IN THE LINE OF PÉGUY

Towards an integral heroism

Rosemary Goldie

Translated by Michael Buhagiar

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Rosemary Goldie was born 1 February 1916 in Sydney, Australia. She was educated at Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta, and at the University of Sydney, whence she graduated BA in 1936, with the University Medal and honours in French and English. A scholarship took her to the Sorbonne, where in 1943 she completed an MA. Her thesis was subsequently published in 1951 as the present work. After spending the war years in Australia her intention was to return to Paris to begin her doctorate; but fate had other plans. She had already begun her long associations with the Grail, an organisation of active Catholic lay women, and Pax Romana, the international organisation of Catholic university students and graduates. In October 1952 she took up residence in Rome, after being recruited to work for the Permanent Committee for International Congresses of the Lay Apostolate ("COPECIAL"). In 1959 Pope John XIII made the epochal announcement of the Second Vatican Council. COPECIAL was given a role in preparing for Vatican II; and when the Council was under way they were given input into the selection of its lay auditors. In 1962 and 1963 only men were chosen as lay auditors; but in 1964 the first women were chosen, and Rosemary was among them. In 1967 Pope Paul VI appointed her Under-Secretary in the newly created Pontifical Council for the Laity. This was the highest position a woman had ever held in the Vatican bureaucracy. When the council became a permanent part of the Roman Curia in 1976, Rosemary's position was given to a priest, while she accepted (not without protest, apparently) the position of Professor of Pastoral Theology at the Pontifical Lateran University. In 1990 she received an AO for "service to religion and to international relations." She died at the Little Sisters of the Poor nursing home in Randwick, New South Wales, on 27 February 2010, aged 94. She bequeathed "all my books and academic papers to Dr. Sophie McGrath to be distributed by her at her discretion to the Australian Catholic University." Her books include *In the Line of Péguy* (1951), the partly autobiographical *From a Roman Window* (1998), and a translation of *Il Cantico dell'uomo* by Franco Biffi, on Pietro Cardinal Pavan (1992). She edited, and wrote the afterword to, the autobiography of her mother Dulcie Deamer, *The Queen of Bohemia* (1998).

Michael Buhagiar gained his PhD from the University of Sydney in 2012, on the subject of the Australian poet Christopher Brennan (1871-1932). Before beginning his PhD he self-published full-length books on Shakespeare (2003) and *Don Quixote* (2008). His published papers may be accessed at www.academia.org.

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Translator's notes: I am indebted to my aunt Dr. Sophie McGrath rsm for the opportunity to take up this project. All the footnotes in this work are my own.

PREFACE by Albert Béguin

When, several months ago, Mademoiselle Rosemary Goldie gave me her manuscript to read, I confess to having begun it with an expectation of discomfiture. The subject seemed to me ambitious, difficult to define well, and in any case full of traps for the steps of the stranger. Heroism of the French kind is so unlike any other heroism that without having at least lived a long time in France one runs the risk of gravely misconceiving it. Why not say it? I feared that the hero according to Carlyle would cast here his excessive shadow, or that romanticism, some mediaeval nostalgia, would come to shuffle the cards. It is not so simple to know a certain French simplicity.

I was wrong, and I think that all its readers will, like me, marvel to see someone, come from the Antipodes, situate so justly our own authors, never to err in her references, in short to be so totally familiar with our spiritual geography. Nothing in these pages betrays the clumsiness and warped vision that one almost always observes in those who, from across the world, write on France. A young Australian speaks of our poets as if they were her own, to the point where I was asking myself if perhaps she would also speak in our manner of the poets of her own language.

The fact doubtlessly is not unique, and each time that I encounter it, I like to tell myself that it demonstrates in depth, and as much in extent, the real universality of the French genius, – particularly of the Catholic French genius. One can enter it with no matter what passport in one's pocket, or even without identity papers, provided that one be precisely accessible to the universal truth, and alerted by its presence, desirous of its revelation, as one so often is in France. What touches me is not that, even unto the South Pacific and to the heart of the Anglo-Saxon world our literature is placed so high, and that one bestows on it encomia such that, coming from a Frenchman, would be contested and judged prideful. No, what is admirable, is that our particular way of seeing things would obtain so complete an adhesion that an Australian critic could explain the import of it to ourselves.

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Mademoiselle Goldie, whose personal preferences run to Péguy, Claudel and Bernanos, and in more modern times to Saint-Exupéry, has the honesty herself to say that the choice of other proofs would have suggested a very different image. Her critique is then resolutely "oriented," if not partial. She does not fall at all into the common error which causes the

writer to choose according to some edifying propaganda. Her choices are given for what they are in reality: personal, necessary for her personal life dictated by a hopefulness and a desire. It would be rather vain to dispute them, as I would be tempted to do when I see her give so much credit to Barrès, or close her eyes to the undeniable weaknesses of Psichari, or ignore in what despair Saint-Exupéry died because the insufficiencies of his thought finished by ruining the fragile edifice of his humanist doctrine. I would have preferred to see here something of that digging deep, of which *Citadelle* bears the devastating mark. On the other hand, I regret certain silences. A fleeting allusion does not suffice to situate, by reference to the works studied, the surrealist adventure, which is not without offering examples of a strange "black" heroism. To speak of the communist ethic only in the characters of Malraux results in the disdain of one of the components of modern heroism. And the work of Girardoux merited an analysis which would have shown at what point, as a whole, it tends to safeguard a heroism without great gestures, after having pierced the pretensions of the overman and his pride. But what does it matter! Mademoiselle Goldie never set out to write a history of our times. She had enough to do to meditate on the works of her choice and, in teaching them, to tease out the delicate notion of an "integral" heroism bordering on saintliness.

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The conclusions of Mademoiselle Goldie, like her work as a whole, are optimistic: not only because she is confident in the future of France in a universe which she wishes to have entered into a total communion – but above all because her implicit theology sees the continuity in the natural virtues and the benefits of grace. She reduces as far as possible the gap from the hero to the saint, and she wishes to make her French masters the guarantors of that assimilation.

One will rejoice to see finally an "outsider" demand something of the French tradition other than the severities of profane pessimism or the moral rigours of Jansenism. For it is very true that a less sombre theology belongs also to the genius of France and was re-established there, after the bourgeois centuries (plainly Jansenist), with the generation of the grandsons of peasants: Bloy, Péguy, Claudel, Bernanos.

I would like to add a simple remark: if, in fact, there is general agreement in saying that the temporal and the spiritual, the virtues of nature and the virtues of graces are bound together in such a way that the flesh finds itself exalted there without debasement of the spirit, this solid Christian affirmation does not come without another side to it. For Léon Bloy, man is capable of God, but on the condition of being ravaged by pain; and since history has a sense, every one of our acts on earth has one too, but this sense is conferred on it by the mystical expectation of the End of Time. Equally for Péguy, time is occupied in creating the hereafter of time, and if life with its demands is worth being loved, it is because it is:

The expectation of a death more living than life,

Where heroism by itself cannot assure the passage to sainthood; for that is of another order. And what shall we say of Claudel, if not that on the last day of *Soulier de satin* Rodrigo is, to

present himself at the gates of the kingdom of God, flayed unto his bones of every possible honour?

Bernanos, finally, is not without having gone beyond, before his death, this notion of heroism which runs from one to the other of his oeuvre. The *Dialogues des Carmélites* go to the deepest profundity of that mystery of fear and courage which is suggested unceasingly by the studies of Mademoiselle Goldie. The little Blanche of the Force is scarcely heroic, at the instant where she goes forward to the gallows. She has just made the offering of her fear, having understood that if fear is "a phantasmagoria of the demon," then "courage is perhaps another one." For the one and the other belong to man the sinner, and have to be transcended through the imitation of Saint Agony.

Mademoiselle Goldie ignores nothing of all this, and it is not in vain that many times she evokes the Cross planted in the earth, and that hole where, according to Claudel, evil is created. Integral heroism can, in her eyes, only be Christian. But, as Christian, it ceases perhaps to resemble heroism, for the order of hope, faith and charity transforms all virtues in the unique royalty of Love.[1]

Our situation, now that the century moves towards the year 2000, is no longer simple enough for the simplicity of the hero. As Sartre has quite recently shown, it engenders the adventurer and his antagonist brother, the militant. Neither one nor the other wishes to be heroic, since one escapes from despair by an exaltation of the self which is indifferent to every adopted virtue, – and the other begins by reporting to the Party all the merit and the very choice of his acts.

And does one believe that there may be heroes in the concentration camps, that there may be of their number in the concentration camp-like world in which we live? The hero cannot exist in a system of derision; even if he stands up against that derision, his gesture will still appear displaced. He lacks the style of the place. He looks a bit superannuated, a bit statue-like. It is not an elevated, exalted man which is needed against new tyrannies. It is a man humiliated, destitute, stripped of all his grandeurs, a man offended who does not return the offense, because finally he has learnt that his humanity is more profound than all of that, that he is in his inner sanctuary where he does not suffer offense. Such is the Lazarus awaiting the Resurrection which Jean Cayrol has taken as a character – not at all as hero – of all his books. If it is today Holy Saturday, if we are in the time of expectation – or rather, if we quite justly begin to understand that the whole of history is this time here – the hour is not of heroes, but of saintliness. Or indeed of that lone melancholy of not being of the saints' number, of which Léon Bloy has taught us the infinite sadness.

15 novembre 1950

ALBERT BÉGUIN

[1] Beguin's attempt to undermine Goldie's argument should be taken with a grain of salt. Christ threw the moneylenders out of the temple. Decisive action is well within the ambit of Christianity. Christ Himself unified the kingly and priestly lines of the Judaic tradition – the king, master of the temporal world, and the priest, master of the eternal – the king, capable of decisive, severe, heroic action, and the priest, the principle of mercy. – MJB

INTRODUCTION

One searches in vain for anything that is so France as Joan of Arc. This statement of Stanislas Fumet, written in 1940 (1), well expresses the spiritual state that gave birth to this study.

It was, in effect, during the years of occupation that our study was conceived, as an act of faith in the spiritual calling of contemporary France, of a heroic and Christian France – heroic in a Christian way – faithful always to herself, as one knew well, in the haughty and painful conquest of her liberty.

We had believed to grasp uncertainly that certain French sufferings of the years 1940-44 offered only, in some way, the extreme form in which became visible all the malady of the modern world, all the anguish and spiritual miseries to which modern man had become prey. But, at the same time, in the "heroic" literature of contemporary France, we saw appear the beginning of a response to this anguish, these miseries. Modern man had not waited for the proofs, sometimes apocalyptic, of the Resistance, to put into question the worth of his engagement, of his heroism, of his very existence; of this "surpassing" where his being, in blooming, found its salvation. But already – piercing like an arrow of light the heart of this anguish – a certain literature had achieved the proffering of a response.

This "response" is not an ideal system where everything is content and nothing lives; it is not purely doctrinal; it proceeds, on the contrary, from life itself; it is quite warm with life – and blood; even as it preserves the self-regarding unity of a living thought, it nuances and renews itself with life; it is organic; it is identified with the living and life-giving ideal of an "integral" heroism, that is to say, of a completely heroic existence, of which the experience of modern life has given to French spirits a profound intuition.

But it has been objected to us that there is not only one response to the questions which are disturbing our spirit and our heart. If it is true that through all its moral and spiritual sufferings, France in the twentieth century is questing after human grandeur, of Man himself, there is not in France a unique conception of what constitutes that grandeur, a unique idea of that heroism wherein man, taking its whole magnitude, can better recognise and measure his worth. From whom is one going to ask for the "personal" response by which modern France may justify its heroism and surpass its anguish? From the most "heroic" of its poets? From the most realistic of its romancers? From the believer or the non-believer? From the thinker or the militant? The responses will be legion.

This objection was not without foundation. We know, in effect, that there are innumerable ways of asking the fundamental questions about existence, and that one seeks the truth of man in rather different directions according to the temperament of the seeker and

according to that experience of life which traces for each spirit a personal itinerary. We know equally that the French writers of our century have grappled with these problems according to very different plans and in very different ways. There are itineraries traced toward the ideal which bury themselves finally in the mud; others which seem to lose themselves in fogs of poetic obscurity or labyrinths of introspection; still others which hold themselves aloof from all abysms and summits; but these lead nowhere: man believes he has found the path of liberty, even as he stays closed up, hidden from himself in the prison of his "positivism".

Each of these researches may represent a partial response, the beginning of a response. But is it true that there may be so many ways of truly responding to the totality of our problems, so many ways above all of conceiving of that human perfection which is called "heroism"? Many of these seekers, inadequately setting out or poorly equipped to overcome obstacles, seem to have vowed in advance to fail; equally numerous are those who renounce in themselves any hope of coming to a result; many "responses" will be only admissions of powerlessness. Everywhere, however, where a true light penetrates the darkness – glimpsed only at the turning of a road, or freeing itself from a fog to illuminate all – that light seems to have a unique source; wherever a response appears, even if only outlined or suggested, it carries everywhere the imprint of its French origins.

There is therefore, let us believe, a rather French ideal of "integral" heroism, which is to be found or which glistens in all that is most vital of French literature of the twentieth century. This ideal is certainly not new in itself. This theme of integral heroism, which some will be tempted to consider as unprecedented in French literature, represents the natural terminus of a literary tradition: under the same heading as the *works of God through the French* and the cornelian grandeurs, this integral heroism is what Péguy calls a "heroism of the French kind." It is not less true of it that this ideal is indeed of our century; it presents itself constantly, or disappears, as the response to all our moral and spiritual preoccupations.

On the other hand, this integral heroism is a way that, at its end, terminates in Christian saintliness; and saints have never been lacking on French soil, even in the less "heroic" periods of our history. There is evidently here a necessary conception, that the more such a heroism approaches its ideal, the more refractory it becomes to literary expression. We are far here from the fluency of journalism, where "heroic" exploits accumulate in numbers; we are as far, moreover, from men of panache and swagger, as we are from proud and solitary stoics. Equally, our conception distances us from those who have believe they have discovered "heroism", who have installed it in the language of literature, but who have stripped it of all it could have partaken of a Christian character. Philological considerations would be misplaced at this point; but, is it not of interest that if one spoke already of "heroism" in the time of Louis XIII, it is in the eighteenth century that this term was consecrated by the philosophers, that it came opportunely to exalt a "virtue" as they saw it: fruit of a sensibility quite noble, but ignoring the gift of its authentic self which is an act of faith, hope and charity?

Finally, this heroism, which prefigures and prepares a Christian saintliness, will not renounce properly human valorousness – manly and even military courage, the moral and civic virtues of the Graeco-roman heroes, quite simply "heroism" – any more than it will renounce all there is of nobility in the attempts which the man, newly paganised with a paganism imprinted with Christian qualities, makes today to realise himself and lift up his

brothers. The heroism of the purest heroes of Christianity – of Joan of Arc and Saint Louis – would not be able to allow a lessening of the human; and does not Péguy say: “It is the case that the eternal will rise up in all its exaltedness above the temporal, and not that the temporal will have abased itself”?

Moreover, this wholly interior heroism is the heroism of those who, across the centuries, have best felt their solidarity with all human misery, with all the efforts that poor humanity makes to alleviate the burden of their moral powerlessness; how could he be a stranger to this bewildered need for liberty, for truth, even for purity, to this need for true grandeur which a world without God suffers? “Integral” heroism must be an accomplishment toward which all that is great in man will be able to tend – all, even the sin, even the grandeur of evil – provided that one seeks what is more than one’s self, that one does not cheat, that one be ready to receive all in order to give all; this will be a heroism that partakes all the more of the human to approach the more closely to the divine, a heroism of the Incarnation!

We know well that our study of this ideal of integral heroism – of the circumstances which have caused it to come into being and of its expression in contemporary literature – is far from being complete. We hope only that, in this imperfect form, it will preserve something of its character of a testimony, as a memory of the years when so many times, with Péguy, we have told and retold ourselves: “It is necessary that France, it is necessary that Christianity should continue.”

1. THREE STAGES

> "All that heroism of race (temporal) advanced in heroism of grace, of eternal race. All that young and chivalrous generosity advanced, to become this young generosity of saintliness... this race of saintliness so particular, so chivalrous, so generous, so liberal, so French" (2).

"Integral" heroism marks in French letters the terminus of a whole evolution. To understand well this new heroic upspringing, which forms the basis of a great current of contemporary literature, it is indispensable to cast a glance backwards, to situate it historically, the better then to draw out the authenticity and providential character of its message.

We certainly would not pretend to evoke here all of the heroic literature of France. We believe that it would not even be useful to do so. For what interests us here is a conception of *heroism*, not a "cult of heroes." France may well have a cult of saints: it scarcely has, in effect, a cult of heroes. It never spares for a long time to its "heroes" the penetrating gaze of its habitual clairvoyance. We therefore do not have to erect a literary Pantheon with the debris of failed epics and official eulogies.

We know, moreover, that a literature which reflects a real element of national conscience and which comprehends a living and life-giving idea of heroism is not of every day nor even of every époque. In effect, if each period has had its heroes – and each one seems to have had those it deserved – the passion of heroism, the heroic act, has only fully burst forth a three moments of French history. If, across all of French literature, the conception of heroism has developed and deepened according to a rhythm so far continued, so far spasmodic, but always in the sense of a comprehension more interior and whole, this development is found to be measured, oriented and dominated by three decisive stages corresponding to these heroic moments of history.

The Song of Roland

The first of these stages is defined by the *Song of Roland*. It is the glorification of the "Christian war" and, through it, of the coming to birth of France. The apotheosis of France which the *Song of Roland* offers us is without doubt premature; it reveals in it none the less

the profound tendencies which would forge the unity of the nation. If Roland and his companions belong to the soil of the "sweet France," it is in the same way as the cross and the knight. They already represent the "system of heroism" of which Péguy speaks, a system of honour and loyalty, a "system of chivalrous thought, and notably of French chivalry" (3). The heroic breath which uplifts the *Song of Roland* could only issue from the quite vibrant atmosphere of enthusiasm of the eleventh century when the crusades revealed to the French warrior his lofty dignity as a French baron, Christian knight, champion of God.

That glory of Roncevaux will be reflected in all the epic literature to follow; it will remain the ideal – scarcely realised – across the Middle Ages. But the ardour of the crusades will not be reborn, and the less severe ideal of courtly love which will replace it will be only too often a conventional elegance. During these centuries – and even the century which will see the birth and death of Joan of Arc – knightly honour will remain for the most part a gesture deprived of its true foundation; bravery replaces true heroism.

Cornelian heroism

To permit the coming to birth in France of a renewed heroic ideal, nothing less than the Renaissance will be necessary, with all the intellectual and spiritual enrichment it brought. Of course, there was no crevasse between the Middle Ages and the modern world; France remained the inheritor of Charlemagne, and of Saint Louis, compatriot of Roland and Joan of Arc. Nevertheless, the sixteenth century witnessed a definitive revolution, a true reorientation, which was manifested above all by a new point of view, a more independent glance cast upon the world, a larger place allowed for the individual personality. As arriving at a mature age, if it no longer retains the marvellous freshness and idealism of its youth, it yet finds itself in a state of forming more solid ambitions, of plumbing the very sources of its idealism, such that the man who emerges from the formative years of the Renaissance will bear with him a matured, if not essentially new, judgement of that human perfection which we call *heroism*.

Many literary, social and religious influences contributed to the maturing of that judgement; all could be resumed in a central tendency: *humanism* (as understood in a very broad sense: the cult of the human), and in pessimistic reactions which were yet powerless to restrain that current which overflows with life and enthusiasm. For the "classic" idea of heroism to emerge clearly from that quest after Man, it shall be necessary that certain different elements – those which derive from stoical antiquity, which the Frenchman can only draw up from his own experience or from the Christian tradition – be "blended" together, in a conscience informed by "Salesian humanism."

This sixteenth century inheritor of humanism and Salesian wisdom who knew how to integrate into Christianity the real virtues of antiquity, this will be Pierre Corneille. But, at the same time – and this is the secret of his "realism," of this authority of a lived reality which transforms even the Don Quixotism of his literary sources – Corneille will be the mouthpiece of a whole generation. His heroic humanism will be that of the 'honest man," an exaltation of

social man in a heroic society, in this "Cornelian world" which truly lived during a few brief years. (We speak, of course, of the Corneille of the masterpieces, of the author who has remained always present as a guide and educator of the French conscience.)

To his contemporaries, avid at the same time for clarity and grandeur, Corneille will bring the insight that heroism is neither a pure mystery nor an affair of poetical convention; than in elevating itself towards the most sublime heights of sacrifice – and one will have the passion of "a small band of common souls" – one can strive for humanly comprehensible motives and fetch up one's strength in a human willingness; that the only mystery which must remain is of quite generous passion, the love of a woman, of the homeland, of God, which strengthens the heroic will without affecting its liberty.

Corneille inaugurated in that way the psychological analysis of the heroism of an "honest man." It can be said that he completed this analysis, at the very least to the extent that his psychological knowledge permitted it. His succession of masterpieces comprehended, one might say, the gamut of heroism: they exalted the triumph of work at first personal or knightly, then patriotic, then moral and finally religious. The "overman of the will"[2] is in the *Cid*, the perfect knight who must show himself worthy of his family and his mistress; in *Horace*, the citizen who fulfils his work for the fatherland; in *Cinna*, the Emperor who, in order to be master of himself, "as of the universe," must: "by a noble choice practise the most worthy virtue of kings"; in *Polyeuctus* finally, the Christian who must abandon in himself the work of his God. The "heroic illusion" which André Rousseaux recognises at the centre of Cornelian thought invades and blooms in all the degrees of human experience, to be clarified finally in supernatural experience, which justifies it, which shows in reality this "illusion" to be "in the service of an immaterial, luminous and sublime truth" (4).

Heroism "sustained unto eternity"

The lessons of the "school of the soul's grandeur" had been well delivered and their authority was destined to remain up to our day; but, even as it guarded the memory of the heroism of Corneille, as an ideal which one would love to be able to attain, very quickly it was becoming impossible to believe in the possibility of such a heroism.

With Racine Christian humanism is already altered. Corneille had demonstrated the "beings who we are," as Péguy will say; but the beings also which we can remain only in a condition of preserving in ourselves an idea more just, more "eternal," than the sad subjective verities of Racine. It is this very same idea of man which we find disfigured in the Racinian universe.

In the course of the following centuries, this idea will be deformed even more gravely. This will be no longer, however, by a pessimistic Jansenism, but by a glorification of the human: whether of human spontaneity – of a sensibility which draws along the will – or, on

[2] This is Nietzsche's famed "overman" (Übermensch) as portrayed in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. How akin is this Zoroastrian hero to Jesus Christ? It is an interesting question, which clearly fell without the scope of the present work. – MJB

the contrary, of a despotic reason which accords no rights to the transports of the heart. In both cases, it is a profound rending which one perpetrates on human nature, a divorce between the life of the spirit and that of the heart. In both cases – in sentimentality as in rationalism – it is human liberty which is misjudged and, with it, all possibility of heroic excellence in the service of an ideal.

It is certainly not the century of the "philosophes" which had been able to provide a renewed vision of heroism. No more is it the revolutionary period, when those who had denied the very strength of heroism were betraying their thirst for grandeur in crowning with antique laurels, in tears and exaltation, the shabbby heroes of a disordered civicism.

Romanticism seemed to promise better. It began, in effect, through the works of Chateaubriand, with an exaltation of all forms of the most authentic Christian heroism. But these promises were not kept. The heroic ideal was not renewed, for the romantics did not know how to arrive at the ends of their demands. Chateaubriand exalted the beauty of heroism, but he had not the taste for total sacrifice. If romanticism is going to develop sensibility in the sense of a fierce Rousseau-esque individualism, in giving it a new depth – under the influence of German *enthusiasm*, as honoured by Madame de Staël – Chateaubriand will count for much. It is he, moreover, who will give the first definition of the "malady of the century," who will have furnished to romanticism as a whole, as much English as French, the very type of the "fatal" man: his René, inheritor of his own sentimental experience.

Through having too closely maintained his familial resemblance to René, the "romantic hero," such as the following generation depicted him, attained in only very instances to a true heroism. Moreover, they are all the dreams of grandeur of the "young France" which are found reflected in the romantic theatre. But the lyrical youths who grew up among the still fresh memories of the Revolution and of war to know finally the deception generally felt under the new monarchy and the "impotent hate" of which Stendahl speaks, who began to write in a society poisoned with religious and political uncertainties and in atmosphere of egoistical war, these beings who lived for long years in a state of "feverish exaltation," how would they have been able to maintain themselves on the summits of the heroic? What was lacking to them – was lacking to Hernani, Lorenzo, Chatterton – is the capacity for happiness. Their idealism is even a kind of decision taken to suffer in expecting too much of life. This essential suffering of the young heart stricken by the ugliness and injustice of the modern world, thirsting for grandeur and purity, we are going to find it again in a more profoundly tragic form in the "sickness" of a new century, in a despair more frightening, more naked, an "heroic" despair which casts into all noble hearts a defiance of the Abyss and which alone can regain a "supernatural heroism."

One could ask if at least Victor Hugo, finally coming out of the terrors of romantic despair, did not know how to offer a renewed vision of human grandeur. But, in his evocation of all heroisms, Hugo remained above all a romantic; if he has a taste for grandeur of the soul, it is for its beauty and mystery, rather more than for its power. What impassions him, what is moreover new and personal with him, is the conception of "hero"; and that hero – Napoleon, Don Carlos, El Cid, the "genie," the "magus" – is always, at bottom, Hugo himself, who identifies himself through pity with all that suffers, who unites himself with the slow and painful ascension by which the "people" climb toward a light which is none other

than God. Hugo, joined with the romantic revolt, linked therefore with the Christian doctrine of the worth of suffering, of the efficacy of sacrifice; but he did not follow Christian heroism through to the end, because he retained the pride of suffering, – his universal pity, a tender love for humanity, did not wish to give way to the humility of happiness, to the humble dignity of seeing his sacrifices accepted and recompensed by a love greater than his own.

One must therefore wait – across the aridity of positivism and the "bankruptcy of science" – for the beginning of our period to see a renewed idea of heroism appear, an idea that is fully in the line of the French tradition, but enriched by the discoveries of modern psychology, and by spiritual experiences which are torturous in a different way from those of romanticism.

It is our third stage which commences, that of a heroism more whole, more interiorised – at once closer to daily reality and more conscious of the mystery inherent in that reality, of the perspectives of infinity which open the totality of a fully flowering human personality. After the epic glorification of he who *battles* in the in the service of his ideal or of his love, and the dramatic glorification of the "honest man" who must generously *conquer himself* in the magnanimity of an ideal love, the "hero" of the twentieth century will be finally he who *gives his whole self* in the quest for sovereign Love.

Already, above heroism, and as it achieves it, is shown saintliness. Behind the "baron" and the "knight" is the ideal figure of the crusader; it is Charlemagne, God's champion, and the pious but quite manly ardour of Saint Louis. Courtly literature itself has revealed, above the purely human chivalric adventure, the adventure of spiritual chivalry: the Grail quest. In the seventeenth century, we guess that the "generous man" owes more to the teachings of Saint Ignatius and Saint Francis de Sales and to the *De Imitatione Christi*[3] than to the lessons of Socrates and Epictetus. But, in the twentieth century, a quite interior heroism, total gift of the self, is not only a summit which the hero does not feel himself necessarily kept from pursuing: that heroism "carried to the eternal," as Péguy will say, is, on the contrary, the only heroism that matters.

This high ideal of an "integral" heroism is derived from an essentially lyrical literature where romantic aspirations continue and are accomplished. There was a necessity, in fact, for the lacerating trials of our century to produce a small number of writers capable of painting the drama of the interior heroism, and of doing so not from the outside – with the conventional attitudes of a saint of a stained glass window – but in drawing up from his own depths a burning sincerity and quite spontaneous élan.

"It is an eternal question," says Péguy, "to know if our modern saintliness, that is to say our Christian saintliness plunging into the modern world, into this "vastation," this abyss of incredulity, of unbelief, of infidelity of the modern world ... is not the most agreeable in the eyes of God" (6). This "modern saintliness" surpasses by a long way the field of heroic literature; but what it may share with it, is a quality of enrichment which must make even the unbeliever rejoice – and for the Christian it is a source of profound joy, a new manifestation of the mystery of the Incarnation.

[3] "On the Imitation of Christ," by Thomas à Kempis.

2. "HEROISM OF THE FRENCH KIND," ACCORDING TO PÉGUY

Before going in quest of "integral" heroism across the chaotic confusion of modern literature, it is convenient for now to characterise the "heroism of the French kind" which is the summit and accomplishment of it. We must ask what the "honest man" could have had in commoén with the knight; and what familial traits we can hope to discover in the modern hero, hero of an adventure more profoundly tragic than that of his great ancestors.

It would be ungrateful to try to answer these questions other than in the spirit and same terms as Charles Péguy. Is it not always to him, to the witness of his life and work, that we must return to see heroism and sanctity where they are most authentically French?

For Péguy, moreover, "heroism of the French kind" is identified very truly with the purest chivalric ideal and with Cornelian grandeurs, as for him French sanctity grows up on what that ideal and those grandeurs possess of the most nobly human.

It is Péguy, finally, who has thrown down to modern France the challenge of its Christian heroic traditions. At the beginning of our century, in a world which tries to shake off the chains of positivism and retrieve the transports of the spirit which had been broken or weighed down by Renanesque relativism, we see him as the "prophet" of a French and Christian fidelity which must be lived in the joy of liberty and in the certainty of the Absolute. It is the same moment as, in an effort of a quite different kind of "liberation", some others, engorging themselves on all that causes our distress, are moving to throw themselves into a quest for the heroism of the Abyss and nothingness; and here it is, in the work of Péguy, that we find not only a summary of the Christianly heroic thought of France, but a new and living synthesis, a renewed actuality of that very heroism, an attitude of heroic and Christian France in the face of the modern world. While others grow drunk on their pride, Péguy – such a small wise boy on the school benches – commits all his fervour to reciting the lessons of eternal wisdom, and that with a limpidity which reveals the profound sources of a living waters of eternal Truth, a Truth eternally fresh, eternally "modern."

Péguy knows much, in effect, about the hero, about the "system of heroism" and the concurrence there can be between that form of human grandeur and eternal values. He knows also, with a Christian realism, a realism which is indissolubly of the earth and the sky – a realism of the Incarnation – that the temporal does not exist independently of the eternal, any more than the eternal is be attained without temporal means; true heroism will then only be the sign of the other grandeur: of saintliness – its sign, its prefiguration, but at the same time its most sure foundation. It has even been said that, with Péguy, "saintliness is the recompense of heroism" (7). All of that rises up, if you like, from his "theory" of heroism, but Péguy does not know it in an abstract way; he sees it.

A Cornelian soul, naturally in accord with the "harmonious city," but profoundly rooted in a concrete and actual reality, son of Christian France – of her laborious earth, of her

faithful people and burning soul – Péguy lives surrounded by incarnate heroisms which are for him at least as real as that which he brands with the name of the "modern world." His "hero" is the republican who is not satisfied with words, who comes to fill his lungs with the air of liberty; it is the citizen who is faithful to his "mystique" – the Dreyfusard of the first hour and of the last; it is the soldier, Psichari, who "gambles his life" for France, for peace, through arms; it is Rodrigo, Horace, Severus and, above all, it is Polyeuctus, who lacks nothing in comparison with them of the heroic virtues of the "honest man." It is Saint Louis, it is above all Joan of Arc, she who has not been a legendary theme for equestrian statues or a symbol for postage stamps, but "a woman amongst all the saints" (8), faithful through illness, weakness, fear and reversals, whose fidelity was not to an abstract ideal, but to what she heard, to the "voice" that called her by name in the familiar surroundings of her life in the countryside, which spoke to her of the "great pity of the royalty of France," of the eternal work in the temporary distress. Finally, above all these fidelities, all these lived heroisms which Péguy has celebrated, That which one glimpses is Christ, the source of all: Truth, Justice, Love and Life.

Heroism – a heroism fully human – is indeed here the point of departure, but it is always a matter of a heroism which asks only to be a "portal to the eternal." Péguy sees it already – at least virtually – clothed again in the unearthly beauty of its point of arrival, as the Christian guesses the fullness of a divine Life in this small leaven which is already transforming the human temper. Péguy is therefore thoroughly incapable of working outside of the "domain of grace" (9), and "there is only Corneille who may have worked like that!" (10). In his life or in his work, it is stronger than him! Anticlerical socialist, he was already Christian; thirsting for heroism, what he always finds there is sanctity; a hero, he already rejoices – the "good sinner" – in what he knows in himself to be of solidarity with the saints, dragging towards them in his train all the sins of his brothers.

Péguy is therefore a good judge of heroism and of saintliness – it is even the only science which he really holds – but one must not ask him to separate them: he knows well that there are there two different "races," but it is always on the "point of dividing" them that he retrieves them. Let us then see, across his works, what is this "heroism of the French kind" which tends thus to be a heroism of saintliness, a saintliness of heroism.

Let us say immediately that heroism is above all a *fidelity* – fidelity to an ideal, to a Master whom one has chosen for one's self because he is a "Master of Truth"; a fidelity which freely accepts every sacrifice even unto the supreme sacrifice of death. It is the fidelity of a knight towards his commander and his companions; of the Christian toward Christ, his Master, but also towards all men, his similars, together with whom he wishes to be saved. It is even the fidelity of the people of France; Péguy's Joan of Arc does not admit that the French may have been able to flee with the disciples on the evening of Holy Thursday: "French knights, French peasants, never one of our people would have been able to abandon him ... Never Charlemagne and Roland, the men of the crusade, Sir Godfrey de Bouillon, never Saint Louis and even the sire of Joinville would not have abandoned him ... I speak of as we are, and as were our saints" (11).

Having become by means of the occasion a "heroism of the French kind," one recognises this fidelity in the hero in his qualities of intelligence and heart which give to heroic action a worth and éclat of a quite particular kind. It inspires a heroism which is at the

same time fully reasonable – one could almost say “logical” – completely willing and spontaneously joyful.

A reasonable heroism

“He who wishes to stay faithful to the truth” (12) must, in effect, have a quite lucid spirit and a conviction as enlightened as it is unshakeable.

If Joan had been given to “hallucinations” as the sceptics wish to see in her, she would not have known how to brave all the knowledge and all the prestige of the Sorbonne: she would not have sourced in the idea of her vocation the strength to face a fearful death. If she erred in flinching a moment before the denouement of her heroic adventure, it s because she was not an exalted type, but this peasant of a common sense so solid that she did not hold danger in contempt or underestimate suffering. Heroism consist very exactly in keeping on even when sees clearly the danger and because one knows where lies the task. It is there that there is “this form of courage so particular and so eminent which the historian will be constrained to name French courage, this courage made essentially of calm and clarity, not of stupefaction, this classical courage, essentially made not of romanticism” (13).

If the French hero is not one who commits himself by a blind impulse, no more is he one who suffers under an illusion with regard to the cause or to the master whom he serves. His idealism must strengthen his will in satisfying his spirit, in assuring him a profound peace, acquired however at the price of constant vigilance. Heroism will not excuse a lack of clear-sightedness, for “the honest man must be a perpetual renegade ... unceasingly faithless to all the unceasing, successive, unwearying, reborn errors” (12). Even if he never gives himself over, in the manner of the Cornelian heroes, to the minute exposition of his interior ratiocinations, he must also have a fortifying – Cartesian – conscience, in never failing to do “everything he will judge to be the best.”

Let us note that, however paradoxical it may seem, it is in its concordance with faith that this intellectual lucidity of the hero reaches its highest pitch. There is, in effect, an act of faith at the bottom of every heroic action; the clearest conviction can sustain a burst of heroic generosity – a transcendence of the self in the realms of sentiment and action – only on the condition of its participation in the transcendence of the self in the realm of intellect, which we call faith. To become efficacious an idea must become an ideal, and every ideal, whether it be the future of a new humanity or the simple beauty of devotion, demands its agreement with a faith. French heroism, at once a literary theme and a reality of life, is born of this Christian idealism which depends upon the certainty of a supernatural faith, itself “reasonable.” It is born of it, and it has lived of it. It is again Péguy who said: “We are as stupid as Saint Augustine and Saint Paul, as Saint Louis and Saint Francis, and as Joan of Arc, and why not say as Pascal and as Corneille” (14).

This essentially reasonable character produces a heroism which is something virtuously human, even humanising ... I was almost going to say “social.” The hero is a leader of men, a chief of the ranks; he shows the way of heroism and it is a way recognisable

by every unprejudiced spirit. If the occasion is favourable, and the will good, there is even a type of heroism which can enter into the souls of those whom one could have believed to be mediocre. This is, for example, the heroism of he – solder or Christian – who knows himself chosen. A brigade has been sent into the centre of combat, "they guess the looks, the cries sent towards them, and the thoughts of the chief on them. Under these looks, these cries, these thoughts, their bruised and decimated troop battles with a courage greater than that same courage itself, resists with a force greater than that same force. In the morning it was equal to the other troops ... it is now different, marked in the eyes of all by the august grace of combat. Chance is the cause of it: heroism entered into it. Such is the Christian: A being among beings, and akin to the humble. But he battles for nature as a whole, the powers of the On High place their hopes in his efforts, he has been chosen and from there comes the increase in his force" (15).

Finally, since reason is that which unites the most different spirits, then France, "land born of spiritual battles" (16), has always recognised in that clarity which is proper to it, a mission toward the whole world. That which she must teach, is that one comes to one's full development, that one transcends one's self in the heroic sacrifice only by dint of striving as a free being whose life has been ordained by Truth.

A willing heroism

The French hero is therefore he who devotes himself quite particularly to this mission of France. But we have seen that, to fully obey the Truth, it is not sufficient to see it: one must believe in it, that is to say approach it, not only with one's intellect, but with the agreement of all one's being. And this is still only a beginning. In the heroic action, the will turned by its faith toward its ideal must passionately adhere to it, with a passion lucid but total. "The French," says Péguy, "are generally Cornelian" (17), and the Cornelian hero – French hero par excellence – is the "overman of the will." If he often appears to us superhuman, it is not as a mystical demigod, but uniquely through that force of will which causes his ideal infallibly to triumph.

Is this "classical courage" not then just stoicism? We know that the Cornelian hero, like the "generous one" of Descartes, bears a strong familial resemblence to the disciples of Zeon; but a stoical virtue conceived after centuries of Christianity could not be completely that of Greek antiquity. In Cornelian heroism, as already in the cases of Roland and Olivier, it is the feeling of a duty clearly conceived which dominates, a will directed toward the good which impels; but duty and will have found a new sense: it is no more the cult of Me which imposes the duty, and strong will is no longer an end: it is pride which appears a fault, not the prudence of an Olivier or the tenderness of a Curiace.

It is true that "what there is of human honour and one could almost say of stoicism and one could almost say in that religion of honour which was chivalry ... was not always in accord with a religion which made humility its very mode and rhythm ... almost its being" (18). But what makes possible with Corneille the true heroism of chivalric honour, is precisely that this honour is not identified with stoicism – and that it is "loved of love" (19).

Its alliance with a quite noble love, itself "honoured of honour" (19), confers on it its Cornelian dignity, and renders it at the same time thoroughly Christian.

Ancient idealism already tended in its most noble manifestations to a heroism more profoundly human than Greek pride or Roman intransigence; but the Incarnation recast everything from within: it allowed the aspiration toward an abstract good to reunite with the Charity of the human passions of loyalty and love.

Heroism is sacrifice, gift of the self in love, or it is not – this is what the ancient paeans of praise vaguely felt, and what modern paeans have not always wished to feel. Or, Charity is the gift of the whole self made to God, or, for him, to his creatures. If this love of charity goes directly to God, one can interpret it as a sentiment entirely "personal"; but, with Corneille, that which shows the interior revolution which Christianity has effected in human life, is a human love which no more sets war between the man and his ideal, which is already a transcendence of the self, something ideal and heroic, because it is an expression of idealism, of the same Charity. It is only in appearance that the heart of Rodrigo or of Polyeuctus finds itself divided; their will is strong because it is one. More often than being false to its nature, their love renounces its rights and becomes an "occasion of heroism." The best summary of Cornelian thought on the subject of heroism, would perhaps be this line of the *Imitation* translated by Corneille himself: "He who knows how to love is capable of anything."

We are far from "fatal" and "baneful" passions which draw along the will and deal death around them. But this heroic love, at once an expansion and a sacrifice, is neither a Platonic "spirituality" nor a utopian dream. It neither contemns nor ignores the conditions of life of the "fleshly world" and the heroism it attains is the very truth of man. "Through his powerlessness even of evil, of cruelty," says Péguy, "Corneille goes deeper than Racine ... his charity is infinitely more profound" (20).

It is evident that such a heroism is only possible in the "domain of grace" where "labour" Corneille and Péguy. The "overman of the will," if he does not want to see himself taxed with being "inhuman," must overcome all stoic pride and egoistical ambition. What is it that will sustain him? – Grace. Yes, but it is not necessary that the "grandeur of the man of God" proceed from a constraining grace reducing the "hero" to a mystical passivity. Corneille was not for nothing a pupil of the Jesuits; for him: "Heaven must offer us its help, then let us go." Grace is found within range of all; a noble liberty invokes an ennobling grace. This is what allows every hope in the domain of heroic actions. And this is a quite French conception of heroism – Péguy dares to make even God say it:

> It is for that, says God, that we love so much the French ...
> They have liberty in their blood. All that they do, they do freely.
> ... It is he alone who lives in the great manner
> With skin rather baked and eye rather deep and the blood of his race.
> And it is he alone who lives in large liberty
> With skin rather baked and soul rather deep and the blood of my grace. (22)

A joyous heroism

Without this "liberty of the children of God" a true heroism is not possible. Suffering, whatever be its intensity, is not heroic in itself; one must know how to avail one's self of it. Freely wished it can become like a personal creation, matter of a sacrifice which one tries to make always more worthy of the ideal of service.

It is France that, from an early time, has taught this beauty of heroic sacrifice, of "chivalrous" sacrifice, to the whole of Europe. The perfect *knight*, hero of a joyous heroism, is like a masterpiece which, in the hands of an artist in love with all spiritual beauties, proceeds from the brute material of warlike nature; this artist is a Christian culture, still quite young, the personality of which was affirming itself at the same time as that of "sweet France."

A good many unworthy things are ranged under the colours of chivalry, but the chivalric society was certainly a school of heroism, teaching not only physical endurance and force of soul, but above all that "French folly ... made of pride and sacrifice, of loftiness and abandon of one's self to the common weal" (23). That folly is such only in appearance, by comparison with the practical life; in reality it is the summit of heroism, the spontaneous *deed* by which the heroic act speaks the silent language of love. It is above all thanks to that folly that, without detaching itself from the earth, heroism can find itself, with a joyous bound, "carried to the eternal." In *Notre Jeunesse*,[4] Péguy still says: "We did not place ourselves at any less than at the point of view of the *eternal salvation of France* ... what we did was of the order of folly and of the order of sanctity, which have so many resemblances ... for human wisdom" (24).

This taste for the very beauty of heroism continues to be expressed in the code of honour of chivalry, even when an over-proud egoism comes to rupture the equilibrium between pride and humility which is serviceable to the perfect knight. It is what knightly honour has taken from the honour of pagan battle, quite simply from honour, a respect of the person which is already a sacrifice to spiritual values, a respect which can become a loving attention to all the subtleties of heroic action. Péguy says of Cornelian conflicts: "In this system of thought the battle is worth more than the victory, and death is of no matter at the price of the correction of combat. It is a well known system, the oldest and strangest that there may be in the modern world. It is not only the system of loyalty. It is the system of heroism. And it is the system of honour ... It is the system of thought of chivalry, and notably of French chivalry"(25).

This chivalric heroism is a game. The hero "loves infinitely more to play without winning, than to win without playing"(26). The saint, it is true, has no right to "play for his salvation"; but he can play for all the rest. In this game the temporal reversal is like a crowning; it completes the sacrifice which the initial risk could only outline. Adversity alone allows the perfection of heroism, preserving it from all that could disfigure it, to bring attention to its purity and glory: "A secret instinct ... tells us that there is always some

[4] "Our Youth"

impurity in success, a grossness in victory ... there is nothing that is of the truly, the totally pure, and thus of the totally great, except for defeat, providing that it be valorously and gloriously acquired, so to speak; sustained....” (27).

It is this “secret instinct,” become a conviction and a force, which is at the bottom of heroic “folly.” In his game, the hero warmly welcomes checks and adversities: he smiles at them; he even anticipates them, for it is not enough for him to fight “correctly” for his ideal: he wishes to offer it a sacrifice “completely pure.” And this smile is in no way a forced or planned smile. If there is nothing of the “grumbling hero,” there is also nothing of the “resigned hero.” “Heroic action is essentially an operation of sanctity, of good humour, of joy, even of gaiety, almost of jokiness ... of inner fecundity; of force, as of a sweet source-water drawn up by force from the blood of the race and the man’s own blood, a surfeit of strength and of blood” (28). This “strength” which overflows in a joyous heroism is of a kind with the genius of France. Does not Vercors say it, in *Le Sable du Temps*:[5] “Nothing in France will be done without enthusiasm” (29)?

Joan of Arc and “heroism of the French kind”

We have already seen that, in the thought of Péguy, the type of “heroism of the French kind” is the saint and warrior virgin Joan of Arc. This fact helps us to recognise that it is a heroism which can attain to the most authentic saintliness; but it also presents us with two precious indications as to the nature of that heroism.

Firstly, it is not *uniquely* a warrior heroism. The “honour of war” with all that it comprises – “blood, sacrifice and willing death” (30) – presents a privileged instance of heroism, but there are other heroic trials which can be even harder and more glorious. “To the highest degree, Joan of Arc possessed to the full the virtues of battle” (31); but she had, further, a second degree of merit, which accrued to her by reason of all that she suffered of treason, of miseries, moral as much as physical, from a civil war and from sickness, this “wearable fabric of the martyr” (32) which has made so many hero and saints.

Péguy knows, from his own experience, that what seems heroic is not always of the nature of the most heroic. In the Dreyfusian era, those who chose for heroism had furnish themselves with a double courage: the courage to confront the open risk of opposing one’s self to the powers-that-be, and the more difficult courage of renouncing their peace of mind in admitting to themselves that Dreyfus was really innocent. And that which is true in the case of heroism, is very much so, further, for saintliness: he is mistaken who believes that saints, in spite of all their sufferings, may have been “tranquil men” (33).

Moreover, Joan, heroin of the “interior courage” as much as of warrior courage, is also “woman among all the saints.” This does not mean only that she added feminine weaknesses to the other difficulties of the heroic mission. More than that, it indicates a character of her heroism which is peculiar, and at the same time typical: a unique realisation

[5] “The Sands of Time”

of that equilibrium of masculine and feminine qualities which is indispensable to the perfection of the human.

We know that true heroism, if it is always the realisation of a human personality, is not completely the same in man and woman. It is in affirming himself that the man transcends and realises himself; while giving himself through love to an ideal cause, he is conscious of elevating himself even unto the grandeur of that cause. If he takes upon himself the cross, it is already the glory of the "Cross" which haloes his head. If he follows too "naturally" his heroic bent, he will set himself up as God, and his heroism will be corrupted at its source. The woman, on the contrary, transcends and realises herself through another; she has for an essential role not only to give herself totally, but to give what she has first received: her personality is autonomous, but of herself she offers herself to the imprint of a higher personality. Then, if heroic élan and the splendour of heroism are more easily found in the man, the woman realises more spontaneously the purity of a heroism where self-love is reduced to nothing. "The male is priest, but the woman is not prohibited from being victim," Claudel will say (34). The perfection of heroism demands in the same being the union of two attitudes, masculine and feminine; this perfection does not detract from the proper dignity of the man, for every creature finds itself in a "feminine" situation vis-à-vis its God; and if we were tempted to believe it beyond the powers of a woman, then we would only have to consider the heroine in whom Péguy saw the incarnation of his heroic ideal.

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So there we have it, this "heroism of the French kind," idealistic without lacking lucidity, willing without being inhuman, anguished without losing joy. There we have what seems to express this word which has been introduced to signify the supreme degree of a "virtue" in the antique style, but which quickly attached itself to the indigenous glories of a French virtue; which will be able to preserve, moreover, its particular clarity across the complexities of modern and contemporary thought. Certitude, liberty, joy – our century has searched for them in even the remotest corners of the human soul, and the last word has not yet been spoken. But the ideal of a "heroism of the French kind" suffers no diminution in this interiorisation of experience: it remains rather as a gleam which guides the seekers across obscurities, as a call which sounds from the heart, feebly sometimes, but as an echo of their most profound and tenacious desires.

But finally, is this "heroism of the French kind" something other than, or more than, Christian heroism? It is clear that it is defined according to a Christian conception of the human person, of the role of reason and of the will, as means by which the natural can gain rapport with the supernatural, in our human process of perfection. This heroism invokes, moreover, the immortality promised by Christian dogma, for the heroic death, total gift of the being, appears in it the most absolute act of faith in the reality of a spiritual world – act of faith, but at the same time act of love, of a love of charity, which [act of faith] is adorned like a lover by virtue of his feather.

It is clear also that all Christian heroism will have to be this reasonable, willing and thoroughly joyous gift of the self which is "heroism of the French kind." But, it cannot be fortuitous that the literary representation of this heroism comes to us above all from France,

that the appreciation of this harmony of “heroic” qualities of the spirit and of the heart appears so specifically French. It is that heroic France sees itself clear in a Christian soul – its soul is hers. It is possible that at all may not be beautiful in that which she sees there – who more than the Christian has the anguishing sentiment of falling short of an ideal? – but the beauty which is truly found there only appears in it with more brilliance. Finally, this heroic France knows how to love with a Christian heart, and with a grace and delicacy which cause a love of love. We shall now see an example of it in a spiritual son of Charles Péguy.

3. THE CENTURION BEFORE THE CROSS

The heroic life, calling of France, lived Christianity – this is the triple discovery that Ernest Psichari made, this grandson of Renan whom Péguy calls: "Young man, young of blood, man of pure heart ... great child, great friend, man of great heart ... Latin, Roman, French, you who of all bloods creates for us a French blood and a heroism of the French kind" (35).

How laden with riches – in spite of their weight of the "modern world" – were those years when, from the basement of his shop in the Latin Quarter, Charles Péguy was leading the spiritual battles of France, while in North Africa, his young disciple was writing at once in the history and literature of France some radiant examples of an authentic heroism!

We must go back to 1906 to see the cavalry sergeant-major Ernest Pischari leave for France for the first time. The military mission in which he was destined to participate was difficult and dangerous, but in that it was just the thing to attract him – he who was searching precisely to put order in his life in submitting to a discipline, to take up again the path where his sentimental experience had led him, to purify himself through heroic effort; who was searching also for a life that was worth the pain of being lived, "the fortifying sensation of going to excess, of elevating ourselves above everyday mediocrity" (36); who wanted to transcend himself the better to possess himself. "Great child" with alive and frank eyes, a deliberately military carriage – willed concealment of his past as an intellectual aesthete – he thirsted for all heroisms, from that "willed heroism ... almost animal, incapable even of expressing itself clearly" (37) which Nangès remarks in Maurice Vincent, to the most conscious and sublime heroism of which he could as yet have only a presentiment. He was approaching an heroic life as towards his natural environment, to draw from there his strength and well-being. No sooner did he enter it than that environment began to reveal itself to him as a homeland at once earthly and spiritual. In leaving France it is the heroic and Christian France that Psichari learnt to recognise and love. Through the heroic demands of his military vocation he felt weigh upon him a responsibility for France herself, for the "dignity of France," and he divined the worth of his inheritance. In these lands of prayer and reflection, where everything sensual seems purified by an influence of fire, he saw, finally, that the grandeur of France is only an illusion without the spiritual reality of French Christianity.

Through his personal experience Psichari was then destined to confirm the doctrine of Péguy: heroism as the basis and the natural sign of a Christian saintliness. That would be his experience as a soldier; for, "of all men, it is the soldier whom he (the Master) has chosen, so that the grandeur and servitude of the soldier would be the figuration, on earth, of the grandeur and servitude of the Christian" (38). That would be his experience as a Frenchman: "Loyalty before France leads quickly to loyalty before Christ" (39). Finally, that would be his experience simply as human being, for, "he who is athirst for heroism quickly becomes athirst for the Divine" (40). It is always the witness as much as the writer who speaks; Psichari sees this spiritual journey as direct, rapid and infallible because he truly made it

himself as he crossed, as a young intrepid chief, without road and without shelter, the burning sands of Africa.

It is impossible, in effect, to separate the literary oeuvre of Psichari from the testimony of his life, to appreciate his works without relating them to the successive stages of his spiritual experience. With him, moreover, the life always anticipates the analysis of his thought, as the thought itself goes before the written works.

To know what idea Psichari develops of heroism, it is therefore useless to search for an answer other than in the totality of his work, where the idea is developed and refined with the experience of the life, with the progessive perfecting of the lived ideal. The Psichari of *Terres de soleil et de sommeil*[6] has already discovered action as a principle of order and grandeur; he of the *L'Appel des armes*[7] begins to rationalise the moral nobility by which it is captivated; he develops a military "mystique" where the ideas of his master, Péguy, find new resonances. But, when *L'Appel des armes* appears, Psichari's thought is already far away: it follows the road of the Centurion, meditating on and examining the lessons of an "heroism of the French kind" which is revealed to him in all its plenitude, that is to say as an heroic action – reasonable, willing, joyous – which is only the expression of a work being carried out interiorly, a quite spiritual work of sacrifice and love.

Lucid and reasonable, he was willing into being, in effect, the man who wrote in *Agathon*: "A Frenchman believes always that sin is more agreeable to God than stupidity. It is necessary when one muses on the lofty mission of the French race ..." (41). Christian, when he was not tiring of proposing, to himself as to others, his loftiest ideal of the heroic, the perfect evangelical state, this ideal would present itself to his spirit as a necessity of existence "of logical men capable of following their beliefs to their end" (42).

But, quite as for Péguy, the heroic life is not for Psichari the coldly, implacably logical consequence of an abstract system: for him also it is a fidelity, the same fidelity which characterises the soldier. Psichari submits himself in the army to an order, a "system of order," but this order is primarily willed and personal: it reigns in the spirit and in the will even more than in the exterior actions commanded by duty. Without renouncing at all his idea of a fully human military heroism, Psichari would have been able to subscribe to the opinion of Renan: "To force all to submit to obedience is to kill genius and talent" (43). The soldierly submission of Maurice Vincent or Maxence is a "servitude still more noble than grandeur, more great than grandeur, immeasurable, because it can only be measured against the idea itself ... it is that of the priest and of the thinker" (44).

The grandson does not disown, in effect, the revered old man, companion of his childhood: he perpetuates him in all that was most respectable and noble in him. But, the nobility which Renan had thought to find in the sage's life – high priest of knowledge – this nobility, Psichari is going to choose it, conquer it violently in spite of the revolts of a passionate nature which holds no *a priori* certitude in the moral domain, no habit of supernatural belief. Renan had lost his faith by an excess of intellectualism, for an exaggerated respect for that discarnate reason which will not support the least apparent deviation from the aspect of life, the least refusal of a purely logical explanation. Psichari

[6] "Lands of Sun and Sleep"
[7] "The Call of Arms"

restores the equilibrium in learning in the school of the heroic life the limitations of reason and the vital necessity of faith.

This faith of the Christian soldier brings, or favours, a detachment with regard to life, but not thanks to an artificial "spiritualisation," which will tear the hero away from the "world of the flesh" and of the living. Quite on the contrary, this faith gives an historical sense, and at the same time a spiritual valour, to a quite human heroism: "It is to the Crusades that I go back if I wish, too isolated in the dune of Ouaran, to contribute my deeds to a great movement of humanity..." (45). This faith binds the soldier to his homeland in the past and in the present, for "what is required for the quality of Frenchness, is the faith of Saint Louis and of Joan of Arc, if not their saintliness. How they think like me and do not dare to say it..." (46).

The heroic task, clarified by faith, accomplished through love of the Order, further supposes for its accomplishment the "unique mechanism of grace which confers on the soldier of France his manly pride and these noble letters which have been given to us, this free unconstrained gait, hardy, the head held high, this gentleness and good nature, all our force and our virtue..." (47). This grace is a Christian grace. Even before having retrieved it from its source, Psichari has felt its effects: the youthful pride of willing service was as a presentiment of the joy of supernatural sacrifice. But, at the end of his career, like Joan of Arc, Psichari is the soldier who sources his most "military" heroism" from a sacramental union with Christ: "Carrying in his heart the God of Armies ... he gaily traverses suffering and danger towards death or triumph" (48).

Ernest Psichari is finally, and especially, the man of "enthusiastic and heroic endeavours," of joyous heroism – "chivalrous" in the fullest sense of the word. In his writings, he exalts the heroic "deed," overflowing with love. The hero is the young Violet "when, a messager, he was thrusting himself toward death, armed with his gleaming lath and, like the angel Azraël, clothed in white. One would have thought that he was going to fetch his fiancée, and that joy, already, was transfiguring him" (48).

Just so did Psichari live his last day's journey, joyously confronting death, for which he so carefully, so lovingly performed, with all his strength, his personal purification. His sister Henriette has given us a moving testimony of that day: "That smile in the midst of that dying, his friends all saw it, he refreshed them with a fond hope, that was all he could give them, it was a lot, it was a license to go on hoping" (51).

That was at Rossignol, 22 August 1914. Facing the certainty of death, Psichari had advanced his artillery as far as possible, and he kept on firing, always firing – to encourage his men – until, summoned by his colonel, he was cut down on the road by a bullet, and fell, his arms in a cross...

The same radiance of a generous élan characterises his work as it does his life. When *L'Appel des armes* appeared, Bergson wrote: "If I am not mistaken, this book will contribute to the creation of a new moral atmosphere – of which we have need" (52).

It is not, however, by the grandeur alone of his ideal and his example that Psichari was a leader: he is that also by all that makes of him a child of his century and the authentic representative of his generation – in his misery as in his grandeur. If, like Polyeuctus, Psichari is the "honest man" who knows how to "promote" a human grandeur even in the domain of the supernatural, it is something else as well. His "heroism of the French kind" is not only

reminiscent of Corneille: it grows from an experience which is rather Pascalian – and quite "modern" – of moral and spiritual miseries of the man separated from God or making his way toward Him. Like Péguy, Psichari has known "the predicament of being unhappy"; but, while Péguy never "works" except "in the domain of grace," with Psichari the "woe" which concerns him is deeply instinct in himself; it is an inner poison against which one must constantly fight. The route that his works retrace partake of the most painful experience of that misery, and faith does not come immediately to deliver the "Centurion," to give him powers wasted by disorder of the passions. The exterior heroism which Psichari exalts, at the same time as he lives it, is only the sign of this other quite interior heroism which must re-establish order in his soul in permitting him grow to toward the total gift of a purified love.

Others had already outlined or would take up again the themes suggested in the work of Psichari: moral valour of action, liberty and submission, passion and purity, clarity and faith, but their conception of heroism would not always be so comprehensive, so profound, so attractive and at the same time so "real"; they would too often lack either lived experience or the principles of life and truth which Psichari drew from an heroic Christianism.

One may thus say that the life and work of Psichari have realised, in a single heroic gesture, the ideal for which Barrès searched his whole life without fully defining. Like Barrès, Psichari has sought after warrior heroism as a healing principle for himself and for France; he has desired "the war that will purify ... that will be holy, and sweet to our stricken hearts"; but he did not hesitate to go beyond the appearances of heroism even unto the infinite which was calling him. He could thus transcend all that was romantic in Barrès – all tendency to complain in his affliction. Death itself is not ranged before him [Psichari] as an irreducible problem, a final checkmate. From instinct he went towards eternal Truth and Life – and his ideal did not deceive him. He could realise thus at once a wholly lived heroism – demanding the concentrated effort of all his powers, physical, intellectual and spiritual – and a literature of heroism, which examined the heroic existence, which revealed its psychological mechanisms and surmised its spiritual sources. And this heroism that he "accomplished" is am "heroism of the French kind," a heroism that is French in a Christian way. Today still, before all there is of the heroic in the world, before all the heroism which is sought in literature as in life, Psichari seems to pose the question of the Centurion: "If he looks at the unchangeable sword with love, why does he turn his eyes from the unchangeable Cross?"

4. HEROISM AND THE MODERN WORLD

Ernest Psichari, whom we have taken as a kind of symbol, was not alone on the path of heroism. In the French twentieth century, there was not only the "modern world," in the sense which Péguy means by that term. It is true that, during the interbellum years, one could have seemed rash – if not ridiculous – to try to establish an heroic "climate" of the century. Péguy tells us, however, that it is only necessary that a small number of people have a taste for heroism for a peoples to possess the instinct for the heroic; and the years 1940-5 have well proved that this number was far greater than the cynics would have believed – those same cynics who did their best to fetter action and extinguish the élan of a Count du Plessis or a Jean Mermoz, those for whom all generosity was only one more proof that "the French are simpletons." We reclaim then the right to examine at one draught, to not dissect to extract from it some "heroic moments," this half-century which comes to an end with the years of the Resistance and which marked, let us believe, a stage in the literary evolution of the idea of heroism. We shall ask ourselves what may be the climate which permitted, and still permits, the hatching of an ideal of an integral heroism, at least in certain environments; which sharpened the thirst for it, at least with certain elite persons.

It is evidently impossible to unravel everything, to retrieve all the threads of a spiritual tissue the design of which perhaps retains some dazzling surprises for future historians. One can only make a choice of the riches – and miseries – of our century: to recall some significant events, some currents of thought and of spiritual tendencies which have drawn similarities between very dissimilar beings, to indicate finally some "presences" which seem to have dominated our époque.

Certainly, to identify some influences, to grasp a climate, does not mean to "explain" a literature. Here, as elsewhere, a certain sociologism is only good for letting the essential element of life escape. A journal article or a literary novel can "explain" up to a certain point. A literary work which is truly a work of art preserves always its unpredictable mystery, and modern life only makes this part of this mystery grow greater, or at least more evident.

It is no longer the time, in effect, of the middling writer whose talent would turn itself so naturally towards clearly delimited genres and accommodate itself to the tastes of a well characterised public. One imagines with difficulty a modern Boileau legislating for all the literary genres, and stigmatising in the name of society all those who would dare to deviate even a little from his teachings.

The time has revolved to no less an extent from the great writer who would dominate a whole period to the point of appearing to exhaust its every possibility: of a Racine who makes himself the interpreter of a whole society, to whose social and literary proprieties he would give flesh; of a Shakespeare, whose powerful originality assimilates so well to itself all the aspects – spiritual, artistic, even material – of contemporary life, that in making his choice of the real, it is the *all* that he seems to have chosen.

In modern society the situation of the writer is complicated in a different way. Were he as great as Shakespeare, it would be impossible for him to embrace with the gaze of genius all the domains of modern life. And, on the other hand, however small were his originality, he would have always to exercise a personal choice of the profusion of genres and styles, and above all of real data, of lived complexities which are offered to him. Temperament, education, familial and social attachments, all can contribute to this choice, as, moreover, the hazards of the mode either of fame and favour or the hostility of the critic can intervene on their part between him and his public; but, in the final analysis, it is the writer himself who must choose the character he will cut in leaving the anonymity of modern life, it, and the effect that he will have on his contemporaries, it is he who will have willed it, in his own personality, if not in the fullness that it will be able to assume.

In any époque, moreover, literature does not necessarily reflect every essential of life. If it has always as its social function to express collective "exigencies," to make itself the interpreter of the society in its quest for a more or less ideal welfare, it has always been necessary that such exigencies be strongly felt, lived by a great writer before their incarnation in literature. In some way as one defines it, genius is irreplaceable. Or, in this complex society which is the modern public, there are many "collectivities," and one cannot say that they will all receive their appropriate interpretation. One sees national crises, sensational exploits or discoveries, collective enthusiasms or despairs which exercise no apparent influence on literature. If, on the contrary, the epoch of the Dreyfus Affair has remained a symbol and a challenge for all those thirsting for justice and liberty in the twentieth century, it is in great part because it was the heroic initiation of Péguy, himself the initiator of literature into heroism and saintliness. If the depths of the unconscious sounded by modern science have attracted – and swallowed up – so many writers of our century, it is because a Proust first bestowed the key of that subjective universe.

What does this say, except that the modern writer, who seems separated from his public, driven back into solitude by all the complexity of life, plays a role which is only the most important of it? More than ever, and even by reason of that complexity, it is up to him to tease out the spiritual content of life – to him whose gaze is more clear and direct, whose sensibility is more acute and profound, to him finally who knows how to express what others can only more or less obscurely feel. The "exigencies" which he will express will be indeed his own, but the human significance of his work will be greater in proportion as he can make the exigencies clearer and more urgent in the minds of his contemporaries. Today all literature could therefore be said to be "engaged"; and a true literature of heroism, if it cannot issue automatically from group propaganda or the "climate" of a party, can be no longer a simple literary genre. It can be only this thing at once unpredictable and profoundly driven: an act of faith.

Barrès and "national energy"

This faith in the heroic, in the possibility of a true human grandeur, in the man who is born from the surpassing of the purely human – faith which often only has the air of a "small

hopefulness" – this faith has not been lacking in our century which is sometimes apparently so without belief. It was already a condition of life for the beginning of the century which saw the "bankruptcy of science," and, through it, the failure of the dream of infallible progress, and which strongly felt, at the same time as the poison of relativism, the bitterness of defeat and of national humiliation. It was so as not to throw it all in completely, to keep faith with life, that one gave one's self over so distractedly to "heroic" socialism, to dreyfusism – or to anti-dreyfusism – to militaristic nationalism, to all which seemed to promise occasions for personal grandeur, for heroism.

Here nothing is more symptomatic than the influenced exercised by Maurice Barrès. Certainly, it was not very substantial, the "faith" of a Barrès. The "cult of Me" in vain established itself on Ignatian principles of discipline, in vain aimed to perfect itself through the nationalistic cult of patriotic sacrifice and by all the virtue of terror: it scarcely succeeded in establishing the existence of an heroic liberty – necessary condition of a true heroism – for "the free man" found himself always too fettered through being too acutely conscious of a determinism of biological or psychological forces; he suffered irremediably from a Renanian "lucidity" which prevented all absolute faith, which came always to poison his trust, rejecting it in a nostalgic and exasperated regression.

It was there, however, this faith of Barrès. It would always rise again from a reversal, from what seemed certain to be its death. It would front up, responding like a deliberate choice to the challenge of events. And, if others have been able to possess a more spontaneous and dynamic faith in the heroic, the attitude of Barrès reflected too strongly the historical climate of his epoch not to impose itself.

To dessicated intellectualism, France felt duty-bound to oppose the cult of life; to its mortal feeling of enfeeblement, to oppose a renewal of all the heroic passions. But, who better than Barrès has felt at the same time the taste of death – at once haunting and alluring – and the call of life? It is almost in spite of it, in spite at least of all that invited him to despair, that he brought heroic solutions to every problem, every distress.

Barrès sought these solutions in France's history, in its chivalric and Cornelian past; and, like Péguy, he saw them embodied in the national and Lorrainian heroine. In 1914, he rejoiced in the idea that, "the armies of France go to war today as always with the feelings of generous heroism which animated the chivalrous Joan of Arc" (54). If Barrès first of all desired civil war, if he acclaimed with enthusiasm the world war, if he wanted to be the interpreter of that war so that nothing would be lost of the moral riches it promised, it is because he believed in the heroic virtues of France, it is because he wanted to believe in it, even if faith, virtue and heroism did not possess for him that transcendent worth which we would have wished him capable of admitting. He believed as a Frenchman; he believed above all as a Lorrainian, he who, at the beginning of the century, had wished, like Sturel, to "make himself more and more Lorrainian, to be Lorraine so that it may pass intact through this period when a mindless and fractured France seems to be causing a general paralysis" (55).

This heroic attitude that Barrès many times chose for himself decided his influence on many young people, even on those who would not perhaps pose so many questions, but who were more ready than him to acclaim the answers, being less profoundly struck by all there was of romanticism in the "cult of Me." To them Barrès showed the grandeur for which they hungered, and proclaimed a faith which found in them a profound echo. Even those who were

unsatisfied and detached themselves from him were none the less his disciples. Man of action implicated through political engagement in the destinies of his threatened country, artist who dreamed these destinies according to an ideal of chivalric honour, expressing with an evocative magic the "mystery in full light" of national grandeur, Barrès was at once creator and interpreter of the climate of heroic enthusiasm which accompanied the militarism of the pre-war years, and with which it was desired to surround the tragedy of 1914-18. It was he who prepared the terrain for the "integral nationalism" of the French Action; it is again he who oriented generous souls toward the total sacrifice of their "imaginary crusade."

However, this war of 1914 revealed in sum only the moral bankruptcy of a proud nationalism, of an ideal at once too and too little human. The climate of heroism which Barrès contributed to creating did not suffice: heroic souls did not breathe there with comfort – spontaneously they climbed higher – while others found there only a pretext for their cynicism or their right-thinking sufficiency. Barrès himself was obliged to make the progressive discovery of the emptiness where he found himself trapped, where, moreover, all his career as a man and writer risked being broken on a simple point of interrogation: To preach the grandeur of a Me enriched with all the secular treasures of the ancestral land is of no help to a man disabled by the thought of his irrevocable death; to preach the grandeur of France could lead one to admire a frightening debacle, compromising all which France seemed duty-bound to symbolise; to preach even "the generous dream of eternal France" (56) – the salvation of Christianity accomplished by the Allies under the standard of Joan of Arc – still risked leaving only empty words with which the President of the League of Patriots would be flattered during that delusive war. Was Barrès faith in the heroic therefore without foundation? His heroic work – "call to the hero" – was it incapable of giving an authentic nourishment to a generation which believed itself satiated by it?

Certainly, this was not the end of heroism. The last heroes had not perished with Péguy, with Psichari, fallen, in the apotheosis of a first impulsion, for the glory of "eternal France." In spite of that desperate disgust which grew as it went like a contagious sickness, until its open irruption after the war, in spite of the disillusions of a Jules Romains, fascinated by the anonymity of "a million men," or of a Dorgelès, deceived by a war "regulated like a workman at his job ... slaughter without magnificence" (57) which not keep the intoxicating promises of 1914, in spite finally of all that can led to cynicism, warrior heroism had not been the monopoly of some rare geniuses, of a Guynemer or of others who evolved in the full light of a sky reddened by the lighting flashes of battle. And it was not a matter simply of a "bravery of the flesh." The letters of which Barrès himself gives account in his *Chronical*, the narratives of a Duhamel returned from the bedside of an agonising France, and of so many others who knew the resplendence of an unsuspected human grandeur, all these witnesses make us see a most authentic heroism.

Yes, we see it, this heroism. But has it for us a real worth, more real still than the suffering which it admits? Yes, still, if we can discern behind heroic gestures a spiritual reality. But, for that, we must know how to believe in that heroism with a faith which is more than just a trust in biological and psychological forces, in the "treasures of the race" and "subterranean sources" of the "eternal French miracle, the miracle of Joan of Arc" (58). And it is this faith which Barrès lacked. If for Péguy the heroism, even temporal, of Joan of Arc is found, quite naturally, to be "carried to the eternal," Barrès must try to explain even what he

feels as the supernatural by a sort of aesthetic and nationalistic mysticism. The tragic question which is posed for him is therefore "what good is it?" This is his drama in a nutshell. He knows that nations are ephemeral, that this "eternal" of the "French miracle" will not last forever, and he does not believe in another eternity. In 1920, when he thinks of the heroes of the war, he asks himself, "They shunned their humanity. Towards what? *Would it be towards nothing*? ... were they mistaken? Were they deceived?" (59).

Poet of warrior heroism, Barrès therefore declares, but does not explain to himself, the élan which true "heroes" possess. He who has preached war is obliged to ask himself: By what right? In the name of what have they been sacrificed? He knows that for heroes themselves their response had no need of being reasoned, that it was implicit in an absolute faith, and certainty of the worth of their sacrifice, of which he feels only the nostalgic desire. The only "heroic solution" available to modern times, Barrés would glimpse it on the mystical summits of which he always felt the attraction, but he sensed it also in the simplicity, the purity of that élan of the modern warrior, to whom all glory, except the true, is refused. "The hero is the gift of himself," he finally recognises (59). But he lacked the supernatural intuition of a Claudel to seize the very essence of the gift that the dead of war have made:

> ... the thing that we have really given, who is capable of receiving it?
> Not you, not that which was our homeland, not that which you call glory,
> Suffice to contain it in its entirety!

The After-War Period

Affirmation a thousand times repeated of a very pure heroism, and sometimes quite supernatural, but negation more and more painful of all the dreams of a national grandeur which would be founded on an unshakeable prosperity, that war of 1914-18 was fated to see itself be followed by a frightful reaction. As long as the war lasted, all could rally more or less to orders of moral grandeur and patriotic sacrifice, some elevating into a virtue the hard necessities where they found themselves, others truly transcending these necessities, and transcending themselves, in a profound gift of the self to a France effectively "eternal." Henri Ghéon was not the only "man born of war" who then received, in an outline to which he was privilege, the revelation of prayer and saintliness! But, the war finished, that ambiguity was fated also to finish. The "carnal land" – in the exact proportion to which it did not accord with "eternal France" – was fated to make seen, heard and vividly felt its wounds, its deceptions, its disabling, while, at its side, the spirit of authentic heroism wrapped itself in silence as if to purify itself to its benefit.

While the selfish reactions of the "after" period openly triumph, and many dazzling acts of valour see themselves reduced to the dimensions evoked in the *Héros aux mains*

vides[8] of Launay, rare therefore are the nostalgic manifestations of that spirit of the "before" period, the gleam of which one more often hides so as not to tarnish it. The heroic literature for which we waited after the war was not forthcoming, or scarcely.

In February 1924, however, Paul Reynal brings off a real success at the Comedie Française with his piece, the *Tombeau sous l'Arc de Tromphe*.[9] At first it is a battle which breaks out and which evokes that of *Hernani*,[10] but one soon gives way to the opinion of those who discern in the piece a real tragic power and above all a magnificent act of piety towards a heroic grandeur extinguished in a deceptive peace. That soldier who returns, after forty months of war, taken out of his country by his own heroism, represents all those who have only wanted to do neither more nor less than their duty to France, who have done it magnificently, and who have learnt in suffering and destitution to desire a perfection almost superhuman. His quite Cornelian heroism, founded in duty and honour, seems, in effect, to pursue a still higher perfection. But this evocation of a heroism which wishes to be pure and holy excites nevertheless the most anguished questionings, for he who creates it knows well that, even as he writes, the spirit of the after-years is not conquered – as the sacrifice of a soldier comes to conquer it in his play – and that the war has not killed war. On what then to found the worth of that heroism? God, whose name trembles on the lips of the fiancée, unfortunately is not living; the quite laic "saintliness" of the soldier remains therefore as a homage, perhaps vain, to a divinity already thoroughly forgotten.

At present, only an integral heroism would permit that heroism discovered during the war to live to its height. Some days after the armistice, Ghéon was already saying: "It is certainly harder to live well and die well in times of peace than in times of war. Thanks to heaven, this ambition is within the power of Christianity" (61). It is the period that will see the birth, in fact, of the great movements of the Christian renewal. But it is also that wherein a new "evil of the century" will propagate, grave in a different way from the "feverish exaltation" wherein the wounded sensibility and excessive pride of a romantic "young France" express themselves.

We have already seen it: no more than the revolutionary period, the war of 1914-18 did not keep its promises of national grandeur and triumphant idealism. But there was still worse. That war, which an elite entered as if for a crusade, gave the confusing revelation, not only of the brutality of which human nature is capable, but also of its powerlessness before impersonal forces let loose in a dehumanised world. At the beginning of the war many horizons seemed to grow sombre through the Renanian thought that "reality is perhaps sad"; at the end of the war, it is the very existence of human reality that will be questioned. One does not ask one's self only if one is beaten, if one has suffered for nothing, if immediate satisfaction provided through action, if joy, even thought, is not the only thing of value, the only reality. One seeks out avidly "earthly nourishment," or rather, one takes its compensations in a world recognised as unreal. It is of Gide or Proust that one demands the secret of existence, the key of a universe "liberated of all its prejudices," of all idealistic "illusions," as of all "principles". If, in 1931, in his preface to *Vol de Nuit*,[11] Gide could

[8] "Heroes with empty hands"
[9] "Tomb under the Arc de Triomphe"
[10] The play by Victor Hugo, later an opera by Verdi
[11] The novel "Night Flight" by Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1931)

mourn the lack of heroism in contemporary literature, it is above all that, in intellectual circles, they had been too attentive to their own lessons of "fervour".

The "heroisms" of Gide and others

There is only one "heroism" which can well co-exist with the cult of the "present moment" which is spreading itself abroad: it is that heroism of "sincerity" of which Gide himself provides the example and which is a form of his religion of risk – of a gift of the self made to the blind man and with no object. In the literature of the "heroic" genre sought after everywhere, this will be the "intimate journal," a genre which, without excluding the depiction of an authentic heroism, lends itself above all to all the exaggerations of a sincerity which delights in itself. With this new "heroic" cult, one will be quite far from the Cornelian heroism of the "honest man." "To be honest," says Jacques Rivière, "is to have only thoughts that can be recognised as one's own: but to be sincere is to have every thought" (62). One will also be far from the ideal of a Barrès. The man of Barrès saw his life, even his inner life, situated in precise frameworks, rooted in a terrain, drawing his power from a spiritual heritage as he needed it; and he wished it thus, not conceiving the perfecting of himself outside of the current of generous life in which he felt himself to be participating. The disciple of Gide is on the contrary the "open" man who wants no limits. Nothing must constrain him, neither his origin, nor his principles, nor any fixed idea of the limits to which he must tend. All his grandeur is in always realising something new, in always risking himself further from the beaten paths of thought and sensibility: "To know how to free one's self is nothing; the arduous thing is to know how to stay free" (63). "Heroic" literature will therefore be destined to be only the achievement and the fixation of more and more "liberated" attitudes. It will be the intimate recitation of "Nathaniel," ungoverned by any care of morality. Actions will not be painted there as good or bad, and all their heroism will be that aimed at by the recitation itself: an absolute authenticity, an irreplaceable spontaneity that will grow through its hardiness.

Certainly it requires courage, and a lot of audacity, to advance one's self in that path, for it is a path of solitude where all communion is refused in advance, a desert where one must neither search for nor establish landmarks. But this "gift of the self" which one makes, outside of all duty and all love, to nourish an always unassuaged desire, that gift is not total. One keeps for one's self the essential: heroism itself. One only surpasses one's self the better to possess – for an instant – that which is most perishable in one' self. The grain of wheat dies in vain: its sacrifice is vitiated. The new life is born already corrupted, for one only desired it for its taste of death.

We must admit, moreover, that, with the "heroes" of Gide, this death remains sometimes rather symbolic. These adventurers, who risk all that makes up the bourgeois life, seem often to renounce their duties rather than their rights or their privileges: they scarcely risk exchanging their bourgeois comfort for unhappiness, but only for a precarious and better felt pleasure.

One could object that there is indeed in Gide the nostalgia of a true heroism put in service of a duty and an ideal; but this sentiment, which aligns above all with his period of communist "faith," is surely not that which determined the Gidean influence.

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The "fervour" of an "interior life" in the way of Gide was not of course the only ready-made absolute offered to the man of the after-war years. Others than Gide preached a doctrine which flattered his need for grandeur even in turning him aside from the total gift which would have satisfied the aspirations of his heart. Other loveless heroisms would find their appropriate heroes. This was the cult of the "poetic self" of Valery, where symbolism sought its perfection in an intellectual absolute. These were the audacities of a surrealism where the artist "surpassed" himself in the infinite. This was further, with a Motherlant, the cult of physical risk, "ruled by hygiene," the principal of an aggressively lucid heroism which developed, on the football field or in runnings of the bulls, the moral virtues of war. This was finally the rather more efficacious "heroic" influence of Charles Maurras.

A system of ordered thought, tied to very strong political passions, the Maurassian doctrine rallied, in effect, many of those who did not want to be left confused by the negations and the openings to the infinite of Gide.

Further, this Maurassian nobility of the "well-born" (64) man is a grandeur of the soul without charity. It presents itself as a principle of heroic life, but it disavows all that distinguishes a true heroism from a simple moral force – all that "magnificence' of sacrifice by which the hero is tied to his ideal, all that spiritual development which gives to heroism a worth independent of all efficaciousness (a worth which Gide himself notes in his *Journal*). Certainly, one can agree with Maurras when he raises himself against the "vain and empty panegyric of action for action's sake" (65), and when he affirms that, "the final cause judges the movement"; but it is still necessary, to safeguard true heroism, that one reserves to one's self the right to judge also the act in itself, the personal "gift," and one must not above all limit the "final cause" to a practical efficacy – even for the good of the city – to a simple conservation of human worth.

In what sense was that Maurassian doctrine also a "ready-made" metaphysic? It is true that it did not present itself completely as an absolute – the "hole through on-high" was never exalted – but it pretended nevertheless to interest the whole man. The rules of life that it recommended derived from certitudes of the political order; but, for those who could not surpass themselves through a metaphysic, religion was there, principal of authority and harmony, a religion emptied of all its mystical content, but always enough to satisfy their need for an appearance of absolute certitude.

And so it is that in the after-days of the First World War the doctrine that was already pursued in the breast of the Barrèsian grew into a great anguished debate: it is an individualism pressed as far as an "heroic" egotism which disputes with a nationalism which negates the person, where heroism in no longer, or tends to be no more than a potential force in the service of the conservation of the nation, an energy that must not be dissipated for idealistic illusions. With Barrès it would have sufficed – as it sufficed with Psichari – if the cult of traditional magnanimity had been allied with the desire for a mystical saintliness, if

faith in the heroic had referred quiet simply to faith, if the "cult of me" had been definitively surpassed, and an integral heroism – a heroism of saintliness – become possible. Between Gideism and Maurassism the principles of such a heroism were torn to pieces. The young man who wishes to realise himself must choose: Will he be a Lafcadio adventurer? Will he engage himself, to lose himself there, in an "aristocratic" doctrine of sterile discipline? Or yet, will he take the part of evasion, the route of romanesque adventure? The "discovery" of Alain-Fournier presents itself at once as cause and effect of that need for evasion which has led certain people to live in the unreal, but which will no longer be unfamiliar with another discovery: that of the integral heroic existence.

Just one look will show us that the literature of the époque develops above all by the side of the way to the infinite: of integral egotism or of the lived dream. However, the inverse tendency, to be more turned toward action, will exert itself in a none the less real way on the development of French literature; the ascendant politics of Maurras will be well felt in intellectual circles, and, in spite of its "realism," its program engages a battle of ideas. It is the "treason of the clerks," signalled by Julien Benda in 1927, which is pursued: the "national passions," derived at bottom from pride more often than interest, monopolised the spirit of intellectuals; and while, before the war, these passions were confounded with an ardent quest for heroism, now, whether it be on the left or on the right, human acts of valour themselves tend more and more to be subordinated to the aims of political action. We have already seen what heroic idealism becomes under the rule of nationalistic "efficaciousness."

Towards heroism through the life of action

Gideism and Maurrasism are not however alone in constituting the climate of that époque. If we turn now toward that which would seem to favour a literature of integral heroism – of the total gift of the man – we will find there also, besides spiritual and intellectual tendencies, inspirations offered on the plan of the active life.

The colonial army continues to be a school of heroism. The Moroccan period is pursued under Marshal Lyautey. In North Africa, in the service of the fatherland, a Bournazel can live and die a hero – just as Charles de Foucauld lived there a saint to die there a martyr – without having to ask himself if his sacrifice was worth the pain, if he does not find himself swept along in a fratricidal battle which threatens that which makes up the very reason of the fatherland's existence. But, it is perhaps above all in aviation that those who thirst for a life of heroic action practice "evasion," and we will see later, in stopping to consider the work of Saint-Exupéry, that that way could lead from a "manly life" in the most superficial sense toward an extraordinary perfection of the human being, to a profoundly heroic humanism.

In the field of civic life also there are those who try to have energetic action at some remove from the enterprise of a totalitarian doctrine. At the moment of the greatest success of the Action Française – it is the Young Republic, under Marc Sagnier, which tried to validate the principles of Christian civism. And, at the time of the condemnation of the Action Française by the Church, the submission of many monarchist Catholics releases, as M. Yves Simon has remarked, a "liberation of mystical energy" which will make itself felt at a later

date. Besides the "*little realist fools*" of which Bernanos speaks, "readers of *The Day*, of *Candide*, of *Gringoire*, of *I Am Everywhere*, insulters of the oppressed and adorers of force" (66), there is then, in the active and even political life, those who witness to the heroic willingness of France, to the willingness of a true heroism in the service of a pure ideal. However, taken together, the same author had reason to write in 1941: "That which was exhausted in France over the last twenty years was the faculty of engendering, maintaining and exalting these collective beliefs which assure at once the energy, efficiency and discipline of collective action" (67). In normal times the heroic will is only ever at work in an elite; but, in the between-war years, it is even the latent will of heroism, essential to the French people, which found itself more and more snuffed out, thanks principally to those who vaunted the most their spirit of patriotism.

In this "twilight of the myths" however, there shone some gleams, glowing even with burning flames of faith whose radiance made itself felt quite far from the political domain, and was reflected at times in a literature of the heroic spirit. It was in one aspect a faith exalted in the promises of justice and universal liberty produced by that communist ideology which presented itself as the awaited response to the most profound needs and desires of modern man. In another aspect, it was a renewal of the Christian spirit, already announced before the war, and realised now among the elites in this great burst of active fervour which responded to the appeal of Catholic Action.

We have cited the experiences of the years 1940-1944 as proof that in the course of the twentieth century France never lost its taste for the heroic. Let us add that the heroism of those years was prepared by the work, often hidden, of those who kept alive during the between-war years the fires ever more nourished by faith and charity. It was by no means immaterial that during those decisive years some elite groups were already prepared, that there were communists who were not only politicians – who were no more scarcely materialists! – and that Catholicism was not the monopoly of the "right thinkers."

5. HEROIC "PRESENCES" OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY

After having recalled some historical elements which contributed to creating in France an heroic "climate," let us examine now in a deeper way of what that climate may consist, and what may be the spiritual tendencies which it supposes. We believe we can say here that the push towards the heroic found itself in some sort directed, and that the domain of heroic existence seemed to be dominated, over the course of the century by certain "presences," that is to say by the moral action of some giants of thought and through the spiritual paternity of some precursors. It is therefore through these "presences" that we will try the better to grasp the climate that we are trying to define.

To whom is literature owing for its haunting by a personal grandeur for which it repeatedly expresses the imperious need and the anguished desire? Would it be Barrès? We have already spoken at length of the Barrèsian influence, at once creator of values and expression of aspirations of a whole youth. But the true spiritual "presences" have developed and interpreted tendencies that are deep in ways different from a Barrèsian nationalism. Lacking a real faith, Barrès was incapable of accompanying his disciples further than the threshold of the Christian heroism "of the French kind" which he loved to preach. If his work seems to us today to be outdated, if his message carries no more, it is because he did not touch the bottom of the soul; his relativism could not echo in the abyss of the Absolute.

Quite different is the appeal of Nietzsche, an appeal to a superhuman grandeur, launched toward the end of the nineteenth century, received in France at the beginning of the twentieth century, and which has not yet finished resounding its echoes in the more and more profound regions of the contemporary soul.

In 1902, in his preface to *Pages choisies*[12] of Nietzsche, Henri Albert wrote: "The influence of Nietzsche on the young literature of France has already been considerable. It will keep on growing day by day. Wholesome? Evil? What does it matter! It brings to us new matters on which to think, new motifs to live" (68). Nietzsche was already "present". This young generation who avidly acquired every doctrine of grandeur, as many nationalists as socialists, and every occasion of heroism – such as the Dreyfus Affair – this generation could not fail to be sensible to the Niezschean "dramaturgy." The philosophy of the superhuman opened up to him seemingly infinite perspectives, indicating to him the laborious yet illimitable road of ascension, offering him reasons, not only to live, but to strive, to say "yes" to the most arduous things, to accept fully his responsibilities, to go towards battle – and above all war – as with all painful occasions of grandeur and increase of life.

Exaltation of instinct, of irreplaceable individuality and of that willingness of power which Malraux will call "divine willingness," the philosophy of Nietzsche worked like a

[12] "Selected pages"

tonic on men scarcely escaped from the prison of rationalism, on those "fervent" for life, who wanted to sacrifice themselves to it, but to it alone, in ceding nothing of themselves to the basely comforting cult of an irreversible progress or a facile religiosity.

Like Bergson, a liberator who launched many spirits on the path of faith, and even of Catholicism, Nietzsche, he also, would be for many a call to courage, an arena for surpassing one's self. Nietzsche, wrote Alain-Fournier (70), is "our father in everything"; but it is of course a fact that the blasphemous laugh which celebrated the term of the Nietzschean ascendancy toward a liberty "beyond good and evil" did not always find an echo among those who followed the path leading to the summits of the inhuman. If Nietzsche is "present" in the most authentically heroic heroes of literature, it is because they are many for whom "divine willingness" is become the willingness of a "grandeur of man with God." But equally numerous are those who, over the last fifty years, dig up through their thought, and realise in their life, the more "underworld" aspects of Nietzschean thought. Many false heroisms have thus found in Nietzsche their prophet.

What is, in effect, the "fervour" of Gide, if not a striving to attain to the Dionysian sources of the superhuman? It is indeed a "sense of the earth" expressing itself through the sensibility of the artist. Gide's "strong" man – he who thinks and calls himself nevertheless happy! – is sensible of Nietzsche's "cheerful knowledge." Gidean "sincerity" is itself apparent in that "hatred of fiction" (71) which Gide particularly admires in the superhuman philosophy. Does not Du Bos tell us that Gide is perhaps "the only Frenchman who has apprehended, appreciated, felt Nietzsche at his true worth – not at all Nietzsche the hero of thought, but the unshakeably vital Nietzsche" (72).

Let us dwell for a moment on the Nietzschean "solitude." The desire for or refusal of a real communion – which is called love – is, in effect, a touchstone for judging contemporary spirits. The sense of the essential solitude of the individual was never more acute. It is this sense which led a Saint-Exupery to search for, and retrieve, the conditions of a true communion between souls. It is the same anguished sentiment which drove Alain-Fournier to communicate as far as was possible the dream lived, and so cherished, of his childhood. But, for those of the line of Nietzsche, this solitude is not only essential to our created nature – destined therefore to surpassed in a transcendent love – it is even an absolute. For them, the feeling of our solitude is more than a condition of all human grandeur; fully willed, this sentiment becomes the principle of a grandeur which is properly superhuman. In the eyes of Nietzsche, stigmatiser of the "too human," all communion, all effort to escape our essential solitude, is a kind of impurity.

Gide, for his part, does not know a real solitude; that "peopled" soul has not the force of solitary spirits. But he is no less, he also, the enemy of all effort of communion, of all that could do harm to the irreplaceable character of our individuality.

For a Sartre – the "thing for the self" is less human than the overman! – communion is not even possible. The impurity which Nietzsche does not want is called for him "appropriation." The "*existant*" is condemned to his absolute solitude as to his liberty, to his inalienable grandeur of the uncreated creator. With Sartre and his disciples, the "presence" of Nietzsche in our century in thus consummated in the absence of all. "God is dead" – so Nietzsche announced; and, under the empty sky, Sartre echoed him: "Let the man be." But, since God is no longer, let man recognise his void, and let him have the courage – heroism,

the only thing possible – to be only an unjustified and irrevocable choice, on which the whole universe depends and which will be always and implacably to be remade in the impenetrable solitude of each existence.

In his book *Portrait de notre héros,*[13] M. Albérès develops the idea that Sartrean Nietzschism represents the "second wave" of a movement which gave "its first oscillation" between 1900 and 1910, but which failed to find in that époque any appropriate interpreter, the romanesque technique being not yet suited to the expression of "metaphysic" based on the primacy of the vital force and negator of all traditional "wisdom."

We do not share the exclusive attachment of M. Albérès to the novel as the sole depository of our moral preoccupations, and even as a compensation for an inexistent theology for our contemporaries, but it indeed seems that the present vogue for the existentialist novel represents an extreme limit of the field opened up by Nietzsche to a thought declared to itself. To show itself consistent, even in its recognised flight toward "absurdity," this thought should end by rejecting all hope, even the hope of the "superman," to be realised, in the same way as the Gidean "fervours," still too overloaded with poetic memories of a lost paradise, to hurl itself finally against the bars of the prison where it has come to be confined. For, and here we agree with M. Albérès, it is indeed the "absence of God" which destroys human liberty, and the man who is present only to himself – who has rejected, with their illusions, faith and hope – will only be able to live in the Sartrean hell of *Huis clos,*[14] if he does not try to save himself by the hopeless stoicism of Camus, or by transfiguring in a Promethean willingness, as does Malraux, the hard necessity of being confined in our "human condition." Certainly, "this courageous atheism has its beauty" (73), but that beauty, of which the techniques of the modern novel have bound themselves to showing the worth, is devoted to death and to nothingness, just as the heroism which is attached to it. There are beings even in hell, but it is not the damned who we will ask to teach us the ways of life.

By Nietzsche's side, and often through him, Dostoevsky is present, he also, in all the disarray, as in all the generous searches of our century. With Nietzsche, an "all is permitted," rigorously logical consequence of denial of God and watchword of a contrarian heroism, seeks its justification and even its apotheosis; a "divine willingness" avidly sets itself to create a universe in its fashion. Of this "all is permitted," it is Dostoevsky who first dared to announce the frightening possibility. Only, with Dostoevsky, this moral chaos, where "underworld man" mocks himself of all idealisms, striking at the shadows where God is absent, is in no way a subject of Dionysian joy; Dostoevsky contemplates this chaos, and suffers through its horror. He also experiences the torturous desire for an absolute spiritual liberty; but, with him, this desire does not wish to be for a prideful refusal of love, of the God of Mercy: his need of liberty inspires him more often as a defiance to whoever would pretend to limit this same merciful Love, and above all to whoever would wish to interpret as a sentimental brotherhood the terrible mystery of our solidarity with the "last of men." This is perhaps cast into the abyss of "all is permitted"; but we also, we feel the attraction of this abyss. If we remain at its margin, is it through justice? Is it through cowardice? He to whom

[13] "Portrait of our hero"
[14] Sartre's one-act play "No exit," which premiered in 1944

we devote a facile pity, he it is perhaps who has born freely the weight of our sin – and who will find the first mercy.

From the study of Nietzsche we can gather the indication of a slope that we must climb in itself, of a necessary striving to be realised, without feeling obliged on that account to go as far as the diabolic pride of the "overman." But, under pain of foundering in despair, on can scarcely follow Dostoevsky across the sufferings and complexities of the human heart without accepting the only possible solution: the hope offered to us by the Father of the "prodigal son," the God who reserves a place in his heaven for the Marmaledovs of the earth. The prodigal son who would be capable of feeling all the horror of his sin and who would then have the "power" – in the Gidean sense – of not returning to the Father, that would be less than human; and, in the school of Dostoevsky, we will scarcely risk ignoring the evil we all share. The "presence" of Dostoevsky is therefore a presence of the frightful revealer. But at the same time – and even because of that evocation of sufferings that we recognise as ours – it has been for many a unique appeal to faith and hope, and above all it has brought the divination of an inexhaustible charity profound in a different way from the mud in which we sink.

The mission that Dostoevsky recognised in the Russian people, to make Christ and his Charity known in the modern world, this mission he himself fulfilled in his way – a way tormented, it is true, and sometimes equivocal. It is that he has obliged us to consider up close evil as it is, but also the wounded and bloodied face which so often hides from our eyes the authentic traits of Christ present in our contemporaries, and which has made us guess the nature of a perfection which we desire, but which we seek in a manner too – or too little – human. Dostoevsky's characters can seem nothing less than "heroic" in the traditional sense; but their grandeur is otherwise: according to the word of Jacques Rivière, they "have first of all this utmost depth. They have all of man,, but also what man has of God" (74).

The "grandeur of our suffering and the suffering of our grandeur" – this is what the Dostoevskian power brings to mind. Through it, his influence attaches itself clearly to another "presence" which is still more real: that of Pascal.

Our century is, in effect, "Pascalian" – perhaps even more than that of Pascal! We have already seen it reflected as such in the work of Psichari, he who was so painfully, and so heroically, conscious of the grandeur and misery of our human condition. But, it is in the course of the twentieth century that, in the presence of those who take the side of praising man, and those of blaming him, and those of diverting themselves," the true human grandeur has been proclaimed by "those who seek in moaning" (75).

Modern man certainly does not recoil from the abysses which Pascal opens for him. He experiences fatally the attraction of that "type of evil ... as difficult to find as what one calls good," and which provides, it also, an "extraordinary grandeur of soul" (76). But, if he is a Christian, this contemporary of Claudel, captured by the abysses, can estimate also at its just price the dizzying risk which Pascal offers to him, the beautiful risk of faith, essential to all spiritual life and which turns one toward emptiness only so as to liberate. The growing light which shines for him on insupportable weight of our suffering, itself is revealed as shadows and the matter of striving toward another light, invisible still, but of which one has a presentiment. In this sometimes desperate quest Pascal holds out his hand. Everywhere he is present.

To the unbeliever also, he for whom “the sky is empty” and life absurd, from the moment when he feels himself burnt by a thirst for spiritual grandeur, Pascal can be his brother. He also knew the dumb ‘anguish” which is born of two sentiments: our inalienable responsibility for our destiny and our powerlessness where we are to free ourselves from the strict limits of our knowledge and our love. This solidarity felt with so many desires and so much suffering was the very principle of his liberator spirit.

There can evidently be no question here of retracing the influence of Pascal in the twentieth century, a theme which exceeds by a long way the domain of literature. One would say, in fact, that the dazzling light of the certain historical night of joy and tears never ceases to cast its radiance across the shadows of contemporary consciences, an invitation to hope – but sometimes also an accusation of inflexibility and pride. Let us therefore say only that Pascal, everywhere present in our century, is above all there where one seeks sincerely the true grandeur of man, and that it is through this that his influence touches the very heart of our study of a “heroic” literature.

Already for Barrès, Pascal is the embodiment of the ideal of the successful quest in our modern world: “This mysterious Pascal is an exceptional being only by virtue of his intensity; he is one of us, but sublime; he is the catholic hero” (77).

We know that Pascal will be the companion of Psichari in his African wanderings which are the visible counterpart of the inward spiritual itinerary of “Centurion.” For a Jacques Rivière, as for so many other soldiers of the two wars, he is still the companion of the long months of captivity which run on “on the track of God” and of saintliness: Pascal – “one of those to whom I *adhere* the most...” (78). For François Mauriac, Pascal, “brother of all sinners, of all converts” (79), is at the same time, “the only humanist worthy of that great name, the only one who denies nothing of man, [and who] embraces the whole of man to attain to God” (80). One could prolong indefinitely the list of literary testimonies.

Humanism, heroism, saintliness – some ideal which modern France proposes for herself, she still reclaims, in effect, from that great ancestor who seems ever to be advancing on the ways of moral and spiritual grandeur.

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Others also have made felt in the course of our century an heroic “presence,” others nearer in time than the ancestor and brother Pascal, and more closely involved in the heroic aspirations of France than the great subterranean wind which carries towards her the lacerating cries and diabolical defiances of a Dostoevsky or a Nietzsche.

It is first of all Péguy himself, who has not only been the theoretician – or the “theologian” – of heroism and of saintliness, and the example of a French kind of heroism sustained until death, Péguy who further had the gift of making others love – and practice – the antique or Christian virtues which he cherished himself. There is a testimony which Jerome and Jean Tharaud make to Péguy of the young years of Sainte-Barbe and which is significant here: “In what some or others of us have been able to do of good, there is often an unknown portion of ourselves which goes back to Péguy. If he did not have the force to make of us the heroes and geniuses of which he dreamed, he created in his friends the happy illusion that they could do something” (81). This will be the role to some degree of Péguy in the course of our century: to breathe life into unsuspected grandeurs in no other way than by

directing them through his brotherly trust and stimulating idealism. Péguy "prophet of fidelity," contrary to Nietzsche, "prophet of rupture" (82) – has himself given to his century reasons to live and to strive, reasons based on hopefulness and on the sentiment of a "French kind of liberty," of that noble liberty of the children of God.

We know, through having long studied them, what were the heroic "tendencies" tuned and reinforced by the presence of Charles Péguy, tendencies which proceed, moreover, from the very essence of that integral heroism which is expressed more or less clearly in all there is of the truly heroic in contemporary literature.

Perhaps less graspable, and however quite real, has been the contribution of an Alain-Fournier, the message which he bequeathed to the after-war period which acclaimed him without fully understanding him. For the *Grand Meaulnes*[15] is not only an invitation to escape into a fairyland of memories and imagination; it is also the cry from the heart of a whole youth – one might better say, of the eternal youth which does not wish its treasures of faith and hope to be taken away, which seeks to gain a perfect communion with a perfect purity of heart, which aspires finally "unimaginably to possess fullness and to have scarcely any other joy than Joy" (83).

Alain-Fournier, said Claude Aveline, is "the truest of men and the most unreal" (84). And if he has stayed present in the conscience of our century, in what that conscience possesses of the most noble, it is, in effect, because he never wanted to let himself be taken by all the appearances of life which are crystallised in sterile attitudes, but accepted. When he speaks to us, it is always in the name of what he would wish from us, of what we ourselves would wish in the most intimate part of our being. "I would wish you like myself," he wrote to little B., "and that, in your country, as in mine, one might feel one's self fervent and high enough to meet one's love at a turning of a road!" (84) – this love which does not allow of "the smallest impossibility," the principle of all heroisms as of all saintlinesses.

Alain-Fournier left for the war in 1914 never to return; but he left, in his "dream" of childhood, the consecration of all quests for an ideal beauty; against all "realistic" appearances, he testified to that which is the true reality of life. "I have loved," he wrote again to little B., "those who were so strong and so enlightened that they appeared to create around themselves like an unknown world" (86). All of the *Grand Meaulnes* is along these lines. And this force and this enlightenment are in no way principles of separation; they are only the invitation to follow the "hero" of Alain-Fournier into the "unknown world" where our need for joy, for purity, for the total gift, for spiritual heroism, will be satisfied. This invitation has not always been well understood, but hearts have also retained it; it has drawn certain people toward the heroic conquest of Joy.

It may perhaps be unexpected to pass from the enchanting intimacy of Alain-Fournier to the abyss of suffering, as much physical as moral, which opens up to us another "presence," no less "real" and, for most of his contemporaries, no less "unreal": that of Léon Bloy. However, the "unknown world" which this "pilgrim of the Absolute," of the thundering voice and so exquisite a heart, wishes us to enter, is indeed the same as the nostalgic time of youth of Fournier sought out. If, seen through the work of an Alain-Fournier, the purest

[15] Alain-Fournier's only novel. Translated variously as "The lost domain," "The lost estate," "The end of youth," &c

heroic aspirations of our century seem to be resumed in a need for joy, for purity, for the total gift, it is, at bottom, that they are resumed in a single need, which is essential to the human soul: the absolute need for God – and for Christ, without whom we cannot approach the Father. Everything, our sufferings as much as our desires for grandeur, all leads us back, in effect consciously or unconsciously, toward Christ – so that, in consequence, we may not turn away from either his exigencies or his gifts. And it is toward this same Christ, toward the Lamb of God who redeems also the sins of the modern world, that Leon Bloy turns us. A new John the Baptist, crying in the desert, incarcerated in a prison of poverty and neglect, he offers however to those who suffer and who do not wish their suffering to be lost, to all those who aspire to a grandeur which seems to be refused them, his liberating words: "There is only one sadness, that of not being one of the saints" (87). There is finally the "only thing necessary" which, Alain-Fournier tells us, because it is necessary must be possible – at least for all-powerful Love.

This saintliness which it is necessary for us to cultivate for our flowering into joy, is something other than a contradiction of our human condition. Only, what seems in our condition to diminish us is revealed here as grandeur. Saintliness is the "absolute gift of the self, such as Jesus practised": the willingness "to make one's self insulted, reviled, whipped, crucified" (88) in order to help the next person. It is above all joy – but a joy against which one must exchange all pleasure: the "joy of love against which nothing can prevail, not even crime" (89).

The thunderous voice of Leon Bloy certainly did not find a great echo when he was alive. However, the wall of silence which was set up against him bears eloquent witness to the uneasiness which Bloy cast into consciences. One was afraid, in effect, of confronting the man of faith that he was. And, in spite of this silence, the prophetic voice not only rallied the small group of the faithful and the godchildren who found the road of Montmartre or of Bourg-la-Reine: it truly prepared the blooming, in literature as in life, of an heroic Christianism – or to say more aptly, in the spirit of Bloy: a reflowering quite simply of Christianism, for "the Christian without heroism is a pig," according to the characteristic word which Bloy ascribes to an "envoy of the Holy Spirit" (90).

Bloy, prophet and pilgrim of the Absolute, does not give us however an "idea" of heroism, even of a heroism susceptible to being a "gateway to the eternal." It is that he moves always in the regions of pure faith. Even if he feeds upon our human pain, the grandeur which he exalts is always like a defiance to the purely human: it is the apocalyptic mission of Napoleon, the shattering image of the God he denies; it is the supernatural grandeur of the "monster of saintliness" (91), Joan of Arc, who receives from heaven at the same time the two apparently incompatible gifts: the genius of war and the vocation of a martyr. Bloy's Napoleon is the instrument of a "mysterious will" which takes him he knows not where – his grandeur is at once more and less than human. Joan, she, is the image at once of Mary, the Virgin par excellence and the true Liberator, and of that France of which one does not even dare guess the august designs of God. She is great with a alarming greatness; a saint, she however remains human – and humanly heroic, but with a heroism itself absolute: the madness of the Cross.

This madness is, in effect, for Bloy the whole of heroism. Outside of that madness, and leaving to the side super-terrestrial manifestations, all that would be heroic will be only

an empty appearance or even hypocrisy. But if, like Dostoevsky, Bloy seeks, and finds, a true grandeur in what causes most horror to the general run of men, the ‘all is permitted” which is a temptation for Dostoevsky, and an absolute grandeur for Nietzsche, gains no ground with him. What exalts him, is not the promise of an unfettered “liberty,” but the very dignity of that ignominy which reduces man to the essential of himself. He travels spontaneously to the deepest part of the abyss, to the complete laying bare which redeems revolt, all the revolts of all men. The sacrifice of Alexis Karamazov, and the purifying love of Sonya become, in the world of Bloy, in an atmosphere quite charged with eternity, the perfect gift in the perfect suffering of the “poor woman,” of she who has kept nothing, nothing but the Beatitude of Love – she who has however her share of solitude, but, in the Communion of Saints, will be alone only the better to be “present” to all the souls who must delve in the treasures of suffering. If we share the faith of Leon Bloy, may we not add that solitude was for him also the secret of his “presence”?

In 1917 the prophetic voice of Bloy was silenced, and only had another twenty years for its true re-echoing. The war of 1914 took off Péguy, Psichari, Alain-Fournier, and so many others of their line. We have seen moreover some reactions which it inspired: for *one* man “born of the war,” how many spirits in disarray! We have seen also how a slow working of renewal was being pursued, as much in the domain of action as in that of thought. This is not to say, however, that for the literature of heroism the between-war period was a time of inattention. It was, on the contrary, already the hour of harvest, for an heroic literature such as only modern France could have given to the world.

In works as different as those of an André Malraux and an Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, one can follow, in effect, paths debouching more or less close to the final goal: of that “integral heroism,” truth and grandeur of man, which all seek, each in his own way. Better still, besides these sometimes groping efforts, there were decisive realisations. Here is, in effect, the progressive blooming of the Claudelian universe, where man will be able finally to satisfy his thirsts for heroism and for the Absolute – where, in the sacrifice of his whole humanity, he finds himself, and finds also the Whole Power, the Whole Liberty, the Whole Love, of which he recognises himself to be the infinitely replete inheritor. Here is still the light of faith of Bernanos, shining into the most mysterious corners of the human heart, revealing a grandeur of man, glimpsed not *beyond*, but *through*, good and evil: the very mystery of a saintliness grappling with “underworld” forces which range “under the sun of Satan.”

It is not surprising that, in the troubled atmosphere of the between-war period, such works may have appeared unprecedented and almost monstrous. But, in the light of all that followed, of so many spiritual experiences evoked still – and all the same – by the word “Résistance,” even in the “light” of that experience of despair which for many is contemporary existentialism, we see better that a Claudel and a Bernanos have been above all vanguards on the roads of spiritual discovery. Today their work can find its true climate, a climate which they have certainly helped to prepare, but which is not less proper to it than to the still more vast and profound universe of French thought.

6. ROMAIN ROLLAND AND THE "BREATH OF HEROES"

Before examining those works where heroism of the French kind was manifested in a more integral way in the course of a second "before-the-war" period, we should fill a gap left in our evocation of all that could create the heroic "climate" of our century: let us pause for a moment at the work of Romain Rolland. If we have neglected him up to now, it has been deliberate, for it seems to us that Romain Rolland, although intimately involved in so many major events, and in so many currents of thought of our century, remains however a little outside – and in certain regards above – the political as much as the literary history of our time and our country.

We have to discuss here neither the political position of Romain Rolland nor the merits or demerits of the attitude which he adopted during the First World War. Let us accept as indisputable his sincere idealism, the moral rectitude and true love of humanity which characterised the efforts – perhaps premature – that Rolland made to spread the ideas of a universal peace, and of that supranational community which seems to us today more than ever necessary.

That which should give us pause is the Romain Rolland who launches his heroic appeal at the beginning of the century, at the moment when "the old Europe dulls itself in a heavy and corrupted atmosphere," and "the world dies of asphyxia in its prudent and vile egoism": "Open again our windows," he then says to his contemporaries. "Let the fresh air in. Let us breathe the breath of heroes" (92). It is still Romain Rolland, poet of the "humble heroic life," of that heroism which he would lay at everyone's door, so that a humanity worthy of its noble destiny may come to fruition.

Why, in spite of the beauty and the moral elevation of his work, in spite of the influence that he has not failed to exert without as well as within his country, Rolland appears to us to remain, however, outside of the heroic tradition of French literature and of the achievement of that tradition in contemporary literature?

The heroism which Romain Rolland shows us and exalts is certainly a lucid heroism, for which "the sacrifice is well, when one understands why" (93); it is a heroism illuminated by a "reasonable" faith: a faith in the worth and moral destiny of man, referring to a "truth" which is "force," "purity," "light," "source of energy" (94); It is indeed also a fully willing heroism of men who are free and who work in humanity through a true love of their brothers. It is a heroism of sacrifice, of the freely accepted gift of the self through which one realises moral grandeur, its "truth." Finally, even if it rejects all bravura [fn] , it is still a heroism which must be accomplished in joy, giving itself even this motto: "Joy Through Suffering."

Why then is this heroism not essentially, and eminently, a "heroism of the French kind"? Why did Psichari write in his *Journal de route*,[16] on 4 July 1911: "I have read Jean-

[16] "Journal of the way"

Christophe ... this book is odious to me, in its style, its ideas, its plan. Nothing is less French"?

Rolland, it is true, places himself on a supranational plan, and radically opposes all chauvinism; but one cannot say that he is insensible to properly French grandeurs – to our "heroic action, from the Crusades to the Commune," to the "tragedy of the French spirit ... the abyss of Pascal" (95) – nor that he fails to recognise the heroic mission of France, the "grandeur of her Destiny," by which "the most mediocre, in terms of power, are seized ... willy nilly, they accomplish the law of the God which they deny, the *Works of God through the French*" (96).

What is not "French" in the heroic work of Rolland pertains most often, so it seems to us, to that appeal to the "great man" which constitutes the very basis of that work. We know, in effect, that the heroic literature of France is not a literature of "heroes." But, Romain Rolland in vain tells us that the hero, "is he who does what he can" (97); in vain he affirms: "I do not call heroes those who have triumphed through their thought or their force, I call them heroes who were great in heart" (98); for him the hero – the man "true" and "free" who is ready for sacrifice, ready heroically to surmount himself to realise his moral perfection – this man is always a "superior" being: it is Beethoven, it is Michelangelo; it is one of the fictive spokesmen of the thought of Rolland; it is always someone who senses in himself the the breath of the "divine," someone who is less conscious than the general run of men of the need to be sustained by a Love which is not one's own, who therefore risks by his "heroism" even the failure to arrive at a *total* gift, for the ultimate end of his action – whether or not he identifies it with the 'God" inhabiting all his brothers – he will always be tempted to place in *his* moral being and in *his* truth.

"There is only one heroism in the world: it is to see the world as it is – and to love it" (99). But, it is precisely that heroism which is only possible to him who has the sense at once of transcendence and of the incarnation. The heroes of Romain Rolland love life with a heroic love, but this is because they see it as already in some way "discarnate," that they see it with the eye of the artist, creator of beauty, that they feel themselves carried away, even in suffering, on a wind of enthusiasm. "The truly great man," says Rolland, "is great in the most ordinary life" (100); but he said further also: "Great souls are like great mountain peaks ... I do not pretend that the general run of men could live on those summits" (101); "The humble heroic life," such as he portrayed it, remains, in effect, a transposition which "ordinary" men seem scarcely capable of seizing – just as his heroic supranationalism remained also a plan too absolute to influence men engaged in the battle for the homeland.

Heroism is always a surpassing, and it must be of an intransigent being; but, in "heroism of the French kind," it is not a matter of realising in man an absolute "divinity"; it is a matter of the perfecting of a contingent being: God has no need of him, but he has need of God. "The grandeur of the man with God" and "the misery of the man without God" will be the two aspects of his being, and he will know sometimes to found his grandeur in the acceptance of that very misery, of that relation and that imperfection which makes him feel the better what he has in common with another – he will know, in receiving all, to give himself whole in an "integral" sacrifice.

7. SAINT-EXUPÉRY AND THE QUEST FOR MAN

By the aeroplane, "one leaves the villages and their accounts, and one regains a countryside truth. One does the task of man ... to be man, precisely is to be responsible ... Truth for man is what makes of him a man ... Only the Spirit, if it blows on the clay, can create a man" (102).

Twenty years ago he who meditates thus commences his meditations in the desert, at the airfield of Cap-Juby. He was a "man with a hairy beard, round face, and worn shirt" (103) – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, man of action, but a great man and a philosopher, who was going to follow his meditations, by the light of the stars, in the shadows and anguish of war, questing always for the truth of man, and finally finding it – sung by the stars, suggested in the smile of a "Little Prince," who would teach him that one "only knows well with the heart."

In the accomplishment of a doubly creative destiny – aviator and writer – Saint-Exupéry has left a unique testimony of an elite generation, but he did better still: he gave an irrefutable response to the question posed in 1936 by Jacques Maritain: "Can there be an heroic humanism?" In *Humanism intégrale*,[17] Maritain demonstrates, in effect, the possibility and defines all the signification of a humanism "disengaged for itself, and conscious of the self, which leads man to sacrifice and to a truly superhuman grandeur, because then human suffering opens the eyes, and is supported in love, not in the renunciation of joy, but in a greater thirst, and already the exultation of joy..." (104). This humanism, "capable of magnifying the man in communion" (105), and which "could only be an heroic humanism" (105), Saint-Exupéry discovered in his experience of the heroic life. Taken with the imperious need to surpass himself in heroism, he arrived at an ideal of communion which enlarged his vision of human grandeur to admit there all that is human and to give a new sense to his heroic action. Finally, through his literary work, Saint-Exupéry gave a quite particular importance to the spiritual destiny which he accomplished: he made himself one of the spokesmen of the at once humanist and heroic vocation of modern France.

We know, in fact, that heroic literature is testimony, at each of its stages, to a profound correspondence with the spiritual vocation of France. It is in its epic tone that the France of the Crusades sang, charged with founding and defending European Christianity. Classic France, which fathomed the depths of Christian morality, proclaiming the grandeur and liberty of man in the face of new pessimisms, is at the same time "Cornelian" France. In our time, when social disintegration demands a superhuman effort of fraternal solidarity, where the failure of all cowardly facile idealisms calls for nothing less than the purity and force of a perfect charity, France of the Christian spring has not failed to make heard its

[17] "Integral humanism," (1936)

appeal to saintliness; and it is this heroic appeal which the new literature of heroism has echoed. Cast towards all men of good will – even unto those who would appear to have no other gift than that of suffering – this appeal has been received, moreover, with an immense generosity, by certain people whose "unbelief" is only a faith too jealous of its shadows to admit a suspect clarity. Amongst these "unbelievers," Saint-Exupéry is one of the most generous, and most widely heard.

Certainly, our century has lacked neither epic heroism nor "grandeur of soul" in the Cornelian sense. A Guynemer, "artless with the look of an eagle ... Roland of the naked" (106), and a Bournazel, "accomplished type of the French knight" (107), have clearly lived their *chanson de geste*, knowing to sacrifice their personal happiness to knightly and patriotic duty. France is justly proud of them. It is however not in them that she recognises the most authentic message with which she is charged toward the modern world. The "integral heroism" of which our world has need is a heroism at once less superhuman and more supernatural.

At the beginning of the century, we saw the "heroism of the French kind" of Psichari; the courage of the soldier, which is revealed as a symbol of a quite interior Christian grandeur. We shall see the modern heroism of aviation become "integrally" heroic in the thought, as in the life, of Saint-Exupéry. Yet courage will not suffice here to define heroism; the work of Saint-Exupéry opens with a question: what good is courage? In "integral" heroism a battle, and finally a victory, in the spiritual order is also necessary. Such a victory is accessible to all, but it is not bought for the price of a simple willingness. Saint-Exupéry makes us see well that there is no "saintliness at a cheap price." Heroic humanism is found at the end of a road of trials: hope precedes perfect charity.

The work of Saint-Exupéry is also witness to the fact that the modern quest for an integral heroism – gift of the self in a quite pure love – does not proceed at all from a sickly romanticism. It is not a kind of compensation for those who are powerless and unapt for the joys of life. Finally, this heroism is not a denial of all that is modern; it is not a matter of a refusal of the real progress of our civilisation.

We lament, in fact, the bondage of man to the machine, the dehumanisation of modern life; but for Saint-Exupéry the heroism of the air, even while it is fully human, is situated at the forefront of modernity. This "heroic humanism" in its quest for man serves as a "tool" for one of the most sensational conquests of modern times: "The earth teaches us more of it than all the books. Because it resists us. Man discovers himself when he measures himself against an obstacle. But, to attain it, he needs a tool. He needs a chisel or a plough. The peasant, in his labour, takes little by little some secrets from nature, and the truth which he learns is universal. In the same way the aeroplane, the tool of aerial lines, involves man with all the old problems" (108). It is the same spirit which has driven man to climb mountains and conquer the sea as drives him now to the conquest of the ways of the air.

But, this heroism of Saint-Exupéry has another "modernity," more profound than the technical perfection of his instrument: the same nostalgia which causes our anguish in the sterility of modern life prompts us to seek in this exalting conquest of the air a moral and spiritual worth. "Nostalgia is the desire of one knows not what ... and is that lacking to us?" (109).

Seeking what is "lacking to us," at once in a physical battle with the elements and in its progressive discovery of the true Love – of the "network of ties which causes becoming," (110) – Saint-Exupéry realises a humanism which is integral and heroic – and modern. He will realise also – because he is a writer of his race, poet and philosopher – an heroic literature which has nothing to do with the conventional epic, but which does not hold any more to simple reportage, which bears the technical detail of aviation while losing nothing of its human poetry. That literary work is a witness born in the name of all of those who lived heroically in the epic years – also tragic – of the birth of aviation, but this witness is ripened by a spirit which evaluates action at its true worth, which plumbs the depth of its strength and is only content with what makes heroisms great: a love which is sacrifice and joy.

It is not at first, however, that Saint-Exupéry came to reconcile the need for heroic action which created the paths of the air, with the sweetly contrasting ties of love, without which man feels himself a stranger, wandering – absurdly – on our planet.

In *Courrier Sud*,[18] which appeared in 1929, this need for action is above all a need to get away. The pilot, Jacques Bernis, reflects bitterly that "all his life been employed in trying thus to flee" (111). Without a goal, searching for he did not know what, he was fleeing all that is banal, mediocre, conventional. He had even tried to find love in his flight, in taking with him that Geneviève, oppressed by "unjust" and "absurd" ties; but, in trying to break the bonds, it is herself that he broke. His untiring flight was not compatible with life: "to live, that is something else" (112). With Genevieve returned to her "bonds" – to die there – Bernis leaves again, carrying in his heart nostalgia for life, "disposable and mortal," "aviator who already has had only one friend," scarcely bound, as the "fugitive," by the virgin thread of that lone friendship. Already as a child he had felt the attraction of another "flight": death; and it is that which waits for him, glistening like a treasure "in the highest star." He dies, he "to whom action which leads to nothing was bitter" (114), but his flight will not have been completely vain. His friend will be there as a witness to the task accomplished, the mail kept intact – a tangible tie between men – and to prolong this human experience, to realise the presentiments of a flight *toward something*, of a worthy human deed to reunite, of a tissue of bonds more real than those of convenience, more solid than those of passion – presentiments finally of a flight toward *something*, towards Him who was crying out – but Bernis was not ready to hear it: "Come to me ... Your vain strivings of each day, which drain you, come to me: I will give them a sense, they will beat in your heart, I will make of them a human thing ... I alone can construe man to himself..." (115).

This "action which leads to nothing" one will try however still to justify. One feels such a need to do something! *Vol de Nuit*,[19] which appeared two years later, confronts us anew with this agonised question: What is action worth? What are "rights"? Has heroism a sense of itself?

It pleases André Gide to find in *Vol de Nuit* the "source of all heroism" – that "obscure sentiment" which caused his Prometheus to say: "I do not love man, I love that which devours him" (116). Rivière, who personifies that "source" of heroism, and who poses all the questions of the book, is in reality "that Didier Daurat with the cold gaze who knows

[18] Saint-Exupery's first novel "Southern mail" (1929(

[19] "Night flight"

how to form men" (117), and who was director of the Aeropostal – of "The Line" – in the heroic years when Jean Mermoz would conquer successively the desert, the night, the mountain and the sea. He is someone who exercises his power in the manner of a force of nature, who "serves events" and "forges men so that they may serve them" (118), but who also senses obscurely that that toward which his will of iron is turned is less an immediate result than the coming of a Nietzschean "overman." "Man was for him an unwrought wax that it was necessary to mould" (119) – that and nothing but that; the unmouldable mass did not have a real existence: they did not really exist "around their music kiosks, the *petits bourgeois* of the small towns," the evocation of which comes like a refrain throughout the book. Only, if Rivière demands superhuman action, if he treads down justice at his feet to cause an exasperated heroism to spring from there – placing the "combustible" in hearts in the manner of the Claudelian king in *Soulier de Satin*[20] – he admits he cannot solve the problems which he poses: "I do not know the precise value of human life, or of justice, or of sorrow. I do not know the precise worth of the joy of a man..." (120); in the name of action he makes war on happiness, but it is a "heavy victory" (121) which he ends by winning.

Saint-Exupéry, like Mermoz and all the comrades of "the Line," felt the rise of that "overman of the will"; he knew the exaltation of heroism indefatigably performed, made habitual, daily, indispensable – like the air, brisk and enlivening to man, of the mountain. Like Rivière, he sensed the worth of a "strong" life. He hesitates, however, to admit that it may be force alone which counts, seeking rather to reconcile it with other human values. Already he senses that he for whom action alone would exist as a real value could not be fully a man. No more does he find sufficient the feeling of duty such as dominates with Rivière to suffice as a justification for action; his heroism seeks to attach itself to something more profoundly rooted than the precarious sentiment of superhuman superiority, so as to realise itself. "We strive as of something of worth was passing out of human life ... But what?" (122).

Yet *Vol de Nuit* does not give the answer to the question posed by Rivière. However, one feels it to be quite near. The "mystique of the Line," which makes the hard discipline imposed by Rivière acceptable, is rather more than a simple intoxication of action; it wishes to be the principle of a real devotion. It is his "spirit of the courier" which Mermoz defined: "An ideal unifying an elevated sense of duty and professional self-regard with an almost mystical spirit of self sacrifice, freed of all meanness, of all moral and social mediocrities" (123). But Saint-Exupéry still does not see clearly a vocation of man – of man free and responsible, one with the whole of humanity and communicating with it – in which this ideal could assume all its human worth. He still does not make us see that what justifies heroism – that same solidarity and communion – belong to the same order of reality as the "august matter" (129) of love, troubled, or wounded, by the heroic deed; that only a higher love, a heroic love, has the right to conquer a too possessive love which would be hostile to heroism; that "the proud intoxication of renunciation," is a sentiment that must be passed through, that must cede its place to another, more peaceful, more profound, and also more lacerating: to a love of devotion which does not deny any of its tendernesses, but which freely chooses the most worthy, that which honours all others. So far as it is inhuman to sacrifice the love of

[20] Paul Claudel's play "The satin slipper"

another for one's own self-love, for one's pretended "superhuman" character, so far is it, in effect, fully human, and fully heroic, to "honour with honour" one's love in lifting one's self through it toward a love more pure.

Terre des Hommes,[21] as one would expect from its title, fully enters into the "humanist" debate, the only one which really preoccupies Saint-Exupéry. This book, which appeared in 1939, is the fruit of rich experience intensely lived and meditated on with passion. The *Line*, the *Comrades*, the *Aviator*, the *Desert* and the *Men* – of these this experience was made. The essential of what it throws into relief is inherent in three formulae of Saint-Exupéry: "It is not danger that I love. I know what I love. It is life" (125); "The truth for man is what makes of him a man" (126); "To be a man is precisely to be responsible ... to feel, in placing the stone, that one contributes to building the world " (127).

"I love life" – this is the condition of a human heroism. There is not even heroic death for him who does not know how to live. Saint-Exupéry shows himself equally far from a puerile exaltation of dangerous action and that bloodless despair which summons death to prove to one's self that one exists. For him, the sign of grandeur is the "gravity" of a Guillaumet, who does not jest before danger; but, it is also this overflowing health which prompted Mermoz to say that, "life is indeed beautiful – the more I risk it, the more worth it has" (128).

This human heroism, this heroism of moral health, is also a "true" heroism: "If you would have objected to Mermoz, when he plunged toward the Chilean declivity of the Andes, with his victory of the heart, that he was mistaken, that a merchant's letter was perhaps not worth the risk of his life, Mermoz would have laughed at you. The truth is the man who was born in himself when he passed the Andes" (129). The sign of that truth is that it sets free "a great man who does not know himself" (130), and it is not recognised otherwise for the anarchist, the Francoist, the dissident Moorish chief ... whatever the man may be who fully engages himself and realises himself through his engagement. It is his own truth who will have found it, and he will be able to die for his cause because through it he will have lived.

We find here the same appeal to a fundamentally pragmatic heroism which created the grandeur of *Vol de Nuit*. Only, the "something" which we feel obscurely to surpass life in value takes here a step toward the light: the duty to which man must submit, for which he can engage himself even unto death, and which will be his own truth, this must be an "accepted responsibility," an obligation to others. This "responsibility" is scarcely considered, however, from the point of view of its usefulness and not even of its justice; it is above all a duty of love, of that love which "is not at all to look one at the other, but to look together in the same direction" (131); and Saint-Exupéry does not even ask to what that look is turned. The bonds created between men by occupation and by experience lived together thus assume the same quasi-absolute worth as that "part of man" which Rivière was working to save. We only know that that communion which creates human solidarity across mountains and deserts, and which gives its sense to heroic sacrifice, is of a quite spiritual nature: "Only the Spirit, if it breathes on the glass, can create man" (132).

The experience of the "strangeness of war" and of the debacle of 1940 is going to lead Saint-Exupéry to the end of his research. He will find again Man. He will finally know *who*

[21] "Land of men," also known as "Wind, sand and stars"

he is. He will succeed in retrieving the traits of that integral heroism which he was instinctively seeking from the beginning as the only acceptable life. From *Vol de Nuit*, Gide had reason to indicate the "paradox" by which Saint-Exupéry, departing from a thorough individualism, from a Nietzschean thirst for grandeur, restored the necessity of obligation – the happiness which, not an anarchic liberty, but the acceptance of duty, bestows. Here, at the end of his evolution, surpassing every egoistical principle – the Gidean joy in being which is quite other than the superhuman pride of Nietzsche – Saint-Exupéry rejoins the "men of fidelity," those of the line of Péguy. As he once sought to justify for himself the uplifting action of the aerial epic, to establish the principles of the "strong life" whose grandeur he sensed, he takes now as his point of departure the more profound heroism, stripped of all exaltation, the gift of self – even unto the acceptance of death – of the conquered ones to whom he belongs, of those men who continue to "play the game" of war in the name of a Fatherland which is seeming irrevocably to collapse, of pilots who volunteer for "sacrificial missions," not at all with the "courage of despair," but because they sense obscurely, they also, that "the only victory which I cannot doubt is that which inheres in the power of seeds" (133). To explain to himself such heroism – which Saint-Exupéry does in *Pilote de guerre*[22] – will be to find again the truth of Man, for in defeat the "hero" is great through his humanity alone.

Can interest, in fact, play a role in the heroism of the pilot who risks his life to seek out information of which, as he well knows, no-one will make use? And he who returns from flying over the routes of exodus, can he can he believe himself the protector of those who are dear to him? – Where he would offer them a shelter? Nor does self-regard have anything to gain here. There will only be blame on the part of "witnesses."

What is it that becomes here the exaltation of an heroic life? In defeat, exaltation, even that of idealism, is not fashionable: "I who leave on a mission," says Saint-Exupéry, pilot of war, "I do not think of the war of the West against Nazism. I think of immediate details. I dream of the absurdity of the flight over Arras at 700 metres ... I see no more the cathedral which I frequent. I accoutre myself for the service of a dead god" (134). This is the temptation. Saint-Exupéry finds here one of the verities of all spiritual life: inward heroism, the true gift of the self, only begins in the silence of all sensible appeal. "I know in what temptation consists as well as any Father of the Church. To be tempted, is to be tempted, when the spirit sleeps, to surrender to reasoning of the intelligence" (135). Intelligence, which must watch over all the details of action, and which arrogates to itself the right of giving action its ends – Intelligence is of no more profit than self-regard in this absurd war. What is it then that impels all men toward death? It is the spirit which "knows how to love" – the "heart" in the Pascalian sense – principle of that formation of Man which progressively comes into being through the free acts of human people.

The Man whom it strives to develop is not a "child of man" considered as an individual. Neither is he a vague abstraction, nor is the end ever reached of a Bergsonian evolution. It is not "god in us" according to the conception of a Romain Rolland. It is he in whom we are made "in the image of God," in whom we are equal, being brothers; it is the key to the vault of the cathedral of which we are the stones. This cathedral is the Fatherland,

[22] "Pilot of war," known in its English translation as "Flight to Arras"

but it is also the larger community of which France is a living stone, in the interior of which each person, and each Fatherland, is answerable to all. All human virtues exist only through rapport with the Man of the cathedral, or – for the other image is also found in Saint-Exupéry – through rapport with the tree of which we are the branches, of which we can be the seed. Thus: "Liberty is that of the ascension of Man. I will fight anyone who will pretend to bring under subjection the freedom of man of any individual, or group of individuals " (136). Saint-Exupéry rejects both egoistical individualism and fundamentally numerical collectivism: the human community, whose well-being surpasses individual interests, must be a communion of free men, a cathedral of Man.

Conceived thus, Man is the end, but at the same time the principle, of all true heroism, and above all of the total gift which is the heroic death: "One dies for a cathedral. Not for stones. One dies for a people. Not for a crowd. One dies for love of Man, if he is the key to the vault of a community. One dies for that by which one can live" (137). The supreme gift is only the crowning of a life which establishes the Man in us – and might one not say without forcing the thought of Saint-Exupéry: of a life which might cause to live in us the Mystical Body of Christ the Saviour?

It is evidently not a case here of a heroism which would be only physical courage, a kind of insensibility in the face of death. In a letter to Gide, Saint-Exupéry had said that courage "is not made of fine sentiments: a bit of rage, a bit of vanity, a lot of obstinacy and a vulgar sportive pleasure. Above all the exaltation of physical force, which however has nothing to do with it. One crosses one's arms on one's open shirt and breathes well. Moreover, it is agreeable" (138). But, it is no more a matter of heroism "of fine sentiments," in these words: "I will refuse henceforth to judge a man on the formulae which justify his decisions. The important thing is to ask one's self: What man is he?" (130). The deed which makes the grandeur of man must engage him quite wholly, body and spirit, and give proof of love – or to establish it: this must be a sacrifice.

Sacrifice establishes love. Sacrifice establishes the Fatherland. Sacrifice establishes Man. It is the "essential act" of humanism, and it is through having neglected it that our modern humanism has finished by traducing itself. It is the also the essential act of that heroism by which man realises himself in surpassing himself. For "sacrifice signifies neither amputation nor penitence. It is a gift of one's self to the Being whom one will pretend to reclaim for one's self" (140).

In the last chapters of *Pilote de guerre*, Saint-Exupéry identifies his quest for Man – commenced with the solitary meditations of Cap-Juby – with the secular quest made by the civilisation of which he was part. It is thus that he retrieves a Heroism which is at the same time heroic and Christian: "My civilisation has sought for centuries to demonstrate Man, as she has taught to distinguish a cathedral through the stones ... My civilisation is the inheritor of Christian values" (140).

For that Humanism, the principles of heroic action are Hope and Charity. "Despair" is "the denial of God in himself" (142), and must cede its place to its contrary: the sentiment of responsibility. Charity is "a gift to Man, across the mediocrity of the individual" (143). Through it, he who gives himself grows in combatting the individual egoist which fights in him, and he causes the other to grow in revealing to him his character of the image of God.

But something else is still necessary: He who gives – and above all he who gives himself – causes Humanity fully to live, and in one Life which is also Truth.

This is the action toward which the "strong life" which Saint-Exupéry instinctively desired was already tending. For it fully to be revealed, it was necessary to await the "strangeness of war." But, if that disastrous war was destined to reduce heroism – or rather to elevate it – to its spiritual essence, it is a gift even more complete, a heroism more integral which the horrors of the German occupation would demand. In his *Lettre à un otage*,[23] Saint-Exupéry addresses himself, from his exile, to those who had stayed in France, to the seed hidden under the snow, germ of life, hope of a future worthy of Man: "You are saints," he told them. It is a kind of triumph which excites him, but a quite silent triumph, for "the conquered must be dumb. Like grains" (144).

Saint-Exupéry finally found his homeland – "sum total of gifts" – and that grandeur of man which he desired. We seem here far away from the titanism of action which *Vol de nuit* seemed to extol; nevertheless, there was no rupture. The posthumous work *Citadelle*,[24] sum of the meditations of Saint-Exupéry, written between 1936 and his death in 1944, well proves the unity of his profound thought. Since its release, one has felt it wrought through the desire for a vocation worthy of commanding action, capable of giving it a worth. Now, the symbolic clarity of the star which will attract Fabien, detaching him forever from the earth, has sharpened its message: it is revealed as a messenger of the Spirit. He who would neglect it to lose himself in empty action would be, in the human cathedral, only a sacristan forgetful of the God he serves. The vocation in which it engages us is a vocation of love. Heroic action, true heroism, is the sacrifice which love establishes; and the only exaltation which that heroism needs is the Joy of "he who is astonished at man" (145), because, having carried all the pain of the human genus, he understands as never man will understand the grandeur to which the Image of God is destined.

"I understand for the first time," wrote Saint-Exupéry in *Pilote de guerre*, "one of the mysteries of the religion which proceeded from a civilisation which I reclaim as my own ... to carry the sins of men. And each man carries the sins of all men" (146). When one has understood that, and has lived it in the simplicity of a sacrifice freely consented to, and in the humility of a true communion with others, his "brothers," one has no need to evade the world and one's self in feverish action. One can look in the face the uglinesses and injustices of the world and laugh at death – one's own death – which will help to redeem them. Such is the Saint-Exupéry of the *Petit Prince*.[25] Like Péguy singing the happiness of the "ripe corn" and harvested wheat," Saint-Exupéry places between the hands of his "little prince" the secrets finally won of his poet's heart – and heart of the so human hero – and, smiling, he watches him leave. "To change planets" is nothing: love alone counts, that love which makes the stars to sing.

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[23] "Letter to a hostage" (1944), published posthumously

[24] "Citadel," known in its English translation as "Wisdom of the sands"

[25] Saint-Exupery's novella and most famous work "The little prince"

8. BERNANOS AND SUPERNATURAL HEROISM

In the years when Saint-Exupéry was beginning his meditations on the nature of man and his true grandeur, Georges Bernanos dropped a bomb into the stagnant waters of the after-war period. This was in 1926 with the publication of *Sous le Soleil de Satan*.[26]

During these sad years, the "decimated youth, which saw Péguy lying in the cottages, in the presence of God, distances itself with disgust from the divan where the supercritic polishes his fingernails. It leaves to Narcissus (Anatole France – the "Saint-Marin" of the novel) the care of refining on its delicate powerlessness. But it hates already, with all the force of its genius, the most robust and presentable of the troop who court the succession of the evil master, who, grimacing, distil their little complicated books, and grind them in the noses of the greatest men, and who have no other hope in this world than to push out their rough and difficult excrement beside the spiritual springs where the unfortunate go to drink" (147). To this "decimated youth," to all who are left of the noble and grand in the world, Bernanos offers an heroic hope – and of heroism the least seen and expected, the most supernatural. He defiantly brandishes his faith in front of them; he cries it out to those who wish to hear. And in many hearts an echo arises; many heroic aspirations and finally recognised to be realisable.

It is impossible not to assimilate this appeal to the heroic of Bernanos to that which Leon Bloy more or less obscurely makes us feel in the France of our century. Like Bloy, Bernanos moves always in a climate of pure faith; what he demands of us is saintliness, what he offers is Joy. While in a sense continuing the work of Bloy, Bernanos remains however nearer to us than the apocalyptic voice proffered by the "anvil of God" at the bottom of the abyss of the most abject and sublime misery. He only takes us with him in delivering his demands, if not less imperious, at least always more adapted to our feeble forces. The bitter and intransigent defiance with which he began was necessary to shake the spiritual lethargy of his contemporaries, to reassemble forces, warm up courage. But, if he never returned to the essential of his initial position – affirmation of reality, of the unique reality, of the spiritual drama and battle – in proportion as his message was refined, he sees this drama and battle in a way ever more intimate, as always more inextricably linked to the humble reality of everyday life. The supreme cry of the "saint of Lumbres," is the frightful defiance thrown at "Narcissus" through all his lifeless body: "You wanted my peace ... come and take it" (148). At the peak of the oeuvre of Bernanos, the "priest of the countryside" has something else to say: his saintliness is not so much defiance as an invitation to hope: his "supernatural heroism" is made more welcoming; the abyss of pain is covered again with a veil of almost childlike confidence. "There is only one sadness, that is not to be of the company of saints,"

[26] Bernanos' novel "Under the sun of satan" (1926)

so Bloy said in the *Femme Pauvre*.[27] "All is grace," murmurs Bernanos's priest on his deathbed: all can be saintliness for us: we have only to take it in giving ourselves.

Just like "saintliness," quite simply, with Péguy, this "supernatural heroism" which Bernanos announces to us is founded on human dispositions. In the thought of Péguy, the saintliness of Joan of Arc, of Polyeuctus, is their heroism as "gateway to the eternal"; in the same way, the supernatural heroism of the "priest of the countryside" will be the perfecting, under the action of the Spirit, of a human willingness, humbly human, of casting off and sacrifice. It is necessary for the priest to taste life for an instant, taste that time of youth which has been refused him, necessary to taste in his disinherited heart the intoxicating experience of the manly friendship of Olivier, an experience which allows him more consciously to renounce all that life can offer him, so that he may then enter more fully into the path of the last castings-off and the real flowering. "Many people sacrifice themselves, who would not have the courage to give themselves" (149), says Chantal in *la Joie*;[28] but the sacrifice which the priest makes of himself is recompensed by the grace of the total gift. So, at the end of his life, when he drags his sickly body to the lodgings of the unhappy renegade Abbé, his act of human mercy – divinely human – merits his finding in a "rat-eaten" death, intimate with heroism, the revelation of life all given, of All-Grace.

Bernanos introduces us here directly and deeply to the central mystery of Christianity: that of the Incarnation. The first condition of that supernatural heroism which Bernanos makes us see, is the very presence of the Author of all Grace, of He was made Man to redeem the sinners that we are, but also to be able to work in and through us, to the confusion of the spirits of evil, and of this "world" of which they are princes, and to the glory of Infinite Good.

The other condition of this heroism is then, paradoxically, our poverty of creators, and our very suffering – above all the poverty of our heart and our spiritual suffering. It is the same weakness of our humanity which allows Grace to insinuate itself into our life; this weakness summons an heroic force, which must be supernatural, but which is unceasing for any "earthly" being, for our earth is that of the Incarnation.

If the Abbé Donissan (150) had not felt himself to be a poor man, buffeted by the winds of evil, capable of letting himself be dragged across desert lands – as much physical as spiritual – by a little devil's go-between strong only in hatred; if later, become the "saint of Lumbres," he had not been ready to grow weak before the frightening power of miracles which was entrusted to him, then he would no more have been able to be the instrument of a power which remains divine, but which demands to be perfected in the infirmity of man. His heroism of saintliness would not exist if it was not called to carry the sins of another, and if these sins did not weigh heavier on him than on others: it is necessary that his powerlessness attracts to him the Hand which alone can sustain a like weight.

This supernatural heroism however has nothing of the inhuman about it. It is in no way a resignation of our humanity; it is moreover the very grandeur of our human condition, when that is regarded in the light of faith, that is to say as being essentially the condition of a creature who can – who must – without limit, but freely, receive.

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[27] "The woman who was poor"
[28] Bernanos' novel "Joy" (1929)

A "heroism of the French kind"

In the thought of Bernanos, the secret of that supernatural heroism is, moreover, analogous to that of "heroism of the French kind." "Our heroes," he says, "were neither giants, nor overmen, nor judges of Israel. They were very human men, so human that they have always the air of being within reach..." (151). This so-human heroism is the same as Bernanos finds – at least "in the brute state" – in the French soldier. This is not, in effect, the myth of foreign usage: "the Tommy of 1914, the hero of the cafe concert, joker and sentimentalist, who has fun as he makes war"; for the French soldier makes war "honestly, patiently, humbly, as one improves the pain of one's children" (152). He perhaps does not understand much of the "art" of heroism, but he knows how to search out, he also, a certain beauty of spiritual order through that decency which makes him keep silent about his suffering so as not to sully the purity of his sacrifice. Not only the authenticity of the heroic ideal and the autonomy of willing impulsion must be safeguarded for this compatriot, even frustrated, of Corneille and Descartes; but his quite humble devotion sometimes realises a deed finer than the too gaudy show of a swaggering heroism. The beauty of true warrior heroism will only make him grow in his misfortune and distress.

"Our only popular epic, the *Chanson de Roland*,[29] is the story of a defeat," writes Bernanos. "It is for a conquered citizen, dying with his face turned toward the enemy, a hand lifted toward the Angels, the other searching humbly for the hand of his friend, that for ten centuries the heart of the boys and girls of my race has beaten. Such is the infallible choice of French honour" (153). There is certainly some "show" in the gesture of that conquered citizen, of that fighter who has known how to "keep on" unto the end, and who has dignity in his devotion; but there is nothing prepared, and that hero who finds grandeur in a defeat humbly accepted has nothing of the pretentious "overman."

However, it is not in the epic hero that Bernanos recognises the perfection of that heroism; it is indeed rather in the "scruple of courtesy" with which a French saint has been able to accept death; it is in the "child's word" of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: "How am I going to deal with death? I am never going to know how to die!" (154). Here, in fact, heroism is perfected, becomes truly "integral." The gift is total – of body and soul, and unto the last reserve of self-regard. Here, there is no more pretention of being hero or saint; more care of one's attitude; but, at once the humble acknowledgement of real frailty and the clear consciousness of the sacrifice to which one is called. The "priest of the countryside" who cries like a child in learning that he is going to die, dies, he also, with a supreme smile: the "All is grace."

The "heroism in the brute state" of the soldier and the "supernatural heroism" of the saint – when they are both authentic – will be for Bernanos only the two poles of a same "heroism of the French kind." What they have in common is above all "knightly honour ... Force become servant ... the Christian type of honour, the orthodox type of honour" (155).

[29] "The song of Roland"

Only, with the saint, the force which becomes servant is the supernatural force with which his heroism is going to benefit others, but which does not spare him any of the sufferings consequent on his human frailty and interior poverty, which leaves him powerless against the enemies who wish to devour him, which betrays him without apparent prop to the hard experiences of the inner life.

The incarnation of that heroism of the French kind, in the thought of Bernanos as in that of Péguy, is always Joan of Arc – she who was the "last true soldier" (156) and the authentic representative of the "old France," "military rustic" (157), but who was also the saint who was to attain the summit of supernatural heroism through the supreme humiliation of her own weakness: "Joan of Arc, relapse and saint," according to the same title of a book of Bernanos'. Joan, "heroic in the midst of all the saints," makes war according to the "system of heroism," where the combat is rather more important than the victory; but no more does she cheat in her spiritual combat, she performs no sleights-of-hand, in exposing herself, like the priests of Bernanos, to all that Evil can bring to bear against saintliness – and that is not a little, for, if the saint cannot gamble his eternity in this combat, he can rather engage everything in his life, and to the end of that peace of the soul without which life is not worth living.

Certainly, if Bernanos believes, with Péguy, in the "France of Joan of Arc," it is not that he is prey to illusions concerning the heroic virtues of his compatriots. And, if he states that war, even modern war, brings forth quantities of heroes, he knows well that the hero of war is too often disappointing, that he is quickly cut down, brought down a rung or two by the "realists" of the after-war period. He knows also, however, that the "eternal France" – that which, from 1940 to 1944, has shown one more time that she does not wish to die – that that France does not render heroes, nor even saints, "unassimilable."

"The Pagan State lives again!" wrote Bernanos in 1942... "This does not mean that the leaders of the state no longer go to confession... It signifies that a ceaselessly growing number of men refuse the heroic dimension of life, refuse to gamble, with Pascal, for eternal values" (158). He was bound to declare this resurrection of the "Pagan State" – and with what wrenching of the heart – in the very breast of his own land, for such a long time already so gravely approached. But, how can we not say he is right, when he rallies, at the very nadir of its disgrace, the true France, the heroic France, that of Joan of Arc, and of Pascal himself, that France where he remembers that he learnt heroism "quite gently, on the knees of old Corneille" (159)? And how can we not with him believe – and for all that – in the sublime reality of that heroism, when one sees him draw, for the material of his novels, on the supernatural, but human also – heroically human, – realities which are the crushed and joyous hearts of the saints of France: of a Thérèse of Lisieux, or of a Jean-Baptiste Vianney? For we know that we must not make divisions in the testimony of Bernanos: all tends toward it. There is no place for separating the novels which declare to us the depth of his spiritual experience, from the burning writings wrenched from his French heart by the torment of his years of shame: it is the same heroic hopefulness which makes him exalt the honour of his country in her humiliation, and which reveals to him the redemptive grace emanating from wretchedness of spirit and spiritual infancy.

This heroic France which Bernanos shows us, always identical under many guises, is a Cornelian France: she is "lucid" and "willing": "My country, "says Bernanos, "has a need

to understand in order to love. She has a need to understand in order to act" (160). And, with the "saints' of Bernanos, that force of will and that clear and calm vision of the good to attain, to be a supernatural force and vision, are not less real for that, nor less truly human. It is with the spiritual arms of prayer and sacrifice that the "priest" declares his battle for the soul of the chatelaine, but he carries off his victory following a conflict of wills where he has surpassed himself in a human way, where the wretched and pitiful child that he will always be has not flinched before the difficult but undeniable demands of his duty.

That France of Bernanos is also "knightly"; it is always, at bottom, the land of the perfect "knight". And, if the France that he would like to see fully realise itself is more monarchistical, it is because one who thirsts for spiritual beauty has "dreamed that the monarchy may one day lay honour at the door of the whole world and first of all of each Frenchman" (161).

Finally, and above all, the France of "supernatural heroism" is a Christian France: it is the land par excellence of the Incarnation, at once fully human and finding its grandeur and its accomplishment only through and in the Divine. It is a land of Christianity, of a "Christianity of the heroic kind," where the sacrifice of Christ can bear all its fruit – and "he whom Christ has come to save," Bernanos tells us, "is the man, and not the overman" (162). There is nothing here of that "sense of the earth" in the way of Nietzsche, who valorises the natural, the instinctive, only by attributing to it I know not what "Dionysian" grandeur. Bernanos has a real sense – a Christian sense – of life such as it is. That of which he comes to give us an almost physical sense is neither the truncated life as conceived by the rationalist, nor the destructive drunkenness of existence of Nietzsche, but rather the life of the man created by God: of that being at once material and spiritual, who is made to participate in infinite grandeur and joy, but who remains chained to the earth, victim of his sin, trapped by the devil and always led back to the mire, from where he can only escape by the Cross which is found to be driven in there.

10. ANDRÉ MALRAUX AND THE HEROISM OF THE VOID

For the man of faith, for a Bernanos, there is no other solution to our present problems than the heroic life. For the man without faith, there is perhaps no solution. For heroism supposes a faith, and to give one's self "heroically" without a real faith, would be to add a new absurdity to a human life which would already appear a nonsense; it would be, what is more, to give one's self an illusion, perhaps exalting, of one's own grandeur. To refuse one's self heroically, would that then not be the only way of "resolving" this insoluble problem? To refuse one's self to the world – to everything – or to give one's self, to engage one's self, but without making any illusion for one's self, to reveal the nothingness of all in order to snatch one's self then from life, at the risk of rendering it unliveable, a semblance of being... would this not be our "human condition"?

In the book of André Malraux entitled *La condition humaine*,[30] and in the others which prepare or reprise the same themes, almost all the answers which a man without faith can give to these questions have been tried. It is there, therefore, in this work where the young generation continues to recognise itself with a painful exaltation, that we will go to search for indications of the "heroic" attitudes of the Godless of our epoch; it is there that we will go to draw up the elements of that spiritual chaos the nature of which we would not dare to try to define in the abstract.

André Malraux is not content, moreover, with posing problems to himself, of philosophising on the heroic aspirations of our epoch, He knows the "heroic" attempts – and checks – of the inner self which restore the modern forms of the consequent atheism. In even the Sartrean sense, Malraux is an "*existant*" who knows the temptation of the gratuitous act. But he knew also the communist engagement; he had to confront the choice which fatally presents itself to the Marxist "hero": the anguished choice between a heroism that is "efficacious" but inhuman, demanded by the revolutionary *credo*, and that heroic humanism, based on respect for the human person, which can only be an absurdity for the complete Marxist. André Malraux could therefore himself be the "hero" of the modern novel whose portrait M. Albérès has rendered: the hero who must necessarily live in the exceptional, even the foreign – whether it be an extraordinary experience in the domain of the spirit or the strangeness of an exotic adventure – and that not to flatter our curiosity and our puerile taste for the picturesque, but rather to give us the "shock" of an authentic experience, of a dislocation which renders to our atrophied senses the sensation of reality.

[30] "The human condition," also known in English as "Man's fate" (1934)

In the “lived” of his work, this born adventurer, whom his unappeased unquiet keeps always on the go, gives us thus a testimony which is even more of life than of thought: he declares to us the intimate secrets of a very real heroism, of a heroism, moreover which has not said the last word on itself, of a “battle with the angel” where the part of the angel yet appears only obscurely.

Let us see now, in the central book of the Malraux oeuvre, who the “heroes” are who must reveal to us the grandeur of our “human condition.”

It is first of all the central character of the novel: *Kyo*, militant communist, for whom heroism is a necessary practice, who “had chosen action in a serious and premeditated way, as others choose arms or the sea... the heroic sense had given to him like a discipline” (163).

As Jacques Madaule has well shown (164), it is not for nothing that Kyo is the son of a European, of Français Gisors; for his attitude to life is essentially Occidental. While the Oriental, Tchen, is like the passive instrument of the forces of nature which seem to drive through him, Kyo opposes to the universe an attitude of *man the maker*, of creator, almost of technician: Of what is man capable? – What is worthy of action? – What can be done to better adapt him to the condition of man? If Kyo gives himself for a cause, it is not that he finds himself carried away by a vague enthusiasm; it is not under the impulsion of a great emotion; it is deliberately, to found and realise the idea which he has of himself and the idea of human dignity which he wishes to inspire in others: “He was not troubled. His life had a sense... to give to every man whom famine was causing to die the possession of his own dignity” (163). And for him, who makes no distinction between properly human action and a certain heroism, what is the foundation of that dignity, what it is then necessary to “install” in the heart and in the spirit of those who live in a less conscious way, is “all that for which men accept to give their lives, beyond self-interest: Christianity for the slave, nation for the citizen, communism for the worker” (165).

Kyo is therefore “engaged,” and arranges himself to dispense with a real faith, contenting himself with a kind of hopefulness based on a sentiment of the worth of all deliberate and loyal striving. Here is however an evolution happening within him: this hopefulness comes to be united with the beginning of a faith in spiritual values which is as yet ill-defined. “The masculine idea” which May descries in Kyo: that “suffering can only make sense when it does not lead to death, and it almost always does lead there...” (166), this idea disappears in contact with the same death. Before giving himself as a communist martyr, Kyo begins to understand, in living it, what makes the heroic sacrifice.

However, Kyo’s heroism will not be “integral”; he will not arrive at that full flowering which is the total gift of the self. It is because that kind of rudimentary faith which appears in his supreme sacrifice has never been able to be integrated into his life. If he goes beyond a sterile materialism, Kyo remains nevertheless a “born Manichean.” His ideal strikes against life and does not penetrate it. When his Marxist idealism would engage it, for example, in drowning his personality in the community of workers, and when his desperate efforts to realise that ideal have brought a check to his rapport with May, that check can only be surmounted by the “discovery” that “the total form of love, that which cannot be surpassed... is perhaps the acceptance of involving the person one loves in death” (167). The annihilation accepted in common appears here as the only solution to the problem posed by

the demands of an inhuman ideal: those who do not have the right truly to live one for the other, how could they love each other "heroically" unless through a refusal of life?

The impossibility that Kyo finds in reconciling the communist ideal of heroism with the demands of his love indicates how Malraux feels ill at ease in the doctrine, and even more, in the discipline of communism. That heroism which can become a fully personal engagement only in associating itself with elements which are rather heterodox for a consequent Marxism, attracts him, in fact, far less than the nihilist heroism of the "gratuitous act."

This heroism of the void, is that of Tchen, terrorist "hero," whose heroism is not content with driving back the human, but is constituted by its absolute refusal of all that constitutes life, resulting in an intoxication with death, where the destructive action is its own end. Man would find his true grandeur in a kind of "ecstasy towards the end."

The "Manicheism" of which we have spoken with regard to Kyo is rather more radical here, of a kind wherein the problem of love is not even posed. With Kyo an a-Christian heroism however allowed a more or less conscious need of charity to appear. Tchen, he, is "deprived of charity" – of all feeling which could finally join him to the life of men. It is then a kind of vital compensation which he gives himself in violence, fruit not of hatred (which would have supposed a certain love), but of pride, of that "immense primitive pride" of which Perken speaks in the *Voie royale*,[31] and which consists "unreservedly refusing one's self to the world," to "make one's self suffer terribly to prove one's power" (169), and that pride can logically only end in suicide.

The whole education of Tchen seems to have prepared him for that "heroism of the void," or at the very least to have prepared him to be left to slide on the ever more dizzying slope of that abyss; it seems almost inevitable that he should deliver himself to the forces of destruction which he carried within him, that he should become that "ephemera, who secretes his own light, towards which he goes to destroy himself..." (170). Brought up first of all by a Lutheran pastor in a Manichean Christianity, who imbued him with a shame of the body, Tchen became finally the pupil of Gisors, who detached him from all Christianity, in opposing to it other forms of grandeur, in initiating him into a heroism of despair: "What to do with a soul if here is neither God nor Christ?" (171). Terrorism becomes for him then the sense of life, and his first contact with death, gift of his hand, puts him on the road to a absolute solitude, where only violent action gives the feeling of being alive, that action which can only lead to death, but "one only ever kills one's self to exist" (172).

Elsewhere Malraux said: "One can live in acceptance of the absurd, one cannot live in the absurd. One protects one's self only in creating" (173). Tchen is one who does not hesitate even before the absurd appearances of life, who affirms himself at first as a master of events; but it is not in a "creation" – an act always very relative if it depends on our limited human resources – but more often by the negation of all, in leaving all doors open to the invasion of that void which alone is fully available to us.

However, even Tchen does not entirely renounce the giving of a more largely human sense to his "heroism," to make a kind of hopefulness his own. At the very moment when he is waiting to do away with himself in a crime, he seems to be searching for a positive value in

[31] Malraux's "The royal way" or "The way of kings" (1930)

that supreme negation; he feels the desire to see his crimes multiply, but that it may be in the service of an idea: "he knew with what heaviness the blood poured out for her weighs on all thought" (174). A Nietzschean overman would not have had need of that appeal to the martyr; neither would a Sartrean existentialist have had need of it. But Malraux, who has the taste for lived heroism, cannot completely misconceive what constitutes the essence of it, and what makes it psychologically possible.

The grandeur of our human condition, sought for calmly by Kyo, desperately by Tchen, is found realised, by a kind of miracle of grace, as unconsciously, in Katow, the "saint." Katow arrives at the total gift because he never thinks of himself, if it is not to give himself; become a martyr of the revolution, he sacrifices for one of his brothers even unto cyanide, which would save him from a horrible death.

The "saintliness" of a Katow, fruit of a revolutionary faith, but also of a real charity, the only response possible to that need for grandeur which pushes him toward a total engagement, is perhaps what Andre Malraux found most attractive in communism. He who would never have allowed himself to submit to the discipline of the Party, cannot refuse his sympathy to the "half-Christians," rejected by authentic communism, who through a taste for sacrifice are "ready for the worst errors provided that they pay for them with their life" (175). And one thinks of the gallery of "holy martyr" communists which Plisnier presents to us in his *Faux passeports*,[32] saints of an inhuman saintliness which accepts the "heroism of dishonour" and the "heroism of injustice," of a saintliness which ignores God, but which is nourished by an infinite hope of which God alone can be the source.

What interests Malraux is at bottom always Man, man in search of true grandeur, not wishing to be the dupe of who knows what illusion, but carried along always by an unconscious charity toward more than human values. "What matters," he said in a UNESCO conference (176), "is not to be communist or anti-communist; it is not the Church that counts, but the *saints*, not the army, but the heroes."

Finally, all the adventures in which Malraux engages his heroes, and in which he himself is engaged, serve only to create a diversion from a "real" which escapes him, of a reality which he calls "Man," and which he would wish to help create. But to wish to "create" that overman of Nietzsche is to want to be God; and it is in the same way to deny the grandeur proper to man, to that creature who is born to serve. Malraux is of those who perhaps would have accepted God without question – that God *whom to serve is to rule* – had they been able to find Him for themselves, if He was not a "given," of those for whom a God who is revealed takes away from man all possibility of true grandeur. This "engaged," who has suffered, who has truly given himself for others, conceives the grandeur of a certain love, but not that of a fully human love, which consents to be understood, accepted, loved. His "heroes" desire sacrifice, but they desire it according to their own conditions, and most often they stop at what that sacrifice can have that is exalting, at the negative aspect of the gift of the self, at that course toward the void wherein man feels himself to grow, without realising that he only gives himself there the reverse of true grandeur. This temptation of the superhuman, principle of destruction and the void, others have known who have finally been able to surmount it in placing their "will to the divine" between the hands of a God of love.

[32] Plisnier's novel "False passports" (1937)

11. CLAUDEL AND THE HEROIC CONQUEST OF JOY

"Integral heroism" – saintliness – is nothing other, at bottom, than the Joy attained in God. It is what we are made for, and the true end of all heroic effort. That all surpassing of the self must be an approaching, perhaps unconscious, toward God – this is what the work of Paul Claudel shows us. For, while with a Bernanos "supernatural heroism" is seized, so to speak, in a unique moment – by that gaze which he allows us to cast into the furnace of a heart crucified by love – Claudel restores that heroism, product of sacrifice and joy, to the summit – or, better still, to the centre – of a total universe, of the universe of Truth, the keys to which are only given to those who know how live an heroic existence.

Heroism is a sign of saintliness; and, in so far as it is, it is only a particular case of a universal symbolism. As a Catholic poet, Claudel has made the progressive conquest of a total universe, which he delivers to us all bathed in the light of faith. It is a "poetic" universe in the full sense of the word, where all is recreated, remade. But, it is not a question here of an apocalyptic vision, such as Bloy can make appear before our terrified eyes; it is indeed our universe for us, the proper joy of which is not only "a horrible, a superb, an absurd, a dazzling, a poignant reality," but also "something of the humble and material... like the bread which one desires, like the wine they find so good, like the water which makes you die if withheld, like the fire which burns, like the voice which brings the dead to life!" (177). Claudel, "poet" in the antique sense of the word, who unites the sky and the earth, often speaks to us in parables; but Life as he interprets it is our life, seen in all its complexity, as with all its mystery, and in its state of becoming perpetual, but seen also as the symbol of an immoveable reality – an harmonious symbol expressing an eternal harmony, a symbol ever renewing, an offering to him who wants to master it the revelation of joy eternally fresh and radiant with light. The optimism which makes of him a poet of the heroic existence is then neither blind nor superficial: it is a spiritual healthiness, which gives the power and even the longing to submit to every test and affront and conquer all the powers of evil to arrive at a unique Good, which gives Joy. Conceived as a unity, the Claudel oeuvre is entirely the drama of the "childhood[33] regained"; and the path that it shows us – illuminated in all its nooks and crannies by the light of faith, open only to heroes of the will, offering to noble hearts the powerful attraction of total sacrifice – is that of a truly "integral" heroism, which is for the time, but also and above all for eternity.

[33] "*enfance*". I take Goldie's meaning to be in the sense of the opening line of the *Marseillaise*: "Allons enfants de la patrie." On p. 76 I have translated this word as "citizenship".

Symbol of saintliness, this heroic existence which, to realise itself, has not too much of the whole life fully lived and the whole universe seized in a sacrificial gesture, is again a "heroism of the French kind." For Claudel, as for Péguy and for Bernanos, it is heroic France which reveals and teaches integral heroism. Is that not the mission of the fatherland of Joan of Arc, of she "who is risen for always like a flame in the middle of France" (178)? That France of Joan of Arc knows how to "keep on" with a tenacious perseverance in the modern war of the trenches, but it knows also how to give a full and profound sense to that humble heroism of the "million men" which Claudel, he also, sang during the years 1914-18; the "unknown soldier" is not lost in the "unanimous" act if he can truly go as far as the total gift. That France of Joan of Arc is ready also to confront every adventure:

> "*Quantum potes, tantum aude*![34] is the device of the French.
> And as long as there is the French, you will not take away from them the old enthusiasm, you will not take away from them the old risk-all spirit of adventure and invention!" (179).

And is the supreme adventure not risk and total engagement of spiritual combat? It is not for nothing that Prouhèze has French blood in her veins!

Claudelian heroism is then French, but not at all in a limiting sense. When Péguy says "heroism of the French kind," he looks from his shop in the Rue de la Sorbonne toward that Africa where the young Psichari is engaged in discovering the deep roots which attach to the "military peasantry" – Christianly heroic – that is France. When Bernanos writes: "The men of my race have loved honour even unto ridicule and the absurd" (180), he is indeed far from his country; but his exile's gaze turns toward the heroic battle which is playing out anew on French earth, and he places all his hope in the triumph of "French honour." Claudel, he, is the man of global and universal vision, and not only in the purely spiritual sense wherein the universe appears quite whole as a symbol of infinite God: he is that also in the temporal sense, and in his very career as a diplomat which has take him all over the world as one who has the task of "being" everywhere France, but also of helping his country to assimilate the spiritual riches of others, to enrich by that contact its own testimony. With Don Rodrigo, Spanish hero of the epoch of the global mission of Catholic Spain, Claudel could say: "I have come to enlarge the earth ... so that there may be no gap. Evil occurs everywhere in a gap" (181). The heroic France which he seeks and finds is the France that is recognised in all there is of the most humanly and supernaturally heroic on the earth, the France which has not renounced its heroic and secular mission as the "conscience" of Christianity, of all Christianity, present and future.

Claudel, poet of cosmic unity, is also he who unifies on the purely spiritual plane. "Heroic" ideas and tendencies which would appear sometimes to be incompatible, come, thanks to a higher harmony, to be joined in the heroic existence, the truly integral heroism which he reveals to us. But Claudel did not find that harmony of heroic tendencies immediately. The series of his works allows us to follow precisely the evolution of his thought, and above all his progressive conquest, his poetic "recreation" of the marvellous

[34] "Dare to do as much as you can." From the *Lauda Sion* of Thomas Aquinas.

realm of the human soul fully flowering in the total gift. Thus, in spite of their sometimes brutal evocation of concrete reality, his first pieces seem to present to us, more often than complete souls, states of soul and the forces, good or bad, which act on human life. We must even wait for the *Soulier de satin*[35] for the man to retrieve, by the heroic gift, his perfect integrity, his plenitude of life.

In that evolution of Claudelian thought, it is a question above all of finding a heroism which could reconcile a heroic thirst for personal grandeur with the not less imperious and human need for devotion, to feel one's self in solidarity with others, responsible with them for a common work which surpasses us and gives a sense to our life. "Head of gold,"[36] the first "hero" of Claudel, affirms himself, in fact, as an "*existant*" (in the even Sartrean sense) who is exalted in his free choice and in the triumph of his will of Nietzschean power. Everywhere he seeks himself, himself and his proper grandeur, even in sacrifice: to Cébès, who dies as a victim, he says:

> " ... I envy you because
> You suffer
> And because you die! Unappreciable richness,
> Which can reject that enormous treasure, yourself quite whole!" (182)

But, it is not death that he wants, that death which lies in wait for him, moreover, and against which his will conflicts every time – death of the loved wife, death of Cébès, his own death. Like Avare of *Ville*,[37] who swears "to deliver in myself that through which I am one," Head of Gold thirsts to affirm himself, in surpassing himself always better: "How magnificent it is that this mouth pronounces its 'I'... I also, I will do my work, and crawling underneath I will cause this enormous stone to shake... O to do! to do! to do! Who will give the power to do?" (184). Right up to death he will keep his pride of the great egoist: dying is a stoic virtue which the chief recommends to his soldiers: "... a haughty thought, a courage when walking on hot coals... carry your immoveable heart like a millstone... and tread everything under your feet, your wife and your house, and yourself like your own clothing... You are certain masters only of yourselves; fear leaving yourself open to dispossession" (184).

However, the last word of the work does not belong to Head of Gold; and death would have soon ended by "dispossessing" in spite of him this "overman of the will," if it was not conquered in its turn by that which alone is stronger: namely, heroic love, the love for the victim as Cébès and the Princess possess. In their sacrifice the heroism of devotion which stands opposed to the superhuman aspirations of "heroic egoism" appears clearly already, although the mystery of its grandeur is not yet fully accepted, and that heroism is not yet fully integrated in a conception of the total man.

That opposition which is affirmed here between the sentiment of personal grandeur and heroic devotion, is at bottom the same opposition, or rather the same difference, as between "masculine" and "feminine" virtues, of which only the true union in the heart of a

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[35] "Satin slipper"
[36] The eponymous hero of Claudel's first play *Tête d'or* ("Head of gold")
[37] "The town," Claudel's one-act play which premiered in 1893

unique personality bestows the plenitude of the human. “Everyone in his breast contains a man and a woman” (185). For a man to realise himself fully, it is then necessary for him to allow what there is in him of the “feminine” to flower, which Anne Vercors calls: “my secret glory, my interior beauty, the springing up of tenderness and innocence, the joy at the bottom of my heart, that thing in us which gives!” And, so that the woman may realise her perfection, she must have something other and more than the “sweet courage” and “naive patience” of the Princess (186); she must have an ideal goal, a driving conviction, which makes her surpass even her human endearments, to control even her love. Like Cébès, the woman searches for the person to whom to give herself, but, like her, she seeks also in that gift of love a principle of grandeur: “Nothing imperfect can make me suffer, for I am not sufficient to myself.

> “I search then for him who is perfectly just and true,
> So that he may be perfectly good and that I may love him likewise.” (187)

The union of these two principles of the heroic life will permit, with Rodrigo as with Prouhèze, a total sacrifice in the plenitude of the human, an achievement of Claudelian heroism. But, in the first works, the synthesis is not yet realised: the two principles confront each other and man questions himself about his true grandeur. Head of Gold rejoices that he has “nothing of the feminine” (188) in him; but what will hold the satisfaction of death is indeed the heroism of the woman, and not the quite virile passion and grandeur of Head of Gold: it is the loving sacrifice of the Princess dying “nailed by the hands... like the tree which one crucifies, so that it may bear fruit” (189); it is “the joy which is in the final hour” (190), which finally appeases, in the case of Cébès, the thirst for the heroic gift.

Here, as elsewhere, Claudel’s revisions are very significant. It is in the *Annonce faite à Marie*[38] that the sacrifice of the “young girl Violaine” assumes all its spiritual value and receives its providential place in the historical oeuvre of the Redemption. It is in the version of the *Soulier de satin* abridged for the stage that one sees underlined the essential message of the work: the triumph of total sacrifice bringing “deliverance to captive souls.” And it is in the second version of the *Ville* that the role of the woman begins clearly to appear, of she who gives and causes to give, but whose heroism, to be “integral,” must be completed by that driving force which is the property of the man; of she, moreover, who, better than the man, represents the *total* gift, for her being is more “whole.” The woman is Lala, whose very essence is expressed as the indivisible unity of a spiritual experience; she is “promise,” “presence” better than everything, “calmness with what is, with regret for what is not” (191), and that unity gives her all her force, allowing her to conquer “the hardest heart,” to dissolve “the most solid bonds” (192).

That unity which creates the power of feminine being is not necessarily “heroic.” It can become, moreover, as a total refusal, the principle of a “heroism” of destruction and the void. But, that unity of a “complete” being is indeed one of the conditions for “integral’ heroism, of the harmony of all human forces in saintliness. It is why the age of heroism is above all that of youth: “Youth is scarcely made for pleasure,” Claudel wrote to Jacques

[38] “The tidings brought to Mary,” Claudel’s play which premiered in 1910

Rivière, "it is made for heroism." Youth is like the privileged age of that perfect heroism wherein force and grace are joined, where one surpasses one's self in giving one's self without reserve.

> Even amongst the souls, I believe that one will recognise in their appearance those who are dead with a full heart, in the fullness of youth! ... A soul of twenty years flames in the sun of God! (193)

This young heroism cannot co-exist with an egoistical search for one's self, however exalted it may be, with the will-to-power of a Head of Gold or the insatiable desire for grandeur of the Rodrigo of the three first *Journées*[39] of the *Soulier de satin*. But it can be kept, it can be reconquered by a young heart, a heart which lets itself be conquered by love, by that "inextinguishable flame, in which he (the man) perfects himself quite whole in consuming himself" (194).

It is love, in fact, which creates unity of being. By the progressive laying bare of the soul, love can fill up the emptiness carved by pride; it can permit, not only to conquer one's self, but to let one's self conquer; it can bestow the force, no more of a stoic resignation before a blind destiny, but of a free and willing acceptance of exigencies grander than those which events can impose, for "it is difficult for he who loves to do everything which love demands of him" (195).

This love which enables one to attain to the total gift and even to saintliness, is of course not an ordinary passion. If it takes root deeply in human nature, it must defend itself, not only against all which is bad and dishonouring, but against all which is imperfect, all that would risk obstructing it in its ascension toward Love itself. It is thus that the Claudelian heroes – Pensée of *Pere humilié*,[40] or Violaine – must become, without losing any of their essential femininity, "heroes of the will," that they must renounce a very noble passion in order to accomplish more than a task: a real vocation of sacrifice; for "The male is priest, but the female is not forbidden to be a victim" (196).

It is to *Soulier de satin*, the summit of all the Claudelian oeuvre, that one must go to see in all its grandeur this role of heroic love, sketched already in *Tête d'Or*. If, elsewhere, Claudel sometimes presents to us incarnate states of the soul rather than personalities, here, in a cosmic setting, he foregrounds a man and a woman created by God to elevate themselves one by the other even to the complete transformation of Love. "is it not Rodrigo," asks Prouhèze, "who has taught me to sacrifice the whole world? ... Rodrigo is for always this cross to which I am attached" (197). And this crucified love is not a destructive force, a principle of annihilation. Quite other than the love of Mara, who is born of suffering, "this suffering which is sufficient for those who scarcely have any joy," who does not know sacrifice and would only know how to bring about death, death of the soul if not of the body, the love of Prouhèze is a principle of life:

> Ah! it is not death, but life which I would wish to bring to those whom I love.

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[39] "Days"

[40] "The humbled father," Claudel's play which premiered in 1920

> Life, would that it be at the price of my own! (199)

It is also a principle of liberty, for it is only the sacrifice offered by love which can truly satisfy our thirst for spiritual liberty. Already Violaine was saying to Jacques: "... this sacrifice has appeared to me so cruel, so lovable that I did not know how to keep myself from making it" (200). But, in the *Soulier de satin*, Prouhèze is not alone in understanding the true sense and liberating role of unlimited love which seems to invade him and invite him to total sacrifice; Rodrigo begins with a vision also quite clear of the difficult climb towards the heroic summits of human experience: "And me, I think that nothing is sufficient for love! Ah! I have found so grand a thing! It is love which must give me the keys to the world and not withhold them!" (201). And finally, when all has been consummated, when in the name of his love he has won all to be able to lose all: "It is a beautiful night for me where I finally celebrate my engagement to liberty!" (202) – a beautiful night for this "old bandy-legs" who keeps in his heart the wound that will not heal!

"Lucid and willing heroism," we have said of that "heroism of the French kind" which appears to us here in a truly "integral" form. To see clearly the ideal beauty in conquering, the "union for always with that thing which gives you eternal life" (203), is, in fact , for Prouhèze – for Rodrigo also, but with more inflexibility an resistance – already to desire, and with the force of will ready for all sufferings and all sacrifices. They know in advance what their love is going to cost them, feeling in them all that is going to resist their need for purity and joy, their thirst for spiritual grandeur; but they are not frightened by it. It is even with a kind of exultation that they anticipate the battle; the truly heroic soul, having seen and desired the goal to attain, does not fear coming to the limit of its forces:

> It is nothing to hope for what is beautiful! it is to know that one partakes of it for always!
> It is not enough only to hold one's enemy by the throat. He is stopped!
> And not only does he oblige us to give all that there is of force in us,
> But we feel that he himself has enough of it in himself to ask three or four times. There is always something new to attend to. (204)

Prouhèze, in giving over her will, with her shoe of satin, between the hands of the Virgin, has not believed she will escape the battle. As for Rodrigo, the king of Spain has well understood him in wishing to make him see Prouhèze again before his leaving for the conquest of America: he knew that Rodrigo would separate himself from her "through his pure and proper will" with so much "fuel" in his heart that it would be forever a "soul absolutely incapable of being extinguished" (205).

This need to conquer a passion that is real otherwise than that of the other Rodrigo and of Chimène – without losing anything of all that she admits of suffering for the time and joy for eternity – leads sometimes to some strange situations. For the drama plays itself out in its entirety in the most intimate depths of hearts. This heroism can be integral because Claudel peoples his works with, not certain saints, but, as he says himself à propos of some characters in *Otage*, "weak human creatures in the grip of Grace" (206).

Thus, Prouhèze who says again and again: “No, I will not renounce Rodrigo!” knows well that she will effectively renounce him , but this will be for him to be truly unified. When, after many years, she will find him again, when he will finally have been able to answer her call, she will only appear before him to ask him permission to die – and she will obtain this permission:

> Die because you wish it, I permit you to! Go in peace, take away for always from me the foot of your adored presence! Consummate absence! (207)

Even as he protests that he can, that he wants to, keep her back, Rodrigo lets her go... And he returns to the conquest of the world, with his will, at once conquered and victorious, fortified by the great unslaked desire which takes him unceasingly towards new conquests, none of which is capable of satisfying him.

Rodrigo in the end will be able to accomplish his global and universal mission, because his sacrifice will have been a total gift, gift of a love at once sacrificed and sacrificer. It is here, in fact, a lone and same love which is “sacrificed” in the woman who plays her role of victim, and “sacrificer” with the man who must offer it – as Pierre de Craon made himself, he also, the initiator of the sacrifice of Violaine – and who must finally consummate in himself, painfully, the total sacrifice: sacrifice of the “whole” human, conquered and offered “so that there may be no gap” in the spiritual edifice.

This heroism of love is necessarily also a heroism of faith. Heroic love, stronger than death, supposes faith, which alone permits the reconciliation of the imperious desire to live with that other no less imperious desire to give one’s self entirely. A love so whole as that of Prouhèze can only aspire to “that thing which gives you eternal life.” Already, with the Princess of *Tête dOr* we had seen that sacrificed love comprehends a supernatural hopefulness, knowing that it must “fructify.” In the *Père humilié*, it is with the same clarity that Pensée receives the revelation of love in all its reality and the invasion of supernatural light: “He loves me; I believe in God...” (208). For Rodrigo, the supreme consummation of sacrifice is the achievement of a sacrifice which brings “deliverance to captive souls.” The act of faith of so great a love devoted to sacrifice is proclaimed finally in the triumphal chant of the Voices which surround the funeral pyre of Joan of Arc:

> There is joy which is the strongest! There is love which is the strongest! There is God which is the strongest! (209)

With love, principle of will, and faith, source of certainty, it is this “joy which is the strongest” which characterises Claudelian heroism and which reveals its other principle: Grace.

Grace is the principle of supernatural life. It is not identified with such a deed or such a word, and it is not acquired through purely human efforts. “All is Grace,” murmured Bernanos’ priest on his deathbed, but for someone who has arrived at that point he must have already have given himself quite whole, he must have opened himself to invading Grace. Claudel’s characters do not all arrive there; most of them remain “in the grip of Grace.” But in the beauty of certain gestures and in the joy of certain sacrifices freely consented to one

often finds the revelation of that supernatural principle of heroism, even with those who remain far below the level of saintliness. Sacrifice, said Claudel à propos *Soulier de satin*, is an emptiness which invites God to fill it (210), and what He puts in the place of our poor human gifts – that new force and grandeur – will necessarily bestow a revelatory beauty. That beauty appears in the "dazzling smile" (211) of those who have died for their homeland, or in the knightly gesture of the dying Sygne: a gesture of quite human beauty, but which one feels to have an almost sacramental worth, inviting to Grace:

> She is as dead. However she breathes again, when Turelure... at once ironic and scandalised, recalls to her memory the great feudal duty, faith, the payment of the whole person to the Suzerain – in that giving of the right hand which summarises the whole work and in a great spring of assurance, hopefulness and love which, as we could well hope for, saves her! (212)

In the *Soulier de satin*, the joy of the heroic gift of the self radiates everywhere, and sometimes burns with the intensity of the African sun. The difficult path of sacrifice indeed appears like the way of Beatitude, where one must engage one's self without reserve, with the sole fear of not knowing how to satisfy all the demands of love. But, to see in its perfection the beauty of sacrifice as Claudel conceives it, it is necessary always to go back to she who wears like a wedding dress her character of redemptive victim. In *Jeune fille Violaine*[41] Pierre de Craon has already told her:

> He who gives so that he may give , it is just that he may receive;
> And he who sacrifices himself, Violaine, he sanctifies himself. (213)

In the *Annonce faite à Marie* this high spiritual value which Violaine acquires through her sacrifice, through her "consecration," re-invests her gestures and words with a unique beauty. Her ideal – expressed from the time of the decisive meeting with Pierre de Craon – is to be "consumed," but, "let it be on a golden candelabra like Cierge Pascal in full chorus for the glory of the whole Church!" (214). And, when finally she has given everything: "Now, I am broken everywhere and perfume is exhaled..." (215). He we are equally far from a stoical acceptation of suffering and the feverish exaltation of romanticism. To suffer is not a weakness which one must refuse to the greatest extent possible; but the supreme suffering of "crucified" love is no more a principle of pride and egoism. What matters, what gives to suffering its redemptive role, is the free offering, at once humble and proud, which one makes, lovingly, to God, to He who "asks us not at all what is above us, but what is most low. Not at all being pleased with bloody sacrifices, but with the gifts that his Son gives him with all his heart" (216).

In that heroism of total sacrifice, where all the human passions are found, not extinguished, but immolated in a holocaust of love for the Love itself which lives eternally, Paul Claudel gives full satisfaction to all the demands of those who thirst for grandeur in our modern world: demands for plenitude even on the human scale, demands of liberty and

[41] "The young girl Violaine" (1893)

engagement with one's "whole heart," of purity in the communion of souls, of participation in the absolute, finally in joy. For only Joy is real – what reveals to us here the unique beauty of the perfect sacrifice. Only participation in that ineffable Joy allows us to see in its true light the melancholy appearances of human life, for Joy is itself light, that Joy which emanates from a unique source: the Cross. At the beginning of our century we have seen the "Centurion" proclaim in the "immoveable Cross" the principle of all true heroism; at the summit of the Claudelian oeuvre, when the poet declares to us finally the ultimate secret of heroic existence – "integrally" heroic – it is still the Cross which dominates the whole scene, and which radiates everywhere the joy of its liberating "madness."

12. CONCLUSION

At the end of our study – rather brief, it is true, for the task which it proposed for itself – we do not pretend to have arrived at a conclusion the evidence of which is imposed in a mathematical fashion. In dwelling for a moment on the evolution of heroic literature in the course of this half century, we have only wished to lend the ear to this "personal response" which, through the voice of its writers, France seems to make understood for all those who seek "reasons to live and to strive." We have affirmed at the beginning, and we believe we can reaffirm, that that response, which issues from profound conscience of "eternal France," is fundamentally Christian.

It will perhaps be objected that our conclusion is rather arbitrary, that it would have sufficed to put together other artists of the French twentieth century – whose complexity we have underlined – to arrive at a quite different result, at a "response" which gives a rather different resonance, if not a total check, to the simple declaration of a profound discord. We believe, however, that, as "idealistic" as our conclusion may appear, it is not for that less true. There where the human is at play, and even when a sane realism claims all rights, it is often, in fact, the "ideal" which contains the profound truth; the heroes of Corneille reveal "the beings who we are" rather better than the minute analyses of the thoroughgoing pessimist. It is true that, just as he who surpasses himself in the heroic act can disavow later on his own heroism, to not recognise himself in the new being that has momentarily appeared, the writer can fail to claim for himself the heroic ideal which one however glimpses all through his work; and, a stronger reason, a public which is prejudiced, or quite simply apathetic, may turn a deaf ear to the ideal which seemed for a moment to solicit its attention and even win its sympathy. It remains true that that ideal has been welcomed with a revelatory spontaneity; and perhaps it has even been the goal of a search, wherein one is finally too delighted to admit the end of it – above all an end which is presented as a rigorous exigency. We will not then deny that discordant voices have been able to make themselves heard in France. We call to mind many diverse sources, and as an element of unity between otherwise very different beings, we have been able to note the testimony, sometimes almost unconscious, of an heroic ideal itself, an ideal which is associated, moreover, with a very recognisable tradition, essential to French thought. How could we then refuse to accept this testimony as that of France herself, which causes to be heard, above the fracas of the modern world, what remains its essential message to a humanity athirst for grandeur?

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Right at the start we ventured to characterise amongst some traits the two first "stages" of "heroism of the French kind," of that ideal which we believe we see – across the historical wanderings which have contributed to bring to it a spiritual deepening – to be essentially

identical in all its expressions, as the heroic literature which expresses it remains also, in spite of its highs and lows, in a same line of tradition.

It is in the *Chanson de Roland* that we have sought the elements of the "knightly" ideal of heroism, what that ideal had that was most pure, and free, moreover, from that which risked its alteration or obscuration; and we have seen that, behind that heroism of the knight who *fights* for his faith, his loyalty or his love, it is the ideal figure of the crossed one – the heroic saintliness of Louis IX – which defines the essential of a knightly fidelity become Christian fidelity – the saintliness of him for whom the cross that he bore proudly on his arms was not an emblem of warrior pride, but the sign of the Crucified One.

Then, we dwelt on that privileged moment when the Cornelian drama synthesises all the noble aspirations expressed in the ideas – too quickly depreciated! – of "grandeur of soul" or of "generosity" of "the honest man." And here again the poet of heroism (moral heroism of he who *conquers* himself in the service of a quite noble love) appeared to us as the inheritor of a Christian spirituality which defines the profound sense of heroic striving.

Our third stage is that which neither the "philosophical" century which believed it had discovered "heroism," nor the revolutionary period which was faithless to its promises of spiritual grandeur, nor a romanticism carried away by the wave of its "feverish exaltation," still less the reign of a rationalism infatuated with measurable "progress," – could realise. It is the stage which coincides quite closely with the first half of our century. It makes us see the result of the whole literary evolution of "heroism of the French kind," revealing what may be for literature an "integral" heroism, the heroism of him who *gives himself* in a gesture of total abandon, which is at the same time an act of faith, hopefulness and love. We have seen that such a heroism is not only the preparation for a possible saintliness, for the search for saintliness is of its own essence. Through what work or what literary genre will our third stage at the present time be able to be characterised?

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It is with the work of Charles Péguy that we have considered to commence our study of integral heroism, and it is across his work that we have believed ourselves able to recognise what constitutes "heroism of the French kind" itself: a lucid heroism illuminated by a "reasonable" faith, a willing heroism which draws its force from a pure and noble love, a joyous heroism which is an overflowing of spiritual health; helped by Péguy we have been able finally to perceive the summit of that heroism, realised in the saintliness of Joan of Arc.

If already the Péguy oeuvre thus contains all the elements of integral heroism, and if Péguy himself remains "present" in our time, leader and at the same time "theologian" of heroism of the French kind, is that to say that his work might synthesise all the quests for human grandeur which are reflected in the French literature of our century? That would be going too far. Or rather, if that work is already a kind of synthesis of all that is going to follow in the domain of heroic literature, it can only be in the sense that it reveals its principle and strength, that it gives its key. Péguy lets us see, in effect, the ideal obscurely glimpsed by so many seekers, an ideal which is at bottom only that humbly and poorly heroic path, that

"citizenship"[42] which seems to be the spiritual revelation proper to our time. But, if it reveals thus the secret of so many spiritual journeys, Péguy himself could not make the path which each has chosen; he could not follow all the detours, sometimes bristling with obstacles and dangers, which have permitted seekers of good will finally to confront the reality, at once simple and sublime, of which they have had a presentiment. He who only worked in the "domain of grace," how would he have been able to predict and prevent so many other tenacious efforts which have only realised a "grandeur" made of pride and hate, so much refusal, still heroic, but of a heroism corrupted at is source?

We have seen, moreover, that modern life scarcely lends itself to the creation of an oeuvre which reflects it in its totality; to render the synthesis of a whole so complex, one would almost need the Omniscience of a Divine gaze. Though it is incomplete, our glimpse of all that has contributed to create in France an "heroic climate" has allowed us to see how much contemporary reality necessarily overflows any single work, even the most rich and ingenious. We have signalled certain historical events which have sharpened the desire for heroism often poorly understood, and at the same time the true grandeurs which are seen in the domains of action and thought: the heroisms which gave birth to the Dreyfus affair, the war of 1914-18, the colonial epic, the hazardous and heroic beginnings of aviation, civic life and its domination by political ideologies, the Christian renewal; equally we have evoked the "presences" which have inspired and dominated the literary explorations of heroism; we have contemplated for an instant the tragic figures of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, heard the prophetic and thundering voice of Léon Bloy, guessed what has been for generations avid of grandeur – but bent under their burden of the "modern world" – the fraternal presence of Pascal, or yet that nostalgic evocation of spiritual beauty by which Alain-Fournier leads us far from the obscenities of daily life... But, when so many great figures seem to us only to represent the elements of what makes up the heroic "climate" of our epoch, where can we seek that which gathers together all its traits, contains all its riches?

Have we not said, however, that the work of Paul Claudel succeeds precisely in rendering this synthesis? Thanks to his spiritual experience and the apocalyptic vision of his "universal symbolism," would Claudel not let be comprehended in the framework of his oeuvre the very essence of all these seekings after grandeur? Does he not offer us, moreover, the highest expression of that integral heroism, that heroism of saintliness which would be the profound ideal of our modern literature?

We believe, in fact, that the poetic universe of Claudel allows us to see, not only the summit of the heroic literature of our epoch, but also the response to all the agonies which modern man encounters, even in the hours of the most total despair. But finally, this universe all bathed in the supernatural, where the very shadows are only the shade thrown by an invading light, this universe remains closed, for that which is of its essential treasure, to those who do not possess the key of a Christian faith. And, on the other hand, modern literature portrays the loyal quests of a true heroism, the gropings toward that same light, which remain strangers to the joy and liberty of the children of God, the spiritual climate of Péguy and Claudel.

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[42] See note on p. 65

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Will the future speak of a "Claudelian heroism" to designate what we have called "integral heroism"? We cannot know; no more than we can know if certain present endeavours, certain personal experiences, are not called to end in a new vision, more complete, more revelatory than that same heroism. Will we soon see an heroic literature still more apt to render what our century will have seen of true grandeur, to render even unto saintliness what is manifested in the most terrible sufferings and miseries and in the purity of a gift of the self wherein self-regard finds no place?

We think for example, of the spiritual perspectives opened up by the work of André Malraux, of what a fearless exploitation of all the possibilities of heroism offered by modern life – psychological as well as physical possibilities – could give, if, in the torment accepted, even sought out, of conflicts of every order, it would be married with that profound, inadmissible peace which only Christian hopefulness can give, that "joy of love against which nothing can prevail."

We think equally of the work of Albert Camus. It seems, in effect, that for Camus the possibility of heroism may be sole solution to the problem of life, the only hope for reconciling love and man – and Camus needs to love man – with a conviction, even a sensation, of the absurdity of human life.

With Camus, that heroism is sometimes only a kind of despairing stoicism: "Everything begins through clear-sighted indifference" (218); it is by this "beginning" that l'*Étranger* [43] ends. But, above the simple acceptance of the absurd, there will also be the solution of Sisyphus: "the higher faithfulness which denies the gods and sustains the rocks," and that "battle itself towards the summits suffices to fill the heart of man" (219). It remains to explain this inexplicable contentment which the accomplishment of an "absurd" task gives; it is the central problem of the *Peste*.[44] That town of Oran afflicted by the plague is symbolic of the years of occupation, with their sum of suffering and ignominy; but it is symbolic at the same time of human life and all its injustice. Before this injustice of fate, how are men going to react? – By devoting themselves. And Dr. Rieux, who recites a list of so many devotions, wants to talk neither of heroism nor of saintliness: that absurd heroism of a terrible lucidity would be the very essence of man; the aim of his recital is precisely to show "that there is in man more to admire than to contemn" (220). But, is this heroic humanism sustainable? "Can one be a saint without God? This is the only problem I acknowledge today" (221). An "absence of God" which poses such a problem appears to us already in some way a presence. Faith has other names for the feeling of the absurdity of all our efforts; for it finally, the shadows are only a preparation for the light. And what shadows more impenetrable are there than that obscene light which forms the framework of l'*Etranger* and which bathes again the town of Oran, a light which is like a negation, the despairing absence of all mystery?

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[43] Camus' novel "The outsider"
[44] Camus' novel "The plague"

No more than we can predict the limits of such a personal journeying which will be perhaps decisive for the evolution of heroic literature in France, can we tease out here all the significance which the collective experiences of our century will have, a significance still too obscure – if not sometimes too dazzling! We have only to think of the annals at once ignominious and glorious of 1940-1944, of those years which have been for many Frenchmen, in heroic circumstances, those of "small Hopefulness" which makes a jest of impossibilities, those years above all of a new fight for the eternal well-being of France: for "what is important most of all, is that France guards its soul, that France stays faithful to its vocation, that France does not lose its honour" (222).

If they must not be indifferent to the evolution of French thought on the subject of heroism, of its own inner strengths and own worth, the years seem to have brought, however, only few fruits for literature. It is certainly too soon to judge the literary worth of all the works which belong to this period; but one can say that, on the whole, not more than the war of 1914-18, the years of the Resistance have not responded to the expectations which would appear to be legitimate in the domain of heroic literature.

Perhaps it is even significant that one of the works to emerge from the Resistance – a work whose literary grandeur would appear to be incontestable – is entitled: *La silence de la mer*.[45] This "silence" immortalised by Vercors is entirely contrary to a heavy sighing: it is an heroic tension ready for every suffering, it is the safeguard of an absolute fidelity carried even unto the most delicate scruple, a refusal of all treason which erects itself like an insurmountable wall, a wall behind which one senses a wave of deep grief which exhales the resonances of the sea. But, if this drama of "resistance" in a pure state – of moral heroism without the accompaniment of inhuman circumstances – keeps itself thus in a revelatory silence, in what abyss of silence have certain sufferings and refusals had to find refuge?

Our study of heroic literature therefore ends without us being able to pinpoint the end of this new "stage" which is realised in the course of our century. If we have entitled our enquiry "*Towards* an integral heroism," it is because we know well, in fact, that the last word has not been said. Even that summit where one arrives with the "supernatural heroism" of Bernanos or Claudel, is only, at bottom, one conquest among almost infinite possibilities; heroic literature is an affair of life, and it remains on the move.

It seems to us, however, that it has already acquired something solid: under pain of renouncing the depiction of true heroism, the heroic literature of France will scarcely be able able to give itself a lesser ideal than that total gift of the man which we have called "integral heroism."

In the future this literature will have to be, moreover, less a presentation of a lone act of heroism than an interpretation of the *heroic existence*. It has been said that French literature "is not of an heroic form, but, if one might say, a clinical form... The Frenchman searches in books not for an ideal image of man, seen as greater than nature, but an observation as exact, as objective, as cruel as possible, a *clinical* observation... of all the weakness and all the vices of nature" (223). This is true, although a more idealistic literature represents also, as we have seen, a very real element of the French conscience. But today

[45] Jean Bruller's novel "The silence of the sea" (1942), written under the pseudonym "Vercors."

there is a synthesis effected of "clinical observation" and more traditional idealism; for at the present time, it is scarcely possible for the idealist to make an abstraction of the evil which is found in the world; one knows too well right now that the path which leads to the summits is neither quick nor easy; one is too conscious of the stones and thorns which obstruct it, of the holes which lie in wait for the reckless step, to wish to fix one's eyes uniquely on the heights; one knows finally that, to attain to that height, one must learn how to follow that painful path, not patiently – that would be too hard – but lovingly, in clasping well the hand of that "small Hopefulness" which leads toward a certain but inconceivable joy. It is then today a heroism less "superhuman" than "supernatural" which furnishes the inspiration of a literature of heroic existence which has no need to nourish itself with exalting illusions. It may be that one will come back later to a more impersonal, more "classic" heroic literature, but that literature will necessarily be influenced by the experiences of our epoch, of so many soundings made in the depths of the human soul, of so many lived heroisms which are reflected more or less faithfully in the works of "witness."

Finally, if the last word on "integral" heroism of the total gift is far from being spoken, it is because man will always more and other things to give, because he will always have more and other things to receive! How could one risk saying the final word when, behind so many still poorly defined conceptions, so many imperfect images, He who is the model and inspiration – sometimes only glimpsed – of a "heroism of the French kind," is always Christ Himself? "All the sainthoods of the world," says Péguy, "are only reflections of the sainthood of Jesus" (224).

This inspiration, this "Presence," is so essential to the heroic literature of France that it is found, in fact, even there where the doctrine of Christ seems to be rejected or completely misconceived. That the Christian Middle Ages proposes as its ideal its Galahad, "knightly Messiah," that the brave Corneille retires from the theatre to translate the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, that Paul Claudel allows us to see his Violaine or his Rodrigo intimately united with Christ in the most complete ordeal and in the madness of the Cross – none of these things can surprise us. But, what really gives us pause to think, is a Rousseau, upholding the sensibility in religion, who holds to make us see the "sensible heart" of Christ; it is a Victor Hugo who presents to us Christ as a symbol of his own hero, who suffers of his genius and virtue; it is in our time an Albert Camus, for whom the "absurd discovery," preparatory stage of the only possible heroism, is the "Mount of Olives" of "men without a gospel" (225). To try to rejoin Christ in his Gethsemane, is indeed, in fact, the ultimate striving of our modern literature. Even the unbeliever has been able to make today the discovery of one of the essential verities of human life: the irreplaceable value of solitude and of silence, of the progressive laying bare of the spirit and the heart; and, once embarked on that journey, one does not encounter any impass.

In our laicised and paganised world the Cross is then immanent, and profoundly so. One may turn aside from it – that will always be the reaction of the greatest number; one may insult it, and hate is already a kind of love; but, as soon as one takes up the path to the heights, one will no longer be able to avoid passing through Golgotha, where even in the shadows, one senses it "in the gently stirring Night which breathes with God" (226).

The message of France, transmitted through its heroic literature, will remain essentially that of a heroism of faith, love and joy – of even the joy of those who, having the Cross, await the Resurrection.

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201. *Soulier de satin*, II, XI.
202. *Ibid.*, IV, XI.
203. *Ibid.*, III, XIII.
204. *Soulier de Satin*, II, IV.
205. *Ibid.*, II, VII.
206. Lettre à M. Pawlowski, Rédacteur en chef de *Comoedia*.
207. *Soulier de satin*, III, XIII.
208. Acte III, p. 157.
209. P. 92.
210. Article de *Théâtre*.
211. *Le Père humilié*, III, p. 62.
212. Lettre à M. Pawlowski.
213. P. 25.
214. *Prologue*, p. 32, (Gallimard, 1926).
215. IV, III.
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218. *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, (Gallimard, 1942), p. 131.
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