade's time, as they were formulated by D'Holbach. In the first chapter of the *System of Nature*, he expresses himself thus: "It is therefore to physics and experience that man must have recourse in all his researches. It is these that he must consult in religion, in morals, in legislation, in government, in politics, in the sciences and the arts, in pleasures and pains. Nature acts by means



of simple, uniform, invariable laws, which experience enables us to know: it is through our senses that we feel connected with universal nature, that we can question it, discover its secrets; when we abandon experience we fall into the void where our imagination rots us." (See ch. I). But more than from physics, D'Holbach drew from chemistry, in the study of which he had been a disciple and friend of the great Guillaume Rouelle, the material that would help him construct the material justification for the existence of the world. "The materials are many and varied and combined in an infinite number of ways, they receive and communicate without interruption different movements. The different properties of these matters, their different combination, their different ways of behaving, which are a set of necessary consequences, constitute the essences of beings. From these essences and their differentiation derive the different orders, ranks, or systems occupied by these beings, the sum total of which we call nature." (See ch. I).

This is the scientific-literary world that Sade finds and puts to good use. The work of the atheistic Enlightenment opens the way for him to understand the possibility of a world based on perpetual motion, essentially governed by laws that find no foundation outside of nature itself.

In the *Dialogue* the dying man expresses himself thus: "My friend, prove to me the inertia of nature, and I will grant you the creator; prove to me that nature is not self-sufficient, and I will allow you to suppose a master". In this, Sade does not see the wisdom of the mechanism willed by an external entity that religions so obtusely see. Nature is necessarily self-sufficient, and in this there is no wisdom at all, only a high percentage of probability, one would say today, only a determinist necessity, says Sade. All this does not change the validity of the reasoning of our philosophers, and here is the secret of their relevance and usefulness, for us, of a rereading in atheist key.

Reason finds in this way the exact terms of its domain. Everything that is understood ends up being, sooner or later, the object of faith. This is the only faith that can be accepted by a rational spirit, says Sade, and man - to distinguish himself from other beasts - must affirm this rationality with all his strength.

The consequences of these atheistic conclusions are left hanging. Sade realizes that the reflection conducted in the *Dialogue*, although it satisfies him as a thinker, leaves him cold as an artist. Unquestionably, the character of the dying man is a very poor one, as deeply convincing as is his dialectic on the operative level of atheist speculation. But Sade the artist turns to this approach to the problem. The pamphlet never had too much consideration in the classification that every author makes of his own works. Quite other conclusions awaited the Marquis.

It may seem extraordinary to speak of irrationalism for Sade, but we cannot find a more appropriate term once we have taken for granted his dissatisfaction with remaining tied to the sweetening premises dictated by a certain Enlightenment on the remains of the dead God. In fact, it is not. Sade had gone in search of the foundation of nature, he had identified the ethical necessity of this foundation, but he had not been able to identify a possibility that it all boiled down to the same determinist mechanism. The reason for being of all things became, in this way, phantom, it was replaced by the absolute equality of all solutions: the nihilistic nothingness in the brute state, the nothingness that will then be of Sartre and of today's existentialists of the same French school. We are in front of an irrationalist atheism that brings Sade closer to Nietzsche and distances him from his contemporaries.

The antithesis with Enlightenment rationalism could not be more serious. On the one hand, there was an accomplished world, certain of its own ever-increasing strengths, certain of the progressively accumulating action of reason, an analytical world that had replaced the old deductive logic with the new experimental logic; on the other hand, there was a man who slowly

penetrated a new universe, a new dimension: that of human sexuality and discovered witch-like ramifications, incredible freedoms, frightening passions, strangely perfect designs, but undoubtedly not easily found in the human consensus in its "superficial state". All these discoveries disturb him but he does not back down, his enlightened lucidity - really in this case - pushes him to go on, up to the most dangerous consequences, up to the irrational conclusion of a rational departure.

It is the instrumentalization of man in the name of knowledge that Sade rejects, while at the same time he constructs the instrumentalization of man in the name of freedom. But it is a construction that arises in his hands, almost involuntarily, as a logical consequence of certain premises. It is secular mythology that Sade rejects, in this perhaps more adherent to secular thought than were his rationalist friends, just as it had come to replace, in the course of the struggle against theology, the old religious canons. That adventure had been necessary and the old atheism, at times almost moving, of the Enlightenment could not move from different positions, but had fallen into the terrible meshes of theological metaphysics. A bit like what happens today, after so much time and after so many experiences in the field of free thought, to those who believe they can constitute an atheist doctrine on the simple opposition to theism. (Cf. my *Essays on Atheism*, Ragusa 1970, p. 45). Sade fully understands the danger - already present in the *Dialogue* itself - and he takes the road he most preferred, the one for extreme consequences, and towards this road he pushes his characters, an underground torturer in the name of the most important symbol of the whole history of man: freedom.

Kafka referred to the Marquis de Sade as "the very patron of our time." The statement is instructive for so many things: for the study of Kafka's personality, for the analysis of the intellectual components of our time, for an investigation into the ultimate world of our author. It is, here, this last aspect that interests us.

The tragedy of our time, the futility of choice, the equality of possibilities, the flattening of the solution proposed in the past by reason, are all anticipated by Sade who, little by little, presents them to the reader after the absence of God, instead of moving towards construction, proceeds with alacrity to the destruction of the world and the superstructures that surround it. If matter is in continuous motion, if this movement is the very essence of matter without a more recondite justification, it means that God does not exist, it means that man is free and can think about building a future that is always better and always freer. At this point the reflection of the Enlightenment stops, while Sade proceeds further towards the adventure of the unknown, towards the modern era: for all that, Sade is a truly modern author, imbued with that dangerous lack of definitive substantiality that characterizes much of modern artistic production.

The doctrine of progress is transformed into something original, contrary not only to the old Christian thought (*Matthew*, V, 48) but also to the new secular thought (Turgot, Condorcet and others). While the former had spoken of progress as the perfecting of the individuality within the wider circle of Christian morality, the latter had spoken of an irreversible, automatic, determined process, not only limited to the individual man but involving all of humanity, the whole of society, to be considered in its historical complexity, avoiding being distracted by possible returns and distortions. Sade concludes the doctrine of progress in the dispersion caused by an erroneous localization of freedom.

These are the essential points of Sade's adventure. It does not count, here, to follow the final terms of his speech, as much as it interests us to deepen more the specific problem of atheism.

We have already seen how frequently, even in the best moments, Sadian atheism is placed in terms of opposition to theism. It is therefore a primitive type of atheism, and very dangerous. There

is no need to go into the reasons for these statements here, having done so in a more appropriate place; we need only warn the reader that theism's greatest ally has been metaphysics; now, coming down on the same ground as theism, the free thinker cannot make use of those metaphysical instruments that the speculative past has elaborated both for him and for the theist. But it is precisely these tools that are the theist's favorite elements; it is precisely that terrain in which it becomes if not impossible at least perilous to counter his gratuitous assertions. To oppose to theism means to claim the same rights of the latter to the discussion, in other words to recognize to the theist speculation citizenship in the domain of thought. All this is absurd, the true atheist must not take any account of theism, must not counter it, must simply ignore it. Atheism can and must stand alone in the affirmation of the non-necessity of the hypothesis of God, simply and clearly, without forcing and without recourse to tools of thought that are so useful to theism.

This, of course, could not be the case with Sade, at least for two reasons. First, because the moment was not one of calm reflection but, instead, one of fierce struggle, at knifepoint, with no holds barred, on the same terrain of theism; second, because Sade himself, with his twisted personality of artist and man, was not the most suitable type to undertake such an objective action. This is not meant to diminish Sade's work, his very important, almost electrifying action in the field of free thought and the fight against religion, only to warn the reader of the danger of a poor reading of his writings on atheism.

We are in front of a negative and destructive atheism, unable to constitute itself as a consequent and constructive atheism by the fact that from the negation of God Sade had passed, logically on a theoretical level but incongruously on a practical one, to the negation of his neighbor. In order to maintain this double negation he will increasingly need a particular typology, a gallery of characters who in crime and sexual extremism will keep intact, to the detriment of any constructive possibility, the negating premise of their author. The ever-increasing need to search for new tortures and new solutions and combinations of sexual perversion is the greatest proof that the passage from the denial of God to the denial of one's neighbor is gratuitous on the practical level. The world can be evaluated in many ways, nullified in only one way: Sade chose the latter.

Once the danger has been identified in the unprepared reading of Sade's work, the rest is very simple. The harvest for the atheist reader is as vast and profitable as ever. The passages in which the doctrine is treated with severity and exemplary logical consequence are not few, the concepts developed in contrast to theism - as we said dangerous - are well supported and always clear. Everything ends up making a great revaluation of a part of Sade, just the one that from the strictly artistic point of view has less importance: the meditative and philosophical part.

Of the scientific literature we have seen the presence in Sade in the limits in which this same presence can be found in the other great French atheists of the time, the case of D'Holbach being an absolute text. The relationships are not exactly what one would have expected to find, however, the influences cannot be denied one hundred percent, although that, say, of the Stoic current or another ancient philosophical current is far more decisive.

Alongside the scientific literature, as a source of Sade's atheism, there is, in addition to the rhetorical and philosophical apparatus of tradition, a widespread underground anti-clerical and atheist literature. In all likelihood Sade knew the will of Abbot Meslier (apparently deist in imprint, but essentially atheist work), the work of Francis Colonna: *Histoire naturelle de l'univers* (composed between 1725 and 1726), the anonymous work *Iordanus Brunus redivivus* (very interesting, which develops a lively thesis of materialist atheism). With certainty Sade knew the work of Nicolas Fréret: *Lettre de Thrasybule à Leucippe*, as he quotes it in *Juliette* (written between 1722 and 1739 Fréret's *Lettre* had wide circulation. Sade cites this author on p. 47, part.

I. Cf. ed. Pauvert), the too well known works of Jean-Baptist Mirabaud (*Sentiments des philosophes sur la nature de l'âme* of about 1743), of César Dumarsais (a well-known atheist who died at the age of 85 years, cited by A. Adam in the *Preface to Sadeed's Opuscles of Complete Works*, Au cercle du livre précieux, Paris 1967, vol. XIV, p. 16), of Diderot (*Interprétation de la Nature*, tr. it, Turin 1960), etc., had to constitute Sade's preparation in this field.

We are in the presence of a non-scientific literature that neglects, or briefly mentions, the discoveries made by science and the avenues of research that it allowed to glimpse at the time, to give free rein to philosophical and polemical discussion. In the work of Fréret, for example, undoubtedly one of the best of the genre, there is barely a hint of past discoveries of biology - some of which, however, had yet to be proven and freed from the status of simple theoretical hypotheses, while the whole core of reasoning is concentrated in the philosophical analysis of the existence of God, in particular of God the Creator. The demonstration of the chimerical consistency of the notion of "first cause" occupies our author for a large part of the work, while the text is dedicated to the critique of the concept of "necessity". The jump - theorized by Kant - between the order of particular causes and the order determined by the "first cause", impossible as the German philosopher had rightly seen, is rejected and relegated among the absurdities of philosophy. There is no necessity for such a leap, the sight of a void in the chain of causes - Fréret affirms - can "endure without pain". Fréret's influence on the poem *La Vérité* is immense, as Adam has noted (*op. cit.* pp. 19-20).

All these presences are decisive, while they remain less important the presences for example in the *Strennes philosophiques* addressed by Sade to M.lle de Rousset in 1782, to which appears an influence derivable from the researches conducted by Gassendi up to Maupertuis on the possibility of atoms to organize themselves autonomously in a universal order (by Pierre Louis Maupertuis the most relevant work to our problem is the *System of nature*, published in 1752 with the title *De universali naturae systemate*).

Can we speak of an ambivalence in Sade's atheism? Doubt arose when dealing with the blasphemous texts passionately directed at striking at the image of God and the concrete structure of the Christian religion. In *La Vérité* we read:

Yes, vain illusion, my soul hates you,  
and to convince you better, here  
I  
protest,  
I would like you to exist for a moment,  
to enjoy the pleasure of insulting you better.

There is no doubt about it: these are verses in which an irremediable break with the idea of God is affirmed, but a break that almost leaves the possibility that on the other side of the opposition something exists, something obscure and uncertain, but something common. If we place beside these verses the passages taken from *Les 120 journées de Sodome*, in which a systematic desecration of all the fetishes of the Christian religion is carried out, we obtain a very suggestive picture of this side of Sadian atheism.

Next to these texts, we have seen, it is possible to place the "serene" texts: hence the myth of ambivalence. Nothing could be more mistaken. First, two things must be kept in mind. The first, that blasphemous extremism in atheist literature of the time was not an exception. Men like John Toland (an English philosopher considered a deist, but essentially an atheist, especially in his

*Letters to Serena*), like Sylvain Maréchal (an author generally very moderate in the tone of his atheism, only in *Fragments d'un poème moral sur Dieu* does he become impetuous and passionate), like Paul Henri D'Holbach (generally very calm in his reflections, sometimes abandons the calm tone for one dictated by anger and passion), let themselves go to frequent outbursts of anger against a god that, despite the appearance, they considered non-existent as a substance but existing as an idea, and against this idea, born and wanted by man to feed the fear and abuse of the lesser on the more, these men launched their blasphemy. The second is given by the identification of God with the idea of authority, of political tyranny, which these writers condemned in one: the political passion ended up crossing over into the religious field and dragging the punishment into statements of defiance and contempt. Certainly there was no lack of "calm" texts, but they cannot in any way be considered "superior" to the "passionate" ones, not even from a strictly methodological point of view, since that was the moment, as we have said, of the fight with the knife against all constituted authority (God and Tyranny) and a particular speciosity in matters of method could not be implemented: all means are good when the ground is hot underfoot.

We cannot speak of ambivalence therefore in Sade. Whether this author adunites in himself both aspects of the atheist production seen before depends on a particular complexity of his psychology and on the fact that he is more artist than thinker. Therefore, not finding contrast in the activity of a Toland opposed to that of the brothers Grimm or of a Diderot, we cannot find ambivalence in Sade's work.

The last act of Sade's atheism is the denunciation of tyranny. At the end of Sade's bitter struggle lies the profound meaning of his message: the Revolution cannot be saved without eliminating religion from France forever. In the fifth *Dialogue* of the *Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) Sade warns the reader that if the French make the mistake of restoring the old Christianity, "within ten years the priests will have restored their empire over souls and reduced the people to their own laws". Here served the detractors of Sade. His atheism was not a simple elimination of God - according to some, God is still present in some parts of the work, especially in those where blasphemous activity is carried out - in order to better build a world of vice and absence of virtue. His atheism was a constructive program of thought, consistent with the political direction of his research.

Certainly it is not possible to implement a critique of religion by starting only with a critique of the clergy. The religious phenomenon cannot be immediately traced back to the action of the clergy, since its deeper roots lie in the psychology of primitives and in the systematic removal of taboos erected by ignorance. Forgetting this starting point means leaving intact the possibility of an eventual resurgence of religion at the mere reappearance of old fears and myths. But it has never been said enough that it is precisely the priestly caste that carries on the fears and superstitions, that propagates submission and cowardice, that prevents the old fears from being overcome and defeated. If religion has origins other than the simple will of a given class that intends to achieve certain purposes of exploitation, this does not preclude that this class and these purposes exist and that this class can collect the vestiges of ancient religions to build on them their own flourishing empire. Fighting the clergy means fighting religion from its very foundation, but it is also necessary that the factual situations that gave rise to fears and superstitions, from which religion emerged, be limited: otherwise the fight against the clergy becomes ineffective and unproductive. For example, it is unproductive to fight the clergy and do nothing about the ever-present illiteracy, the ever-present superstition at all levels, the poor spread of culture, etc. In this way, that struggle threatens to get bogged down and not be understood by the people who, from within their illiteracy, their necessarily modest culture, their superstition, can only look on with horror at the attempts to

eliminate the representatives of something in which centuries of subjugation and oppression have led them to believe.

Having affirmed the need to eliminate certain presuppositions that favor the persistence of religion, we can move on to the fight against the priestly class. And this is precisely the step taken by Sade who completes his program by indicating the path to which the action of this class is directed: the alliance with tyranny for the exploitation in collaboration with the people. Almost all the deists of the century had fought against the crimes of religion and its representatives, some, like Voltaire, with the powerful weapon of irony and ridicule, Sade, with the theoretical extension of atheism, extends the fight on the level of concrete representation: that of the novel.

Now, if on the one hand the deists took refuge in a sort of oasis of positivity, admitting the existence of a Supreme Being, the regulator of virtue, and in this way contrasted the corrupt world of religion and priests with the idea, albeit abstract, but certainly concrete from the point of view of action on the spirits who make it their own, of God, atheists could not evade the invitation while they could not admit, for their part, the existence of God, the solution was that of the admission of a benevolent and providing nature, able to regulate everything according to a deterministic process closed loop. Sade, on the other hand, breaks the structure of atheist research, opposing men like Diderot or Joseph de Lalande who spoke of the group of atheists as an elite all closed to perpetuate a tradition of virtue and moral health, but very little inclined to open up to reality, to the world of man, although very willing to the world of nature and science. And this position of Sade, for better or for worse, is the result of his passion as a man and as a man of letters, much more than his substance as a thinker and philosopher.

To dictate, at this point, a guide for the reader is no longer possible. Approaching Sade is always an adventure and his fame lies precisely in this. For the reader who would like to include Sade in the arc of that atheist research that the series of which this book is a part intends to bring to fruition, let us say, in addition, that Sade is an "integral" atheist, one of the most rational builders of a "reality without God," even if this statement of ours may sound strange when related to certain passages of Sade's work and to certain interpretations. The wholeness of Sadeian atheism depends on its absolute adherence to the presupposition of God's non-existence: not absence, or rejection, or forgetfulness, or suspension, or death of God, simply non-existence. This is why a reading of Sade, no matter how adventurous or dangerous, is always a productive reading.

[*Introduction to Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade, Writings on Atheism*, tr. it., Ragusa 1971, pp. 9-36].

## **Antonin Artaud. The theater and its double**

At a time when the theory of communism, on a political level, is extremely down on its luck, uprooted from the seats where it had been entrenched for about seventy years, it is useful to reflect on it, from the community perspective, certainly not from the state and political perspective.

In all revolutionaries who don't declare themselves openly authoritarian and not even individualist, there is a latent need of communism, therefore a utopian project, if you want, concerning a future society based on different values. Several times this problem has been addressed, without ever arriving at an acceptable definition.

Yet it is precisely from the communities that indications of different practices have arrived, in the sense that diversity is given as greater or lesser distance from the homologation that daily life constantly achieves. It is better to fail disastrously by trying with courage, not thanks to some truffling gimmick, to open a path that tramples on commonplaces and taboos, than to limit oneself

to pursuing a miserable autarchic ideal, impossible to achieve if not by sacrificing and immiserating desires and therefore also needs.

I am not arguing here for the usefulness of experiments like free love, which have had and have their importance. On the contrary, I claim that the interest lies in utopian experimentation. For this reason I think that at least some aspects of certain communities are more interesting than others, and I am referring to those that have done theater and those that have done music. Again, there would be some limitations to test, but these are political choices that may have to do with the choice of community medium of expression and may not have to do with it.

The theater is the place where you can, even today, feel some of the conditions of mysticism, of course talking about theater here I mean that set of efforts that starting from the technical conditions of theatrical representation, in the sense set by the scenic tradition, tries to escape this imprisonment by resorting to other techniques, but first of all proposing other basic reflections.

A theater of diversity is possible only by breaking the wall that the permissive society, but not too much, has built between spectator and actor. This is Antonin Artaud's hypothesis, as it was developed by him in the context of the theories and practices of the "Theatre of Cruelty". It ends up breaking the reciprocal and contrasting roles of actor and spectator. Today, it is an old discourse, which is still new, and manifests many incomprehensible and therefore not accumulable aspects, every time it is applied. When we talk about it, as I will do here, everything seems instead to receive a chrism of rationalization, which is not possible. Artaud's discourse must be taken from different points of view, in the technical aspects it has become daily practice, extending irremediably into the quicksand of institutional recovery. But there are not only the technical aspects.

The story was considerable, the underlying problem also, even the technical aspects proved important. By bringing violence into the picture, we were entering into a discourse of initiates that, in the sacredness of the relationship between actor and spectator, was getting on the nerves of the respectability that takes root everywhere, especially among those who say they are open to different experiences, who are the first to ask for guarantees in participating in the experiments, at least the guarantee of coming out alive. Alongside this work, there is another that penetrates the social problematic, and that maintains even today all the freshness of forty years ago. Today, it is no longer possible to talk about theater without taking into account many aspects that pertain to theater because they are its foundation, aspects that are at the same time the foundation of other human activities.

The category of participation becomes accessible at the moment when the theater decides to move, to come forward, to spread its visual and sonic glow over the entire mass of the audience. The ancient Greek myth of totality here takes on a different dimension from those it had in the past. The spectator, wrenched from his partiality, defenseless, is placed in front of this totality in movement, of which he is a non-negligible, non-marginal element, and thus enters into a different reality, where nothing remains of his previous partiality. All it takes is a small gesture, a transfer of the centrality of the scene, which is suddenly poured out on the single spectator, for everything to come into play; no great events are needed for the act of cruelty to permeate.

Here, then, we come to the central point of Artaud's discourse. The action and the violence, of which we speak, find their extreme justification as simple instruments for a purpose, cruelty towards the spectator, a radical attempt to shake him from his guilty passive attitude. Artaud's diversity consists in this, unlike the possible precedents that from *Ubu roi* can go all the way back to Sade, it consists in the relationship with the man in front of him and, through this man, in the relationship with society personified in the static immobility of this man. Declaredly, Artaud's

intention is to bring back to the theater a passionate, and convulsive, conception of life, contextual to an extreme rigor and to a condensation of the scenic elements as such. Therefore, cruelty becomes a kind of severe purity, a Jansenist morality that does not "fear to pay life at the price it must be paid". In a letter dated September 13, 1932 and addressed to Jean Paulhan, he wrote: "I cannot give you details about my Manifesto that would risk distorting its tone. All I can do is to comment, provisionally, on the title *Theatre of Cruelty* and try to justify its choice. This cruelty is made up neither of sadism nor of blood, at least not exclusively. I do not systematically cultivate horror. The word "cruelty" must be understood in a broad sense and not in the physical and rapacious sense that is usually attributed to it. And I claim, by choosing it, the right to do away with the usual meaning of the language, to break the armor once and for all, to blow up the pillory, to finally return to the etymological origins of the language that, through abstract concepts, always evoke a concrete element. One can well imagine pure cruelty without carnal torment. After all, what is cruelty in philosophical terms? From the point of view of the spirit, cruelty means rigor, application and implacable decision, irreversible, absolute determination. The most current philosophical determinism, from the point of view of our existence, is one of the images of cruelty. It is a mistake to attribute to the word "cruelty" a sense of ruthless carnage, of gratuitous and disinterested pursuit of physical evil. The Ethiopian Ras, who drags along defeated princes and reduces them to slavery, does not do so out of a desperate love of blood. Cruelty is not synonymous with bloodshed, tortured flesh, crucified enemies. This identification of cruelty with torture is a decidedly secondary aspect of the matter. There is in fact in the exercise of cruelty a kind of superior determinism to which even the torturer is subject and which, if necessary, he must be determined to endure. Cruelty is first of all lucid, it is a sort of rigid control, of submission to necessity. There is no cruelty without conscience, without a kind of applied consciousness. It is conscience that gives any act of life a warmth of blood, a cruel note, because it is clear that life is always the death of someone." It is, therefore, man who must become aware of cruelty, cutting himself off from all the pretenses that hinder this awareness. He must bend down within himself and feel the appetite of life, the rigor of this cosmic drive, of this unstoppable necessity".

Here we are inside the technical mechanism. The theoretical level follows the creative moment. The author realizes that many aspects could precipitate too soon, not least the possibility of habituation to participation. Thus, speaking of symbiosis, he declares that before the habituation of others there is the danger of triggering one's own, against which one must equip oneself. In order to avoid this rationalization, which in the theater corresponds first of all to professionalization, it is necessary that the theater becomes a conception of life, life itself, no longer a stale proposal of schemes or trellises on which to climb with the sole skill of the mime or clown, life that is thus developed in many plots of participation, revolutionary plots because placed in an exact political rightness. "The Father himself," he wrote in a letter to André Breton in September 1937, "is not the first God but the First Awareness of the horrible Force of Nature that creates Being, and causes the unhappiness of all Beings.

Sade is perhaps the true precursor of the themes of cruelty in theater, naturally understood in the sense of a possible involvement of the spectator. Sade gets to the heart of the contradictions of the society of his time and, in some respects, of our time as well. A society in which competition is still the basis of everything. The empire of reason was taking shape with a certain consistency as man's dominion over everything, in the context of that determinism which eighteenth-century materialism contributed to making science flow into the concrete phenomena of life and the vicissitudes of men and their relationships. But the empire of reason is despotism, and Sade exasperates with refined cruelty all its aspects, beating so much on the extreme consequences of



this rational disposition of man as to reach incredibly instructive results for us, today, results that are very close, under the aspect of provocation, to the themes of the theater of cruelty.

On the contrary, Sade's theater, both the two represented subjects and the unpublished one, is far from the effects and the literary quality of the short stories and novels. Even the dialogue part does not reach the effectiveness of the dialogues included in the works. Gilbert Lely writes: "It is necessary to warn the reader at once that the author of *Aline et Valcour*, who always shows his genius even in quick notes or in lines hastily written from prison, in the plays is of a disconcerting mediocrity". (*Sade, prophet of eroticism*, tr. it., Milan 1968, p. 220). The work represented is *Oxtiern ou les Malheurs du libertinage*, the one that was not represented, but was interrupted by the public, according to some because written by an aristocrat, is *Le Suborneur*. Neither has anything of importance, like everything else unpublished at the death of its author. The substance of Sade's theatrical text must therefore be sought in those texts that were not directed at the theater, where evil takes on an autonomous existence of its own, in the same way that it does in society, where through the rationalized affairs of man its entanglements extend in the form of a unique dictatorship. Sade has shown us man in his action in the world without the protection of the coordinating action of laws and the State in order to make us understand the ordering weight of reason apart from laws and the State. A free society could never be the one described by Sade, where often, in the small islands of absolute rarefaction of state controls, the controls of reason emerge, the "geometric perfections" of the eternally identical to itself, of the rational principle.

Saint Pond is the great priest of this kind of rationalist religion. The death of the innocent finds its necessity in the happiness of the guilty, the old God of salvation finds a way to pop up again, as a justification of evil itself. In its entanglements there is no solidarity even among the members of a small group, there is no morality. The others are objects, pure signs of a situation in which no one feels solidarity with another. Gian Paolo Brega wrote: "The chess player knows the value of his pieces on the chessboard, and he is in a certain sense conditioned by them in the game, but he does not establish any relationship with them because between him and his pawns, there is no common situation. King, queen, bishops, rooks, horses, pawns are auf, the chessboard, the player is über. He does not expect an answer from them, because like all things, those pieces are also signs of a world that is foreign to him. In short, the being who recognizes only his own individuality does not even have ethical problems, but only problems of self-satisfaction: other men are not individuals, but things, signs, tools. With them, there is no commonality, no normal relationships, the individual does not ask any answer to them: they are cadaveric beings". (*Introduction to the Selected Works of Sade*, tr. it., Milan 1967, p. XIII).

Later Artaud will say: "Essential theater is like the plague, not because it is contagious, but because like the plague it is the revelation, the transposition into the foreground, the outward thrust of a fund of latent cruelty through which all the perverse possibilities of the spirit are located in an individual or in a people. Like the plague, it is the moment of evil, the triumph of the dark forces, which an even deeper force feeds, until extinction." (*The theater and its double*, tr. it., Turin 1968, p. 125). The overall conditions of the work of Sade, understood as non-specific but enlightening premises, from the theoretical point of view, are the basis for understanding the situation of man in the world, a situation that can be captured by the theater and that, being able to be captured, the theater must seize on pain of death. Here is the origin of the Mortal Theater. This is why Artaud speaks of theater as a revelation, as a transposition in the foreground, as a push outward of a latent cruelty. The action, that is, in which the very essence of the theatrical dimension is translated, is that which Sade had so well entrusted to his characters, especially to those of the dialogues, certainly not to those of his theater.

In these characters is identified a cruel and tenacious action, rationally cold, devoid of any excessive stimulus and any moral rethinking. Sade's texts have horrified generations of respectable people, just as the plague had horrified generations of men in the past. Today, the plague is no longer frightening, it is cured and that's all, and by curing it, it is recognized, accepted, delimited and then accumulated, used. For our way of life, daily failing, a technically perfect procedure of recovery has not been found, that's why Artaud speaks of plague, of theater as plague. "Between the plaguee," he writes, "who runs screaming after his own hallucinations, and the actor who launches himself in search of his own sensibility; between the man who invents characters to whom without the plague he would never have thought, and who depicts them in the midst of an audience of corpses and alienated people in a delirium, and the poet who intemperately invents his own and entrusts them to an equally inert or delirious audience, there are other analogies which confirm the only important truths, and place the action of the theater, like that of the plague, on the plane of an authentic epidemic." (*Ib.*, p. 121).

By placing at the center of his theatrical proposal the concept of participation, Artaud not only determines an opening in the traditional theater, but takes a different path, at least within the limits of the instrument used against life, then moral. The concept of representation is missing. The theater becomes life itself, not the life that is lived in an inauthentic form, then as a detachment of man from himself, in the scattering of everyday trivial things, but the life that is lived in its deep unrepeatability, then unrepresentability. This implies the fact, extraordinarily productive of meanings, that the theater cannot be one activity among many, a profession that allows intervals, but must correspond with a total commitment, then, for those who develop it and are in it as a means of transformation, a community commitment.

If cruelty is synonymous with life, he cannot exercise his own cruelty who finds himself passing through the contrada, a guest of life, who shortly afterwards will return to his own practice of normality, exactly at the moment in which he has thrown the spectator into disarray, has cruelly brutalized him. Here lies the implementation of some insights Nietzsche directed to interrupt the absurdity of a theologically dominant position of the theater. "That the theater does not become lord of the arts. Let the comedian not become the seducer of genuine beings." (F. Nietzsche, *The Wagner Case. Complete works*, vol. VI, t. III, Milan 1978, p. 36). What must be avoided is that the comedian, according to the negative concept of Nietzsche, equivalent to the classical way of doing theater, stands in front of a series of individuals as spectators lined up tickling them in their attention. Thus he continues: "... in cultures of decadence, wherever the decision falls into the hands of the masses, genuineness becomes superfluous, disadvantageous, put in the background. Only the comedian still arouses the great enthusiasm." (*Ib.*, p. 34).

The comedian is thus synonymous with being ideologically dominant, a maker of words and sense. Erasing him without eliminating theater means deeply transforming the whole theatrical expression into something magical and atrocious, a revealing brutality exerted on reality, a way of acting that does not allow compromises precisely because the essentiality of its relationship of participation consists precisely in not allowing the representation of something previously described in a repressive form.

This requires a different distribution of the theatrical space, understood not in the strictly physical sense, as a distance that can be counted, although this aspect too, falling within the conventions of the field, ends up having its own weight, since we are always dealing with places predisposed to this, open or closed, at this point, it does not matter. Space as existence, therefore as life. By moving in the theatrical space, the static event comes alive and becomes life, precisely because it has opened up to anxiety all the conditions of security and control, and therefore of

respectful distance, that previously existed. In this opening, not having anything yet of the possible transformative concreteness, not being yet in the real action, which ultimately remains outside the theater and to which the theater looks at as the instrument looks at its possible use, in this opening the word must be inserted, the possible binder that encloses in the magic circle the life redelivered to its new capacity, completely different.

The word extends to any kind of expression, language of sounds, objects, movements, attitudes, gestures. In its widening, it bears witness to the human condition, to the actual impossibility of enclosing all of this, all of this miraculous interpretative strategy, in the immediacy of consciousness, in daily reality. This last impossible eventuality would make theater a commodity of exchange, acceptable reproduction, discourse with power. Therefore, even in the case in which participation would become habit, there would always remain a margin of absolute unacceptability, the non-accumulation of what has been prepared in the context of the relationship between cruelty and life. However, Artaud specifies, it is not a matter of "bringing metaphysical ideas directly onto the stage, but of creating around these ideas particular tensions, vortices of air. Humor with its anarchy, poetry with its symbolism and its images, suggest a first notion of the means to channel the temptation of such ideas." (*The Theatre and Its Double*, *op. cit.*, p. 168).

In this way, theater proposes itself as diversity, as a way through life and towards life, as a duplication of meaning, therefore as masking, as interpretation. Irony and imagination are two interpretative methods that have the possibility of defeating all too immediate limits. Of course, they cannot defeat every kind of limitation, but this is another matter. Participation constitutes an enlargement of the community, leading others into the dream, not as an escape from reality, but as a possible construction, on the basis of an idea that is also a word, therefore on a text, circumscribed but not enslaved by the dominant reason, of an author god, absolute creator and tyrant, ineliminable, continuously impending as an evil destiny.

In order to free himself from this perilous oppression, always working in the field of the double movement between reality and dream, Artaud lists some exclusively external expedients, according to him capable of saving the spectator from what he calls cosmic oppression. "Every performance will contain a physical and objective element perceptible to all. Screams, moans, apparitions, surprises, twists of all kinds, magical beauty of costumes inspired by certain ritual models. The splendor of the lights, the bewitching beauty of the voices, the enchantment of the harmony, the precious chords of the music, the color of the objects, the physical rhythm of the movements whose crescendo and decrescendo will agree exactly with the pulsation of movements that are familiar to everyone, the concrete apparitions of new and surprising objects, masks, puppets several meters high, abrupt changes of light, the physical action of the light that causes sensations of heat and cold". (*Ib.*, p. 170).

Here, we are already in the stage of stabilizing the scenic reality, the task of the director. The rationalizing aggression is behind the scenes, one must be careful. Examining all the technical devices listed by Artaud, one is disappointed. Especially today, with the highly specialized levels of dominant philistinism. But also in the days of Nietzsche and Wagner, for that matter. Thus Nietzsche: "... and it is the worst thing, *the teatrocracy*, the bizarreness of a belief in the primacy of the theater, in a right to the *supremacy of the theater* over the arts, over art. But it must be said a hundred times in the face of the Wagnerians what the theater is: always only one *below* art, always only something secondary, something undeveloped, something arranged, artfully arranged for the masses!" (*The Wagner Case*, *op. cit.*, p. 39). If there were not the radical proposal of participation, the whole apparatus described by Artaud would be an updated version of the Gesamtkunstwerk. Instead, the apparatus, however much it is stabilized in the work of the director,

remains immobile up to a certain point, since the director is no longer the ancient interpreter of the text in the restricted sense of a elucidation of the anomalies of expression, in order to more effectively put the audience to sleep. Now it is a starting point, a springboard from which to begin a realization that, in order to be complete, theatrically valid, must end in participation, therefore in something that is part of life and not its reflection. Every dualism, at this point, becomes not only useless and harmful but impossible.

Regarding the scene, Artaud writes: "We suppress the scene and the hall, replacing them with a kind of single place, without divisions or barriers of any kind, which will become the theater of the action itself. A direct communication will be re-established between spectator and spectacle, between spectator and actor, because the spectator, situated at the center of the action, will be surrounded by it and involved in it. This encirclement will be due to the very configuration of the hall". (*The Theatre and its Double*, *op. cit.*, p. 172).

More technical indications, which may seem obvious now, but which were not. All these aspects, which, taken individually, could only mean reforms of the classical theatrical fabric, become something else in the different dimension of provocation, such as the use of musical instruments as big as men, or King Lear's beard materialized in puppets ten meters high.

All of this rejects the very possibility of survival for written texts, transforming themes, episodes and cues from well-known works into directorial essays. The topicality of the narrated event becomes of secondary importance, there exists and emerges a sense of perennality, a sense of deep concern, not probable through the normal everyday concerns that translate into the great reservoir of power of accumulation and, in theatrical specificity, into the theater of death. The actor and the performance therefore play a role that is no longer that of classical theater, but that of community life. They establish, the one as initiator of provocation, the other as linguistic means, as instrument, the new location of the performance in the uncertain territory of reconnaissance. Both the actor and the interpretation, while remaining specific elements of the theater and its communicative problems, are influenced by the direct line of the performance, by its wholeness, by its total belonging to a reality that is in the process of modification, that is taking shape but is not yet known in its entirety, it is not yet, not only not yet expressed.

Jean Duvignaud wrote: "Artaud makes an impassioned attempt to detach the dramatic creation of speech and identify it to the social ceremony. This is what he calls physical theater, which takes place in a visible space that speaks directly to the senses. Therefore, the word must no longer serve to translate petty psychological problems or to animate a dead mythology, but to comment on a visible, real action. The spectator must feel endangered by this representation of existence." (*Artaud Today and the Others*, in "Curtain," no. 230, June 1965, p. 219).

Thus, an abandoned spontaneity is rediscovered, the spectator becomes a man again, finding himself involved in the general awakening of the room. Everything here becomes a community fact, or at least it should become one. Everything contributes to this ultimate goal, from the technical devices to the decisions that are made along the way, from the choice of abandoning objective figurations to the decision to accentuate linguistic expressions in a communicative sense. But the spectator is afraid of spontaneity, he remains closed within the envelope that protects him, as once happened with the womb, and from those distant lands he analyzes, dissociates, he even allows himself to extend his perfectible closure to the outside world, to the problems of the social world. Forcing him to go outside, even in the limitedness of these operations, which obviously under the transformative aspect must be seen as opportunities not as achievements, forcing him to spontaneity, or better it would be to the revelation of his own limits and fears even in front of conditions that only a childish mentality can consider dangerous, constitutes the real theatrical

action, the text that is constituted and recited, beyond the place of the written words, of the rehearsals, of the director's idea, and maybe even of the same intention of the actors. Community is always a movement that produces more than the mere sum of the good intentions that constitute it.

The agreement of the Living Theatre with Artaud, whose themes will be known by the members of the Living only at the end of the fifties, will be possible starting from the opening towards the public, therefore from the same concept of participation, which we have already seen in the theses above. At the beginning, in the Living, the respect for the word, with its almost classical heaviness, however poetic, is badly arranged regarding the possible participation, at least in the sense of Artaud. The word, in fact, can be the realm of the absurd and therefore of freedom in absolute, but it can also be the other extreme, that is the realm of repression, however of deception and integration. Then, when this word remains noble, pretending to become an honest word, it aspires to truth. This is the point of greatest danger. The importance of Living, beyond the fact of sharing or not sharing the theoretical positions on pacifism, theses that I personally consider misleading, consists in the accentuation given to the community structure of the theatrical group and in the work aimed at perfecting the conditions of participation. The two aspects, in my opinion, are not separable. The productive community is thus extended to the new community that is created in the course of the theatrical work, without it being possible to establish with certainty the boundaries between preparation and execution, between the community life of the members of the group and the communion of this life with the spectators in the course of the work. The contrast between some of Artaud's positions regarding the role of violence and the pacifist theses of Living, has never been, in my opinion, an important point or an insuperable obstacle. Also because in poetic matter all this fades into interpretation and does not have the cadaveric chill of immediacy and accumulation. In fact, the problem is not here, but in the attempt to hold up a message of a communitarian nature from the inside of an operative community to the outside of another community, to be constituted from time to time. And this can be considered a remarkable attempt to start a path towards diversity.

Of course, everything we have examined so far from the discourse on totality, and the subsequent shift to community, smells too much like forcing and occasionality. Apart from Artaud's itineraries of personal desolation, I don't know how many of us have really understood his intentions regarding the point of no return. Perhaps there is too much respectability in each of us to truly break conventions and protocols. We are afraid to appear naked.

[1990]

## **Sylvain Maréchal. The man without God**

Sylvain Maréchal, *Libre échapper au deluge, o Pseaumes nouvellement découvert, composed in the primitive language by S. Ar-Lamech, from the patriarchal family of Noah, translated into French by P. Lahceram Parisipolitain*, Imprimerie de Cailleau, Rue Galande 64, Paris 1784.

This book is, by Maréchal's own admission, a bold imitation of the style of the prophets. This is no small idea for an atheist. Others before Maréchal had had this idea and had tried to implement it: Clément Marot and Racan are some of these. Maréchal tries to actualize the ancient themes of the psalms, but also to draw his own conclusions.

Very short, Maréchal's psalms deal with religious topics and especially with moral problems; they are certainly not philosophical propositions. The style is correct and elegant, as has been noted

by Maurice Dommanget, in *Sylvain Maréchal. L'égalitaire. L'homme sans Dieu*, Paris 1950, "sometimes even elevated" (p. 104). Neither the annoying metaphors nor the gigantic hyperbole of the prophets are found there. Evidently this is a profane author, far from being divinely inspired like the prophets.

Indeed, the purpose Maréchal seeks to achieve with this writing is to suggest an almost patriarchal simplicity of life, to preach virtue to corrupt nations, to convert the wicked to a life consistent with revolutionary principles. In effect, the state of nature, primitive equality, wise mediocrity, the tyranny of kings, the usurpation of wealth, the lies of priests, the contradictions that the eighteenth century had placed before everyone's eyes by Rousseau and Mably, are here put on display and receive the form of the psalms. God and Providence are replaced by different objects: Truth, Nature, Peace, Justice. He leaves no doubt as to his intimate feelings, despite the cover to which he resorts of the false psalms.

Atheist reflection, as it is possible to identify it in many contemporary currents of thought, presents itself as a form of definitive liberation from the deleterious religious influence, therefore as a liberation on the part of man from every residue of superstition.

This is precisely the reason why it becomes difficult, not to say impossible, to find complete evidence of atheistic doctrine in antiquity. From a general point of view we can say that even at the beginning of the history of man, and precisely in that Greece which gradually sought to eliminate and replace the ancient aristocracy whose power had been founded on blood, it is possible to identify atheistic evidence.

The same can be said for the Roman period, and then especially the medieval period in which the pressing and disgusting domination of the Church was so heavy as to make almost completely disappear any form of free thought and free criticism. Yet, in spite of such prohibitive environmental conditions, in spite of the great return of superstition and in spite of the decline and almost total disappearance of Greek and Roman culture, it is possible to identify not a few movements of revolt, not a few stimuli that were only apparently reformist but substantially revolutionary.

Nominalism presents all the characteristics found in contemporary materialism, while a form, albeit mild, of criticism of dogma and blind faith in the doctrine of the Church can be identified in Averroé. But the essential characteristic of the revolt against the closed-mindedness propagated by religious doctrines, in particular by the Catholic Church, is to be found in the struggles carried on by the peasants and serfs. It is precisely these tumultuous events, still scarcely illuminated by historical research, that wreak havoc on the iron temporal organization of religion and prepare the groundwork for subsequent movements of a reformist and revolutionary nature.

With the advent of the intellectual opening caused by those currents of thought that are summarized in the Renaissance, the possibility for free reflection to attack and provoke doubt towards the dogmas of religion becomes greater and greater. The new social structures of the bourgeoisie proceeded with alacrity to replace the old feudal structures and in this new struggle, in this new attack in no uncertain terms and without reticence, they understood very well that the first thing to be questioned, the first thing to be reformed first and to be destroyed later was precisely religion. About these periods, which roughly can be placed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and which ultimately can be made to coincide with the advent of eighteenth-century French materialism, it is good to add something that may enlighten the reader about the limits and characteristics of the literary production of the time.

In particular, it must be kept in mind that radical and revolutionary writers were forced to be very cautious when dealing with religious arguments, in order not to run into the repressive

measures of the religious temporal institution, in particular the Inquisition, which involved not only moral but also physical penalties. As we will see in its place there were not a few writers who ended up on the stake because of their doctrines. It is precisely the problem of this cover that the reader must keep in mind when confronting a text by a radical writer of the period from the beginning of the Middle Ages to the dawn of the materialists of the French eighteenth century. No, here it is almost never possible to identify an atheistic doctrine in its pure state, almost always we are faced with allegorical covers and subtexts, satires that help to camouflage and thus indirectly save the life of the writer. In deism and pantheism one must try to discover the substance of that atheistic doctrine which runs uninterruptedly, from the beginnings of the history of human thought to the present day. In these two doctrines of thought admitting, in principle, the existence of a single god, it is possible to see so much of that criticism of religion and the obscurantism of its dogmas which today is commonly identified with the atheistic doctrine pure and simple.

The preparation for the French Revolution, the work of the Encyclopedists and French atheists in the eighteenth century, the disintegration of the rigid ecclesiastical institutional structure existing in the previous period, the ever greater openness to the progress of science and technology, the general spread of culture even at a popular level, the decrease in illiteracy and ignorance in general, the increase, albeit limited, of the general standard of living, are all to be considered positive elements in the fight against religion conducted by the atheist doctrine. In particular, atheism from elite thought becomes if not popular at least more widely spread.

Next to this popular current of struggle against religion and openness to free thought, there is the more strictly philosophical current headed by Hegel and, on the other hand, headed by Kant himself. The latter current, both in its left-wing representatives, more openly aligned against religion, as well as in its orthodox representatives, aligned in favor of religion, can be categorized as a kind of rationalism directed to review in the form of criticism the myths and the alleged logical necessity of religion itself. In this sense, the work of Ludwig Feuerbach, together with that of Bruno Bauer, are very close to the construction of an atheistic rationalism in the same way as the work of Marx and Engels a few decades later. Chapters apart are the modern currents of atheism, on the one hand Marxist atheism, on the other existentialist atheism. On the one hand the atheism of Nietzsche, on the other hand the atheism of technology and science. All these branches of atheist doctrine are openly declared. The problem of coverage today arises in much milder forms and is roughly completely negligible. The scholar who wants to deepen the problem of atheism today can certainly direct himself towards texts declaredly of atheistic order and atheistic content, while previously he was forced to dig into more general essays such as those we have examined.

Today [1973], the fight against religion can take place on a plane of greater openness of thought. With the exception of a few less advanced legislations, such as that of Italy, the attack on religion on a scientific and doctrinal level, even if it is mixed in the characteristic virulent or blasphemous form that some writers are unable to eliminate from their works, is by no means the object of legal persecution. This constitutes a great achievement for the struggle waged by free thought against obscurantism and conservatism.

For its part, religion has ended up fully identifying the substantial modification of the new state of affairs and has carried out its propaganda on a very different level. From the ancient coercion of the individual and the community, we have come to free discussion, to the advent and the very solicitation of dialogue, we have come to the establishment of religious institutions and institutions of religious research, directed primarily to study and solve the problems of non-believers.

In the context of the new situation that has arisen in the last hundred years, our attempt to summarize in an organic form the various manifestations of the atheist doctrine arises. My desire

to work on a history of atheism wants therefore to contribute to spread the knowledge of atheist doctrine and to push people to the free use of their intellect.

Here is a translation of some of the Psalms from the above book, of considerable interest.

Note not only the content but also the form of coverage followed.

Psalm XIX: *The Judges* (50-52)

1 - God of Justice! You see them! The Chiefs of the People, who call themselves Republicans, have two scales, as if there were two justices.

I saw a man leave his family to come to an unjust tribunal to dispute the piece of bread, the fruit of his toil, awaited by his hungry family.

4. If the unhappy man comes empty-handed: what delays, what faults will he be blamed for?

5 - He will die before he has the consolation of knowing whether the field of his fathers will pass to his children.

7 - I saw the widow and the orphan ask for justice as one asks for alms.

8 - I saw them ready to strip off the last of their clothes to find grace with the judges.

10 - I've seen them tune everything out to preserve something.

11 - Tremble, for your seat, unjust judge, you will find in my God a stern judge.

Psalm XX: *War* (53-56)

1 - Father of life! You said to men, who had escaped your creative hand: grow and multiply.

2 - Men disregard this law so sweet to follow, they have developed the art of destroying the work of your hands.

5 - Interest and revenge only drive them against each other.

11 - O my God you see and allow all this to take place before your eyes.

12. Allow the peaceful temples to be raised with trophies of war.

16 - Allow the bloody hand to rise toward you on the battlefield.

Psalm XXII: *Refusal of Arms* (61-62)

2 - I reject far from me the murderous instrument, of which my brothers make themselves an ornament.

6 - Will I always have to be an accomplice or witness to a crime?

7 - Will I have to walk on this earth much longer as in an enemy country?

Psalm XXVIII: *Of Societies* (79-81)

1 - Father of Nature, call your children back, bring them back to the old ways.

2 - You had put us on earth with everything we could possibly need to be happy.

9 - They asked for kings, and you sent them in your righteous anger, and men received them as benefactors.

10 - God of my fathers, make man regain his ancient dignity and teach him to govern himself.

11 - Remind him that you did not create him to serve nor to be served.

12 - The children of the Father of Nature must all be free. The Father of Nature did not make slaves.

Psalm XXIV: *Abuse of Men in the Use of Life and in the Use of the Products of Nature* (82-88)

1 - God of Nature! Thou hast given mankind laughing countrysides and even forests.

2 - They have raised up thick walls, narrow prisons, which they call cities.



- 8 - There they shut themselves up, one next to the other, instead of dispersing without harm.
- 10 - The pure water of the fountains, the nourishing milk of the benevolent cow, the sweet honey of the industrious bee,
- 11 - were not enough for them, they imagined intoxicating and unhealthy drinks.
- 12 - The countless fruits, healthy legumes, and hearty vegetables are not enough for their hunger.
- 13 - As voracious animals need blood to redden their teeth.
- 17 - Lord! Tell me if there is still a corner of the earth where one can live according to Nature.
19. Unfortunately, the devil of war and the genius of despotism have divided the world.
20. One can see the traces everywhere; they have reached out to the boundaries of the Universe.
- 21 - Is there no asylum for freedom?
22. May I not, before I descend into the grave, use for a single moment the rights of man?
- 23 - Is the grave the only refuge against injustice and slavery?
28. What do we do with our lives? Artificial vicious occupations fill it up entirely.
29. Besides, only the rich rejoice at the fruits of genius.
30. The poor Talent watches over the ignorant Wealth.
31. Of all this brilliant work, what remains? A vain name and much toil.
32. Happy is he who gives himself to the contemplation of nature, and who rejoices in its works without mingling with his own.

[1973]