A MAN'S HISTORY

By Pietro Ubaldi

PIETRO UBALDI COLLECTION:

Great Messages The Great Synthesis The Noures Mystical Ascesis A Man's History Fragments of Thought and Passion The New Civilization of The Third Millennium Future Problems Human Ascensions God and Universe The Future of the World Commentaries Current Problems The System The Great Battle Evolution and Gospel The Law of God The Functional Technique of God's Law Fall and Redemption Principles of a New Ethics The Descent of Ideals A Destiny Following Christ Thoughts Christ

For suggestions, inquiries, or the wish to share your thoughts please contact at: <u>pietroubaldibooks@gmail.com</u> Instagram: @UbaldiUK

Book last update on: 11/11/2024

Contents

PREFACE	1
1_FROM HIS DIARY	17
2 THE PROTAGONIST AND THE ENVIRONMENT	25
<u>3</u> THE MEANING AND METHOD OF LIFE	
4 A MAN AND A DESTINY ARE BORN	43
5 IN SEARCH OF ONESELF	51
6 FIRST SCHOOLS AND FIRST PROBLEMS	65
7 UNIVERSITY STUDIES AND INNER EXPLORATIONS	75
8 THE THREE PATHS OF LIFE	83
9 THE PAIN IN THE LOGIC OF DESTINY	93
10 THE PROBLEM OF WEALTH, WORK, AND THE GOSPEI	L105
11 POVERTY AND WORK	115
12 TRIBULATIONS	123
13 THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE	131
14 SPIRITUAL AFFIRMATIONS	141
15 SUFFERINGS AND VISIONS	151
16 THE ASSAULTS	167
17 THE WAYS OF THE WORLD	175
<u>18</u> CONDEMNED	185
19 IN THE EARTHLY HELL	
<u>20</u> REVOLT	203
21 THE BETRAYAL OF JUDAS	217
22 LIES AND JUSTIFICATIONS	227
23 THE GOSPEL AND THE WORLD	239
24 THE STRUGGLE FOR THE IDEAL	249

25 RESURRECTION	257
<u>26</u> LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR	271
27 HUMAN ASCENSIONS	
28 LAST CHORDS	293
29 GOODBYE TO SISTER PAIN	301
<u>30</u> ARRIVAL OF SISTER DEATH	315

PREFACE

Those who read this volume, believing that they will find in it the same Ubaldi as in his previous books, will be disappointed. With each new book, he transforms and renews his personality. Each of his volumes is a documentary of what was, real and spiritually, at a phase of his life. Therefore, it is useless to search these pages for the same propositions and attitudes as in his previous works. This clarification is necessary from the outset so that the reader is not deceived and because misunderstandings are detestable. There is nothing here of mediumship, biosophy, spiritualism, and the like. The personality of the author, who never belonged to any group nor joined any school, always remaining free in its development, independent, now reaches, completely renewed, other affirmations. It is horrible to repeat oneself, to remain stagnant in a certain field. Only those who renew themselves live. Constant specialization in the particular may be materially useful, but it is paralysis of the spirit.

The preceding tetralogy, in which the Author, starting from matter and reaching spirit, traverses the path from Earth to Heaven, the tetralogy represented by the Spiritual Messages¹, The Great Synthesis, The Noures, Mystical Ascesis, is a complete edifice, a surpassed phase, a finished period. Thereafter, in the spirit of the Author, a terrible crisis occurred, necessary for a renewal, completion and continuation, things that, without storms and crises, cannot happen. Here Ubaldi reappears, after a silence in which he underwent the painful sufferings that await those who follow

¹ Or Great Messages (Note from the Translator)

the paths of the ideal. Before, he was a theorist and dreamer, it could be said. But now, he has already hit his head against the reality of human life, and he is no longer so. The blow was hard for him, and it destroyed that naive and simple faith that made him speak everything with frankness, without the cunning of human precautions. Assess, therefore, this book also by what the Author might have said, but chose instead to remain silent. A great storm unleashed within that soul, starting from the man, which ended before the face of God. He does not lament all this, for he knows he has glimpsed an important novelty, though through bitter experience, he knows he has learned to understand man, and because he made a new and great discovery: that is, that spiritual conquests, like matter and life, sufferings, refine and purify the spirit, they do not crush it. He is satisfied because, with his ideal, he traversed a period of death, emerging stronger than before, and his faith was reborn even deeper, more conscious, more solid. He offers the pages written with the blood of his torment to the skeptical and wise world, which knows what it does because it knows life and does not care, laughing at these passions and idealistic assertions. But he, in turn, knows the laws that govern these phenomena, and knows that the laughter, the incomprehension that turns its back, the indifference, and the disapproval, which is not of a social class, but the expression of the common man today, must naturally be in the life of those who follow the path of human redemption, indicated by Christ. Dreams of grandeur, expansive vitality, victorious conquest, and even the power of genius and dominion over nature, all these great and admirable things cannot suppress that law of individual sacrifice, which also belongs to life, and which the man of today, pursuing embraced ideals, would indeed have much desire to forget. It is a crime, however, to betray the ideal, whatever it may be, when so many martyrs have sacrificed for it. A tragic and desperate call, but who knows will understand; a call made in a historic and solemn hour, full of its strength and its desire to give, to those who suffer, faith and hope in ever higher things.

This volume is not autobiographical. It does, however, translate the Author's experiences and reflects real states of mind, truly felt by him, or, at least, ideally lived. As always, behind each word there is a real vibration of spiritual life, a true torment of passions; there is often a lived experience, a trial faced and overcome, a pain endured, perhaps even a path traveled, a bit of the tragic and painful journey of life seriously lived.

Despite this renewal, the principles of the preceding volumes are not denied here. On the contrary, they are invigorated, because, now developing under another vision and with a different state of mind, that is, with demolishing scepticism, they reemerge more beautiful and stronger, with a less naive faith, less simplicity, and a more tragic sense of anguished humanity. In this way, the reader will rediscover on these pages the personality of Ubaldi, more complete, matured through new experiences, led to a new phase that, while it is the logical continuation of the preceding ones, sometimes resembles the reverse, so violent were the blows and the chaotic storm that enveloped it. Here the author leans over the infernal abyss of the stupid life of the world he discovers. For a moment, nausea suffocates him and terror paralyzes him, but the forces of the spirit are powerful, and equilibrium is eventually restored. The evangelical conception, which seemed to waver, shines anew, more luminous than before, consolidating itself in the trials overcome and now definitively triumphant.

The type of reader to whom these pages are directed is different, and the same principles are here appreciated from another point of view, in a manner that might disconcert, perhaps, the superficial observer, still attached to the previous perspectives. This aims to be a strong book, with a human hue, marked by violent contrasts, a real and contemporary book, no longer Olympianly thought in the peace of Heaven, as in The Great Synthesis, but tragically lived in the struggles of the earth. The same truth is here differently observed. That is a book of clear vision of the truth, contemplated in the serene peace of a being tranquilly situated outside earthly competitions. This, on the contrary, is a book written by one who lives on earth, immersed in its psychology, making the infernal soul of the world his own, by one who has lived its pains, and fighting and bleeding, describes them. It is natural that the same reality of life, not observed from the peace of the heights, but in the struggle and torment of the earth and sometimes expressed with the psychology of the world, seen thus from a different angle, offers us a different picture. But this time it was necessary to descend to the world of human realities and also speak to another category of people, to those who live life plainly; it was necessary to speak with their own language and according to their way of thinking, even to those who had until now smiled and shrugged, as one does when faced with the naive and impracticable utopia of a dreamy idealist. It was necessary to speak, this time, not only to the chosen ones, capable of intuiting and believing, already matured, seers, sensitive to the trials of reason, the explosions of sentiment, the allure of beauty and goodness, already on their path and eager for greater spiritual ascensions. It was necessary, now, to also speak to the blind and deaf, placing oneself at their own level, to make oneself understood, to speak to the insensitive, tied to matter as their only form of life, to the unevolved, the inert, the rebellious, the deniers without faith and without hope. And to make oneself understood, it was necessary to become one of them, to adopt their blindness, their revolt, their cross. This new voice could no longer descend from Heaven, clear and melodious, but had to, painfully, emerge from hell, harsh and weary, no longer of an angel but of a condemned. When the man of the world hears this language, he will more easily open his ears and understand. When, this time, one hears someone speak who shows knowledge of the reality of life, with all its lies, evils, and betrayals, they will more easily be persuaded, and it will not be so easy for them to smile sceptically, accusing the dreamy idealist of naive and incongruent utopia. Moreover, it is natural that things appear this way on Earth, seen from Heaven. It is necessary, then, to see them on the very Earth. A matter of perspective. And, in the end,

everything shows itself to be more real than before. The same principles, previously only theoretically and rationally affirmed, here attain a different potency, when instead of descending from Heaven, they emerge bloodied from the earthly hell. And a truth that withstands this human trial of mud and blood acquires a strength it did not have before, at least on Earth, and can then proclaim itself louder, for here too, experimentally, it has proved its reality.

In this new position, the author hopes to have found another way to do good. And in this consists the continuation, the completion of his past, his progress. Perhaps, a book of true spiritual experience was necessary, as a special reaction to certain foreign novels, books of the unconscious, crafted to demolish what is most elevated in man, achieved at the cost of the sacrifice of martyrs and the ruin of so many lives, made to uglify and poison our existence, stealing from us the faith in good and the hope for the future, books, in short, mercilessly demolishing and subtly malevolent, which the people avidly devour. Those who, like these books, deny everything, mutilate and kill primarily themselves. This History of a Man says, on the contrary, at every step: Yes! And those who affirm, build, create, rediscover the life that denial steals from them. Creation is an affirmation. God is the Yes. Satan, the No.

This time the Author speaks to a world of infernal clamour, and must use a language of contrasts and torment, of struggle and revolt. We are now not in Heaven, but truly on Earth, in the harsh reality of life, in a low and gloomy atmosphere, which light struggles to pierce, where beings fight and suffer. A war of all against all reigns without respite, preventing the serenity of higher contemplation. All energy is engaged in human rivalries, in the necessity to prevail over others. Attempting to escape is futile. In such a world, heaven, a place of bliss, can only seem like a utopia. Everyone, sooner or later, undergoes this harsh experience. The Author, too, had to and wanted to undergo it, but not to bury himself with it, but rather to resurrect, in the end, and to show everyone the paths of resurrection. Evil here is not invoked to demolish, but to build, with the purpose of good. This book was written during a brief respite stolen from that incessant infernal tension, a very brief truce, snatched from the disturbing necessity of work and the struggle for life. The author himself suffered the harsh law of all, human life immersed in matter, the spirit invaded by its merciless necessities. The experience and overcoming that he describes to us are those that the world too, albeit in a thousand different ways, must realize. The account therefore has universal significance and interest, for in his particular case we see the universal laws of life at work, guiding everyone. These pages deal with a Heaven seen through the critical and positive eyes of the man who knows the struggle of life and knows pain, viewed with the objective mentality of science and common sense, through the practical and realistic criterion as the reality of tomorrow, in which the scientific concept of biological evolution and the religious concept of Christian redemption converge, a heaven, finally, that reason itself shows us as the logical and necessary future of humanity.

Although not autobiographical, this book was, nevertheless, truly fought for and suffered through. It was written, in fact, in forty days, like an explosion. Perhaps real life sometimes presents itself as more tragic and merciless than this one, imagined by the author, and to certain individuals it also denies the consolation of the final years, which, in his great faith in the ultimate victory of those who fight for an idea, the author cannot help but grant to his protagonist. But the principle is not shaken and the thesis remains no less valid for that. Perhaps there is no time in this volume to demonstrate everything to the sceptics. This book contains many theories. Their main demonstration will be given by the fact that they were lived and applied, concluding in life itself. This demonstration will always leap out, equally evident, from the logic of the development of the whole, from the ardent faith revealed by the author, from the objectivity with which the experimentation is conducted in the story here narrated, and finally, from the excellence of the conclusions. This is a book written in a moment of global spasm. It is true that the theories preached, perhaps even with faith and conviction, in the religious and civil realms, are excellent and holy. But this book does not stand on theories. It wants, on the contrary, to have the courage to look into its own biological reality, what man truly is, and not what he believes to be or would wish to be, or only exceptionally is. Is it not true, perhaps, that we are in an era of construction and great audacity? Well, then it is necessary to have this great courage to look everything in the face, without deceiving ourselves and without lying.

The present hour, even despite all the shortsighted and all the weak who curse it, is ample and vigorous, demanding breadth of vision and the courage of the strong. This is not the time for the tranquil and pleasant Mozartian psychology, of the angel who speaks to the few happy ones; it is not the time for the sweet balances of beauty, but it is the time for the human, tragic, and powerful Beethovenian psychology, made of struggle and storm, of fatigue and pain, that speaks to those thirsty for happiness, who are in greater number. It is the time of impetuous and strong feelings of creation. This is the style of the present book, given by the spirit of our time, which is essentially Beethovenian; not Rossinian, but Wagnerian; not Raphaelite, but Michelangelesque; not Ariostan, but Dantesque; not baroque, but revolutionary, Napoleonic, iron-like rectilinear, twentieth-century. So many, like little ants bound to the earth, see only the small neighbouring things, and thus lose themselves in minor considerations, without imagining the gigantic overall picture, which makes the present hour apocalyptic. So many do not know, as so many did not know, on the eve of the French Revolution, what is being prepared today, and if explained to them, they do not understand. But those who know, tremble, exult, live in fever, and, also, in hope. This book is a cry, primarily launched to posterity and those who today anticipate them; it is the cry of faith of the new man who waits to live the new civilization of the third millennium, no longer the past civilization of force, nor the present civilization of money, but that of the

spirit. For this era, and to it, above all, our author speaks, knowing that only then can he be fully understood. He speaks today to prepare the spirits for now, to point out problems and solutions, to contribute to the maturation of the new man of the new civilization. If the author speaks loudly and solemnly, it is because he feels that we are truly at a great biological turning point, where the primitive man, ignorant and fierce, is about to emerge from his minority and is preparing for new forms of life, in which, tired of being an unconscious puppet, guided by a few instincts, he will live in the logic, the directing power, the consciousness, freedom, goodness, and justice of the spirit.

This is a book of reaction to the current world, to the man who has become inert, selfish, false, and bestial, in the midst of the so-called modern civilization, and its aim is to make him better, giving him again, first of all, light, faith, and hope, giving him a direction for the unleashing of primordial forces. A reaction that may be perhaps brutal, but the energetic language can be a good thing when the spirit no longer listens, accustomed to the routine formulas of warning. Behind this form, the substance is evangelical. And the world, upon reaching the depths of its current and tragic experience, will certainly hunger for this substance and will seek to rediscover the things of the spirit, overcoming the sordidness of matter, particularly venerated today, and indeed even to the point of idolatry. Poverty and pain will be salutary, for they awaken souls, and this book prepares them, for in it, even from the depths of hell, it is always heaven that is looked upon. In it, the same evangelical objective is always followed, albeit through different paths than those of the past, which is the author's constant and never denied goal.

If this book speaks with energy and courageously faces the human reality as it is, not as it will be or should be, frankness is not used only to condemn, but also to understand and to assist. Behind a rough form lies the fulfilment of a mission for good. In it is comprehended the tragic passion of the man who suffers to free himself, to ascend, to redeem himself from animality. The author feels and lives it, because that laborious vearning for the ideal and the human impotence to fully achieve it is also his. To convince and propel towards the exit, he clings to biological truths, which are not matters of religion, philosophy, social classes, or personal opinions, and therefore reasons for discord, but truths accepted by all, because all apply them, regardless of whether they believe in them or not, whether they profess them or not, and he throws them in our faces with the energy of desperation, for the world's crisis is indeed desperate. To awaken and convince, he also clings to these more comprehensible truths, because they are tangible and near, which everyone has within reach, encountering them at every step, in the reality of life. No path is despised to reach his goal, which is the good. If at times, with harsh language, he exposes human baseness, he affronts, and then soon, rationally resolves the problems. With a sense of love and a deeply human understanding, he fraternally approaches man, to extend a hand to him and stand shoulder to shoulder with him, under the same cross and along the same path of human ascensions.

* * *

Here, we are dealing with the spirit. It is good to clarify this right away to avoid misunderstandings. Here, the spirit is not conceived in a materialistic sense, as it is by some, in a certain modern mysticism. The spirit, for the author, is not an organ or a function of animal life, put into service solely for it to triumph in the struggles of earthly existence. The spirit, for him, is something much greater, something that belongs, beyond the limits of human life, to the absolute and to eternity. It is true that materialism today has refined itself to the point of reaching the realm of the spirit. It is no longer - except for some stragglers - the crude and negativistic materialism of fifty years ago. But its substance and its results can be the same. The materialistic approach to the problems of the spirit cannot be accepted by the author, who knows very well that, beyond the earthly world, there is a whole other world. He knows it so well that he makes his protagonist live in that world, from beginning to end, and shows it to us so vividly and actively that it serves as an example and a warning to those who knew and forgot it, and as a demonstration to those who ignore it. Let us understand each other right away. It is not the spirit that is the servant of earthly and human life, but this is the means that the life of the spirit uses, which has other objectives and other limits. This book demonstrates this quite clearly. The spirit is something that surpasses all human utilitarian affirmations, and the author's morality does not admit that it be reduced to a mere instrument of material conquests.

All of this did not prevent the author from understanding the meaning of the current historical moment and admiring its titanic constructive effort, which he has always supported and encouraged. He only wants to maintain himself in the balance of the universal truth of all times, not wishing to limit himself to a given point of view, as is necessary for those who find themselves dragged by the force of circumstances, in any moment or historical situation. And the action of circumstances today is so titanic and urgent, that it mobilizes everything, including the spirit, absorbing it into itself. But the author cannot forget the distant objectives, and he also addresses future generations, who, placed in different conditions, will certainly think differently and will need different affirmations. He can only

complete and anticipate, with a vision that today's masses may perceive as utopia. And here is outlined an ideal that, today, is not current for the majority, but perhaps will be tomorrow. There is no antagonism between the conception this book offers and the present times; it is merely a different position on the path of evolution. The author very well understands and admires the efforts of peoples to organize themselves into new social orders, the effort of science to discover the secrets of nature, the collective effort of labour to dominate and utilize it. But he also pleads for the understanding of the effort of the isolated man, who conquers just as much, dangerously and usefully, by the paths of the spirit. These may be today exceptional paths, too complex for science to comprehend and for the common man to follow, but precisely for this reason more interesting, as they represent a certain type among the many paths of the world to come. Almost always the future is utopia only until it becomes present, and here is anticipated a phase that, if today it may seem absurd, tomorrow may be normal. We must clearly understand that the author does not destroy or condemn, but merely forewarns. His attitude, therefore, is not an evasion from the human world, which in his plane he must accept, but a complement to it, with broader and more far-reaching visions.

He thus shows himself to be in full agreement with the present moment. No one respects more than he the sacrosanct rights and labours of man on earth. But he cannot help looking further and higher, remembering that there is, above all, another world in Heaven, which is the goal of the journey in this one. Therefore, he cannot limit himself to conceiving the spirit as an exclusive instrument of the earthly struggle, enslaved to the ends of matter, but he needs to outline, in this book, the greater objectives, which lie beyond Earth and earthly life. This complement is necessary and useful. We also believe that the perspectives of certain audacious and unusual surpassing, the narration of certain extraordinary experiences, can help spirits, either by showing them the affinity between nearby goals and those higher and more distant in the future, - which man, one day, more civilized, will have to understand and begin to live, - or because all this gives a deep sense of direction to life and projects onto it a useful and fruitful principle of order, a comforting hope, a light that satisfies and guides reason, towards ever more noble and good achievements. The vision of what is morally higher is always a lesson in wisdom and therefore can only be beneficial. The account of a life experience –where the fierce and merciless motive of brutal struggle is elevated to the motive of evangelical love, the sense of existence is elevated to a higher plane, and the ascension towards individual and collective good is proclaimed through experimentally realized example – can never harm anyone.

The author does not deny, in this book, the human reality. He demonstrates, rather, that he has understood and lived it, and he does not always condemn it, but he also knows how to understand it, to sympathize with it, and he turns to it, to assist it, according to the evangelical "love your neighbour." However, he cannot refrain from making the supreme goals of the spirit shine before it, which are the key to redemption. He maintains himself in balance. On one hand, he accepts the modern biological conception of the spirit (The Great Synthesis), and makes of it not an abstract, isolated unit, foreign to life, but fused into human reality and in the organic unity of the whole; he feels the fruitful collaboration between spirit and matter. On the other hand, he nonetheless reserves the higher purpose of that fusion and collaboration, a purpose that is found in the spirit, entirely above the lesser and contingent relative purposes, offspring of the moment and situated on the plane of matter. This book of his is precisely a balanced call to the ultimate purposes, in the field of proximate purposes, thus compensating for the unilateral conceptions, which seek to reduce everything to the human point of view, in function of the utility of earthly and transitory life, to the detriment and suffocation of the superhuman, divine, and eternal point of view.

The current world aspires to dominate, and this is just within its plane. But, to dominate, it needs to become better, and to become better, a simple utilitarian conception of the spirit is not enough. It needs a broader and more organic conception, one that surpasses the limits of this simple practical and immediate yield, on the human and earthly plane. To succeed in life, to have a goal, a reason, and the right to win, and to give a sense to victory, it is necessary to also see the distant and superhuman goals of the spirit. These cannot become susceptible to immediate application because the world is still behind. But only they can give it a sure direction. The purely utilitarian conception remains egoistically isolated in the organic functioning of the universe. And, on the path of evolution, it is like a broken instrument or a mutilated organ before the vision of the great lines and distant goals.

Therefore, in the present work, even though the protagonist is not always victorious, he presents us with the ideal model of a man who, in a tragic effort, seeks to elevate himself, in clear opposition to the normal type, with very different qualities, statically bound to the earth, and who desires, by themselves, solely by the force of numbers, to become the model of life. To this biological type, normal today, the author opposes and indicates a new type of man, who struggles desperately to become superior and better, projecting himself entirely towards the future. The laws of selection, now acting on the psychic plane, seem to tend precisely towards the formation and normalization of that type, today exceptional. The modern scientific discovery of energy and its mastery, leading the world from the static phase of matter to the dynamic phase of movement, introduces man, from now on, to the threshold of that new civilization of the spirit, of which the restless dynamism of the 1900s type is already a first, albeit elementary, step. This type of new man is today an aristocratic and individualistic biological conception, which, however, does not find itself in antagonism with current socialist, levelling, and collective conceptions, because it is precisely in the service of others that the protagonist places his

qualities and achievements. This book is a challenge to the world, but in favour of the world, to which it shows an ideal type, towards which the best that can be done is to turn to it, and that, if it can be better, makes its superiority forgivable. If he is rich in goodness, tenacity, spirit of altruism, and sacrifice, he demonstrates and utilizes these qualities, not egoistically for himself, but in what they represent of high collective value, in what they are necessary for the formation of more compact social units.

This may provoke easy accusations of pride. But the protagonist shows us, in these pages, the work before the triumph, the martyrdom before the success. And this triumph expands in Heaven, far from Earth, thus not harming or disturbing its interests. This work demonstrates how the first attribute of all superiority is its corresponding duties, how everything is earned and deserved, how severe and just the laws of progress are, how great compensations crown these efforts of self-improvement, and how deep, serious, and grand life is, even in the most painful cases. All of this is highly moral. This book aims to be an encouragement to everyone on the path of self-improvement. Whether for the less advanced, to whom it is addressed, almost always assuming their psychological form, or for the more advanced, through its substance and evangelical conclusions, and whom it wishes to guide, just like the former. The book is, in this sense, aligned with the lines of evolution, constituting a force that acts according to the most powerful currents of life. It may be an instinctive and unconscious expression, manifested through the author's sensitivity, of the creative biological impulse that is inherent in nature, now active, especially in the psychic-spiritual field. Therefore, the book is among the good creative forces that guide towards God, and it can only awaken, in the depths of healthy consciences, a vibration of approval and sincere adherence. If at certain moments the words are energetic and the admonition may be fervent, behind them, however, there is no interest to be defended. With complete frankness, it is simply a matter of a sincere being who allowed himself no other wealth than the courage to tell the truth. The author will feel, for this very reason, satisfied and will consider his work rewarded if he can ascertain that, with this book, he has even better achieved the purpose of the previous ones. If he finally verifies that, by urging others to ascend towards higher forms of life, he has managed to achieve a bit of that good which is his most ardent aspiration.

* * *

In his last volume, which precedes this one, "Mystical Ascesis," the author, in the final chapter, "Passion," concluded with these words: (....) The hour is intense for everyone. We cannot stop. Prepared by time, it rushes forward. I am afraid to look. (....) Then, before me, the vision of earth and sky tears open... the earth trembles convulsively, in the premonition of a nameless catastrophe. (....) I see a whirlwind of forces projecting onto the earth, and I see the earth shaken, convulsed, submerged in a sea of blood. Grim is the hour of the world's passion. And it seems hopeless. The circle tightens, tightens, and soon it will be closed, and it will be too late to escape its grip. The hand of the Eternal wields the destiny of the world, the forces are ready to be unleashed for the fatal clash. The hour of darkness, of triumphant evil, of the supreme trial is approaching. Blessed is he who is not alive on the earth then. ...I said a long time ago: prepare yourselves, prepare yourselves, but you did not listen to me. Soon, it will be too late. The drama is near, I perceive it... At that moment, I felt the

earth tremble. ...Within me, is the vision of the real. I truly felt the earth tremble." If that book, published in 1939, clearly predicted the current world cataclysm as imminent, the present volume, "A Man's History," continuing the path followed in "Mystical Ascesis," concludes, instead, in the following manner, with the spiritual testament of the protagonist (chapter XXX): "Study the great book of pain; learn to suffer if you wish to ascend. It is good that the world suffers, so that it can correct itself and advance. (...) without pain there is no salvation. This fundamental law cannot be escaped. But after the passion and the cross, there is the resurrection and the triumph of the spirit. Therefore, accept the baptism of pain, the expiation that purifies, because this is the only path to redemption. I leave you with the warning that in the necessary passion of the world lies the dawn of the new civilization of the spirit." This new volume, published in 1942, written amidst an already announced storm, concludes, therefore, with the announcement of the dawn of a new day. After destruction, reconstruction: after pain, the joy of a higher life; after the necessary passion of war, the new era of the spirit emerges.

This is, therefore, the book of resurrection, announced at the end because it cannot arrive, for one or for all, except after traversing the necessary path of purifying pain. If this is the book of trial and suffering, of the anguished grip in the claws of evil, it is also the book of hope, of the triumph of the spirit and of good. The laborious elaboration of ascension is here driven for the individual, in the story of the protagonist, and for the world, in the awareness of its current apocalyptic experience. Contrary to the scene of terror and passion with which "Mystical Ascesis" concludes, this volume ends by invoking the call, from the depths of biological maturation, of the new man, conscious in spirit, and announcing and welcoming the dawn of the new civilization of the Third Millennium. Christmas, 1941.

1

FROM HIS DIARY

Is the universe order or chaos? The universe is order. This is what science, history, and so many years of observation and experience tell me. I have come to the conclusion that the universe is an organic functioning in motion towards a certain goal; that all phenomena are interconnected according to a law, in whose core I feel the thought and touch with my hands the will of God, present and active. Thus, I concluded, with the certainty given to me by thirty years of study, experience, and pain.

If from this universal truth I descend to more particular and closer truths, more relative and tangible, I discover that the life of man and the planet he is now called to govern correspond to a particular order and an organic functioning, whose goal is indicated by ever more perfect states to be achieved, whose law is progress. I have verified, after all, that the law of our planet is to progress in all forms; to evolve always, in every sense, is the dominant idea. Evolution is a superb and incessant march of all beings on earth, from mineral to plant, to animal, to man, to genius: the march towards God.

Descending always more into the particular and relative, ever closer and more tangible to us, we discover that man is at the forefront of the movement. His law is the selection of the best, achieved through struggle.

Man and woman, masculine and feminine, are the ministers of this law, which in particular bifurcates into a dualism that is also a complement. Like everything, this human unity is also given by the fusion of two smaller and inverse units. In positions and movements inverse and complementary, they complete the same circuit. The man says: I am the will, the strength, the conquest, the victory. I am the lord. There is no other lord besides me. I subject the woman so that she gives me strong and victorious children, like me. The woman says: I am the beauty, the goodness, the love, the conservation. I am the wife and the mother. In this, there is no other woman besides me. I choose the strong man so that he gives me strong and victorious children, like him.

Two are, therefore, the great motives of human life: the male and the female. They are opposites and attract each other. Although they divide the field of life between them, they are bound by mutual fascination. These two motives are enough to sing the symphony of life to its last notes, in a continuous interplay and compensation. Each of these two principles is an affirmation in itself, but a negation in the face of the other, a void that aspires to the opposite, always eager to be filled with the opposite affirmation, and thus they rush into each other, satisfying only when closed in their soldering with the opposite half of the circuit. Neither is superior or inferior. The woman dominates as the man does. It does not matter if the former affirms herself by being silent and denying, and the latter by shouting and commanding. The feminine principle has as much to complete as the masculine. Both reign equally, but through opposite and complementary forms and tasks. Yet each of the two feels isolated in their incomplete realm, and desires to complete themselves by reverting to the bosom of the opposite. The fragility of goodness, the altruism of love, are as potent as the strength of conquest and the selfishness of domination. Each has their own weapons: opposite and complementary weapons, made not to fight but to embrace each other. Between these weapons, rivalry cannot exist because they do not tend to evolve but to help each other. The masculine principle is part of the feminine, presupposes it, understands it, and completes it. Each human being is born within one of these principles, carries it within themselves, and represents it. Each of them exists and has meaning only in function of the other. Opposites only to unite, they divide the work and the opposite functions of life: creating by conserving, accumulating, proliferating, and creating by destroying, renewing, selecting; always merging the opposite positions in the same function of creating. The woman, like the earth, is conservative and fertile, that is, apt for the formation and protection of the primitive material of life; the man, like the air and the sun, is active and fertilizing; he is like the hammer that forges, the dynamism that selects and renews. The first half of the cycle, creator of quantity, remains useless if not completed with the second, creator of quality. The woman is worth as much as the man, and the man as much as the woman. Each of the two has their own function and mission, of which they are supremely jealous in fulfilling. The man is thus envious of any other who tries to surpass him in his task of selection; he feels in him the rival, and, jealous of his evolutionary function, accuses him of arrogance and roguery. The woman is also envious of any woman who tries to surpass her in her task of protection and conservation; she feels in her the rival, and, jealous of her function of love and reproduction, accuses her of that dishonesty that betrays the mission of motherhood. Neither can bear others usurping or surpassing them in the function they have the right and duty to fulfil, because in it lies the purpose of their life and the realization of themselves, because in obeying the command of the Law is the greatest joy, and not obeying is the greatest pain a being can experience.

Both desire the same thing: life; they express the same law: to create; one saying: yes; the other saying: no. The law makes the opposites unite for its same purpose. The satisfaction of the individual lies in fulfilling the instinct, that is, in obeying the command. And man, the more ignorant and primitive he is, the more blindly he obeys, the less evolved, the less emancipated from the original determinism of matter. In historical moments of *involutive* regression, man sings of freedom, believing he is liberating himself. But he only frees himself from the work of evolving, subjected to the

19

superior social laws that impose order, discipline, and virtue. He only frees himself to create again, more blindly, in service of the most elementary and iron laws of life, inscribed in the instinct.

I have wandered through the distant and abstract philosophies of the absolute. But the philosophy that interests me now is this specific and practical one, closer to us than abstract principles, related to the small but translated into actions; objective and concrete, the one found at every step in lived human reality, the one that every man practices even without understanding it.

At the root of human life lies this mechanism. It implies rivalry, struggle, and ultimately, selection. Thus, war and love are the two fundamental functions of these two terms: masculine and feminine. Love protects and creates, war destroys and kills. Inverse complementation, even in their effects. In this, the cycle is fulfilled in equilibrium, and the circuit of life and death is completed. Thus, in death, the condition of life is life, and in life, the condition of death is death.

It is useless to argue. The biological law thus commands, desires, and acts this way; it cannot be corrected or evaded, only fulfilled. War and love are the binary on which life advances. It is futile to ask: why this way and not another? The fact is that our world works this way. The fact is that the goals imposed, certainly by an intelligent hidden will, are achieved in this manner: continuation and selection. For this purpose, it is protected by supreme defences and individual conservation, as well as collective conservation and the evolution of the species. The world has come this far, reaching its current state, because those objectives were achieved.

All this involves struggle, risk, immense fatigue. And what does it result in? In selection, in progress. The significance of the process lies in evolution. Thus, making a man, a nation, a race always better, this is the result that the biological law desires. Atheistic materialism did not understand that its evolution precisely means creation in the spirit. This is how the world advances. This is the meaning of the power of command that instinct reveals.

Our social world is a field where diverse forces clash, each desiring to eliminate the other in their opposition, and thus they correct each other. It is necessary to recognize that there is profound wisdom in their arrangement, for from this chaotic coexistence emerges not destruction or disorder, but the construction of an ever more perfect order. The progress observed in the world consists precisely in the transition from primitive disorder to a state of order that is progressively realized. The progress is a progress of harmonization. Thus the Universe moves towards God, who is harmony, that is, increasingly realizing the manifestation of His thought.

In this way, men, nations, peoples, civilizations and humanity are born and reborn, ever more perfect, through organic evolution, but now especially through psychic evolution. Thus, peoples and civilizations, like individuals, grow, age, decline, die, and are reborn, to complete, starting from ever higher bases built with previously conquered materials, ever higher cycles.

Struggle is therefore necessary, useful, a law of life, fundamental, creative, inevitable. Divine harmony can only be realized on Earth through this great effort, the price of human redemption, the condition for the coming of the kingdom of heaven to Earth.

From this struggle, a form, on the lowest human plane, is war. We always find ourselves in it because the evolution of the world is entrusted to it through the suppression of the undeveloped, the parasite, the inept. It is, for sure, the primitive form of struggle, characteristic of the unevolved phase in which so-called civilized man still finds himself. And as long as, through evolution, that form cannot be surpassed, the struggle, which will always be necessary, must continue in that same form. Until today, war is an inexorable law, as an integral part of the zone of determinism of human destiny, and this is because it is in humanity's biological past. Therefore, until the neutralization of this past, through its overcoming, war will be a biological fatality. And this is because struggle is the means nature uses to achieve selection and progress. It is not the struggle that can be suppressed, but only its more backward forms. But these cannot be surpassed until man has learned by himself, through his own effort, to overcome them. Each humanity has the biological laws that it deserves.

At the risk of betraying the supreme purpose of life, which is to ascend, the form of struggle that is war cannot be abandoned until man has learned to transform it into higher forms of struggle, directed toward higher ends. It is necessary that humanity first have the strength to transport itself, entirely, to a higher plane. Today, war and love balance each other in their reciprocal corrective effort. If this force of love, which conserves and multiplies, were not corrected by the selective and reconstructive destruction of war, it would equally end in the stagnant decay of death. It is not enough to multiply men through love. It is necessary to remake peoples through war. Protection and proliferation can only be means to achieve the end, to which only struggle leads to: to destroy in order to rebuild.

The verification of these laws led me to the conclusion that life is and cannot be anything but hard, serious, and useful; that it is not a joyful excursion of pleasure-seekers, but serious work, directed by the organic plan of biological laws, towards a high and precise goal. I concluded that it is useless to try to escape, in unconsciousness and easy pleasures, from this necessary effort to evolve, from this law of progress that is written in our blood and in our human destiny. Those who try to escape are inexorably and terribly punished by the invisible Law. How many invisible things have tremendous power!

Under these conclusions, I have established a hard, serious, and useful life. Usefulness is not that which is commonly understood, that is, that of material advantages: it is the conquest of moral values, which are unseen and govern the world. I am convinced that each person can choose their own goals, regardless of the dominant opinion among their peers. I am also convinced that true truth is simple, the one that serves life; that complicated and erudite philosophizing is useless, for what matters is living that truth before professing and preaching it. This is how I have lived and acted seriously.

I do not claim that my truth is absolute, nor that it should be imposed on anyone. This is my experience. Others should make theirs in their own way. Each one reaps for themselves the result of their own system. An experience conducted honestly, with conviction, objectivity, and scientific seriousness, always deserves respect. A working hypothesis that, after thirty years of scrutiny, still aligns with the facts, resolves problems, and withstands the test of a lifetime, must contain something truthful. I have passed through particular truths-rivals, in conflict with each other, philosophies, and theologies-but the solid, something objective, the ever-present, indisputable, and convincing, I did not find in the constructions of personal psyche, which are nothing more than the elevation to system of one's own temperament-a biological case-but I found it in the observation of the organic functioning of the universe. In the conviction that only this can express to us the thought of God, in the form in which it manifests, and through which, without a doubt, everything is directed and guided, I deduced it from phenomena of all kinds. And in these, which are always present, I have continually seen it in action, as a hidden motor, which is for me an objective, undeniable reality, because it is always functioning. Everything, at every moment, speaks to me of it. I have lived from this thought and this reality. In the chaos of human conclusions, dissonant to the point of opposition, I clung to this biological reality, that is, to this reality of life. I allowed myself to be guided by the wise voice of nature, which indicates this reality to us at every step. My whole being, from the lower zones to the higher ones, has been nourished by it, like a divine source. If I have set for myself unusual goals and attempted experiences that others avoid or ignore; if I have fallen and sometimes failed; if I have

lived dangerously and suffered greatly, I have, undoubtedly, worked in harmony with creation. If progress is a process of harmonization with the thought of God, active in the world, and goes from chaos to order, I, after basing my life on a universal conception of absolute order, have managed to bring this harmony and order into my destiny, despite everything. Thus, I fought and overcame chaos and evil, which may appear at a given moment in individual and collective life, but which are triumphed over by those who possess the foundations of equilibrium, fundamental orientation, and the key to phenomenal functioning. I have thus decided to march, I believe, in the fundamental direction of life, which is not to wander or enjoy, but to struggle to conquer and ascend.

THE PROTAGONIST AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Who wrote like this?

The protagonist of this account, the man whose story we narrate. With those words of his, we individualize and present him.

But, to better understand, it is necessary to narrate further.

The story unfolds in the titanic and apocalyptic hour that, like a slash in the sky, appears ever more dazzling over the latter half of the twentieth century, a prelude to an even more severe hour. This story is somewhat the story of all sensitive and mature spirits who possess a profound and unique individual life. In this spirit, a reflective mirror of all the lights of its time, the great ideological storms that the century had been maturing are partially reflected. Born at the end of the nineteenth century, he later saw the greatest political, social, intellectual, spiritual, and scientific transformations take place around him. Raised among old ideologies, in an intellectually restricted provincial environment, he had witnessed the triumph of the automobile, the airplane, the radio, and observed profound changes in the cultural field. Many times, he was forced to change his own orientation and renew his conclusions. In a world evolving so swiftly, he,

agile in mind and body, had renewed himself even more swiftly. He appreciated the frenzy of dynamism, the effort of ascension. And he felt satisfied to have been born in such an intense and interesting time, for his dizzving desire for renewal, for his attempts at elevation, tormented and, although at times, frustrated. And he threw himself into the whirlwind, not to spin like many, around himself, in a useless swirl, but to understand the profound meaning of that whirlwind and to derive the highest benefit from it. He had a complete sense of that historical, grave, and solemn hour, and lived it fully, advancing and trembling, to realize its most real, eternal meaning, that is, the laborious ascension of man towards better forms of life. He raised his head before the asleep, whom he stumbled upon, in his struggle to save the moral values of the world and conquer among them the highest. He was suffocated, despised, misunderstood. A life of toil and wear, but a life of inner ascension and spiritual conquests, deeply conceived, beyond all forms; adhering to substance, a life of laborious creative silence, of faith, and not infrequently of despair and blood. He was, thus, a fighter, and a fighter in the highest field, which is that of thought and moral ascension. Sometimes he fell, was betrayed by ideals and men, betrayed to the point of contempt, ridicule, despair; he lived, in solitude, tragic hours, unseen and misunderstood. But the high and righteous idea is not the path of easy success. And although pleasure-seekers, easily triumphant, may laugh, he wants for himself the serious life, with a serious purpose. And if to the world he appeared failed, he was very satisfied with his own conscience.

Our protagonist is thus a symbol, an idea that, when lived, transforms into reality, a realized experience in whose bosom many other daring spirits still torment and mature.

In the distant background of the scene is the anonymous crowd, the large amorphous, instinctive, ignorant, and unconscious masses that murmur, the great populace, a vague entity to which we must address ourselves, obeying the ancient evangelical teaching and the very latest teachings of the most recent social conceptions. The crowd is one of the forces moving within this narrative. Here, it is an indistinct background noise, immense like the sea, a collective sound resulting from many small sounds, a vague and confused sound that cannot be pinpointed because it comes from all sides, nor can its origin be identified because it comes from everyone. Yet, it is a force that sometimes takes the form of defined thought and decisive will, and at certain moments, transforms everything, imposing itself on history. Here, the crowd appears as a term of comparison, as an element of resistance, of misoneism, as inertia in the face of force, as the great earth negative pole on which the true man, the positive pole, walks alone towards his goals, so distanced from today's masses. He is an idea, a will that reacts against the collective psychology and against which this psychology reacts. Here, we will see the formation of circuits of resonances and their dispersal into dissonances, we will hear chords and discordances. We will hear attunements with other forces of the imponderable.

In this work, we will frequently encounter references to the world and the common man. Here, the world has the evangelical sense of the human law of the earth, inferior, opposed to the higher laws of Heaven. By the common man, or normal man, or any man, we mean the dominant type, the serial model, with its uniform psychology. This type undoubtedly exists in practice. It is the man on the street, the one who constitutes the anonymous and amorphous public, a type to which all others are reduced, in the moment and by the demands of normal social coexistence. It is the man of average culture from newspapers, simplistic, restricted to elementary animal impulses, varnished with some erudition and education; the man who vegetates, struggles for woman and love, for the necessary and the superfluous, remaining in the material realm. It is the man who thinks for himself and his own, driven by the fundamental instincts of life, incapable of vibrating with the higher passions of the spirit. The man who knows only how to walk in a herd, who knows only how to think of himself, who knows only how to do what everyone else does. He is made up of many diverse men, of many types of gradations. He is like the dominant public expression, to which everyone conforms, due to the necessities of practical life, in social relations. Even men of high perception, men of all levels, assume, out of practical necessity, the expression of this dominant psychology, which summarizes the traits of the prevailing majority. It is a means of understanding, it is the monetary unit of common exchanges and contacts, a practical point of reference. It is the psychology of the streets, common to all, like a habit that everyone must acquire when they go down to the street. It is the current psychology, which shapes public opinion and usage, to which everyone adapts in order to exist: religion, the press, and all the derivations of public life.

But if it will frequently constitute the point of reference, the substance of this work lies on another plane. For the deniers of the spirit, who by their own blindness feel authorized to deny its existence, the narration of this life, lived in their own world, among them, will be a proof much more convincing than many arguments; a life lived from beginning to end on a logical and organic plane, directed not towards ephemeral conquests, but towards others, situated entirely in the spirit, endowed with potency and lucidity. That type of man, common today, is here contrasted with a new type of man, for whose formation this book strives with all the energy with which it was conceived. A new man, virile fighter for the ideal, no longer unconscious, whose value and utility cannot be ignored by anyone, no matter how much they need to evolve, on the path of progress, and whose formation, in this historic hour, dawning at the threshold of the third millennium, is a vital necessity if civilization does not want to plunge into death.

Thus, you will not find in this volume the usual passionate motives, nor the customary fiction plots, with characters physically moving in various environments and circumstances. If characters and facts do appear, it will only be to give form to the movement of currents of thought and will, to give tangible life to the clash of ideas and forces, as these are the true characters of the narrative. This narrative will thus be quicker, more synthetic; the facts will be reduced to their pure substance. For this, we will leave aside the most common events of our character's life, those that make him resemble others. It is not interesting, we think, to refer to things that everyone does, that everyone knows, that everyone says, and that are, even in narratives, always repeated.

At a time when everything becomes collective, and no one thinks or acts except in masses, without their own spirit, our protagonist remains solitary, as if he were out of his time, perhaps because he understood it too well; he is a rebel, determined to live his own life at all costs. Certainly, some temperaments and some destinies are not chosen, and are far above one's own will. He neither wants nor can he accept and endure the thoughts of others. He wants to embrace his experience of life, alone, before the cosmic forces. He wants to always remain himself, a logical development, directed towards a consciously chosen goal, tenaciously pursued to the end. Full of discipline, firmly tied to duty, yet an observer and arbiter of everything, and, at least in his innermost self, where one can only be so, free, independent of everything and everyone. Thus, he coordinated the forces of his own turmoil, amidst the turmoil of the world.

His time offered him chaotic thoughts. The world was shaken by the clash of so many diverse truths, divided between the crumbling of millennia-old structures and the constructive tension of new values in all human sectors. His time was a battlefield of great maturations, where the past, firmly established but ossified precisely because of that, resisted with great inertia the new that burst forth from the old shell, trembling with life. Our man deeply faced the great struggle in which civilization played its supreme card, and he gave himself entirely, body and soul, to the preparation

for the advent of the new civilization of the third millennium. Thus, the solitary man fused his life with the substance of his time, aware of this like few others, both visionary and active, and concerned with the world's destinies like few others. Distant from the useless clamour, absent from the easy hour of rights and harvest, he preferred to be present in the silent work, in the hour of duty, in the obscure effort of sowing. Thus, he lived much more connected to his fellow men than it might seem, for he preferred to engage in their pains rather than in their triumphs. In this way he wanted to be, and not in any other way, even at the price of disappointments and contempt. He preferred a life of struggle to remain always coherent with himself. He wanted to be a true man, living seriously. This fundamental note of honesty, whatever mistakes he may have made, never left him. He never compromised with the world against his conscience. He had to walk against the current, the real current, not the apparent one, but the well-hidden one of human actions. He was considered an imbecile by many. For this reason, never wanting to reduce himself to the vileness of a betrayal of his principles of righteousness, he found himself forced to be a solitary man.

If the reader does not love an ideal, does not have a passion for the highest and holiest things in life, does not know how to vibrate in these dramas of the spirit, has not lived ascending through pain, has not understood the gravity of our time, does not feel, ultimately, the need to escape the everyday misery of life, then they will not be interested in stories like this. Here, we find no love except for God and for those who suffer, nor passion except for goodness. This is not a book of easy life, that lowers itself, but a book of hard and severe life, which builds and elevates. Whoever seeks in these pages any literary vanity for their own delight, whoever enjoys only curiosities for distraction, whoever thinks they will find here the usual motives that move men and their passions, should put the book down. Whoever has not sought and followed, in struggle and pain, the harsh paths of ascension, walks in life on other tracks. Each one has their own, and goes where they wish. Put the book down, but remember that, in any social or spiritual position in which you find yourself, you also participate in the narrative, called a man's history, but which is, in reality, the story of all men.

THE MEANING AND METHOD OF LIFE

He was born as any other man is born, in a common and insignificant environment. Being born is such a simple and natural thing that it seems, in fact, not to deserve attention. In general, no one is surprised by the most wonderful things in life. However, in that fetus that comes to light, there are abysses of wisdom and mystery, from an organic as well as a spiritual point of view. That human organism had to travel a long path to transform into what it is at birth. It was, in the beginning, nothing but a tiny cell, the fertilized human egg, and had to restart its existence from the origin, returning to the roots of the genealogical tree of life, that is, to a unicellular form, like that of algae or amoeba. It then slowly transformed into a multicellular organism, into a sphere of cells. Only through the force of multiplications and differentiations, becoming increasingly complex, did it reach the complete human form. In nine months, it recapitulated the entire evolutionary biological scale from which it descends, and which preceded and matured its current form. Only then could it come, complete, into the light. This indisputable verification is indeed surprising and shows us how gigantic a work the immense past had to carry out to reach present forms. It shows us what a cyclopean bundle of forces exerts pressure on that fetus, so that the impulse does not stop and life continues.

The return, the necessity to redo everything from the beginning, summarizing the work already accomplished before moving forward, as if to gather momentum for the new constructive task, corresponds to the universal law of cyclical phenomena, of which it is just a particular case. For each phenomenon to advance in evolution, it is necessary to consolidate its foundations, which results from the repetition and review of the past².

All this, the being accomplished without knowing anything. Little of the present, nothing of the past, and nothing of the future. So much so that only at the end did it reach the formation of consciousness, the only one that can know and understand things. Therefore, there is a guiding and intelligent principle that directed everything with logic, economy, and technique that astonishes us, and which is not found in the being, ignorant of almost everything. Now, it is incomprehensible how Darwinian and Haeckelian science, which discovered that truth, ended up in atheism when materialism is the deepest demonstration of the existence of God. A scientifically solid demonstration, much more so than the philosophical, theological, abstract, and rational ones.

The proof that the human organism repeats its history, clearly showing us, from the earliest to the latest stages, the biological development, tells us another great thing: it speaks to us of the kinship, and therefore the brotherhood, of all beings and the communion of biological destiny between the individual and the human race. The individual carries within himself, in his cellular constitution, in his organic structure, in the directives of his instinct, an experience and wisdom that are not only individual but that belong to the race. He possesses within himself qualities that are collective, the heritage of all, and which nature's economy provides him already realized at birth, with great savings of creative effort, ready for immediate use in life's necessities. The insignificant fetus summarizes and

² See The Great Synthesis, by the same author, Chapter 26: "Study of the Typical Trajectory of Phenomenal Motions". (Author's Note)

synthesizes the species, carries within it the past, and above all, still in germ, the future. That being is a cosmic force, life, a force that cannot be stopped. In its vibratory development, it repeated the genealogical history of humanity; it traversed again the path of the formidable ascent that, from unicellular organisms to amoebas, to invertebrates, to fish, to beasts, to pithecoids, to anthropoids, leads to man, always by the same law. This man, who has travelled so far, cannot stop, and his present life can have no other meaning than the continuation of that path. The unforgivable blindness of materialism lies in its failure to perceive the intimate spiritual engine of this growth and, therefore, the direction of the continuation of that unlimited, incessant, and unstoppable becoming of the species. The error arose from the desire to persist in the previous one-sided view of purely organic evolution, which is, on the contrary, only the effect of the development of a spiritual principle. What does the history of human civilization indicate to us: organic construction and, more especially, the psychic? For here it becomes evident, stands out, and dominates the psychic, acting especially in the nervous and spiritual field. And we believe it is scientifically solid and persuasive to consider spiritual and moral conquests as biological constructions. Only in this way do they acquire an organic meaning, in connection with the development of life.

It is true that modern materialism has been compelled, whether it wanted to or not, to advance and orient itself in the direction of the spirit. This is such a powerful and evident force in nature that it could not remain perpetually unseen. And this is already a great progress, compared to the old atheistic materialism. But despite this, science still sees only the first signs of the spirit, that is, only what can be seen from the material plane on which science remains. And this is not enough. To understand life and live it seriously, an integral conception of the spirit is necessary instead. But let us give materialistic science time to ascend according to that inevitable law of evolution, which it itself affirms, and it will reach the spirit in a manner never before seen in history—effective, solid, and complete. Only then can the foundations of the new civilization of the third millennium be laid, which, if we do not want to regress to barbarism, can only be that of the spirit.

It would be absurd for that evolutionary impulse, so evident in the fetus from an organic point of view until its birth, to then stop precisely when individual life begins. And if that impulse, which is the law of life, as of all phenomena, cannot be halted, logically its continuation can only take, as the facts confirm, a psychic form. And so, we still notice here that man recapitulates, in childhood, repeating all the stages of development, no longer the organic history, but the spiritual evolution already accomplished, which is the very substance of the history of life in this superior phase that humanity is going through. And just as the fetus only presented itself as complete in organic life after this repetition of its past on this plane, so the consciousness of the young person appears mature, in psychic and spiritual life, only after an identical repetition of this past on a superior plane. In conclusion, the biological meaning of human life, in its maturity and old age, cannot be other than the formation of an increasingly complete personality through trials, pains, struggles, and all the experiences useful for spiritual progress, both individual and collective. If man is born organically at the moment of birth, spiritually, man is a fetus in gestation until his youthful maturation, and only then is he born consciously to life and prepares himself for the continuation of the endless creative work of his own spirit. Being born, our man therefore presented himself to life, and here is what awaited him. This is the direction in which he will orient his existence, which we have just begun to narrate.

This is about an experience conducted against the current trend followed by the majority today. Theories and ideals preached hold no importance unless they are also lived. Simple words, biologically, have little value. It will be about a reaction and a rebellion against the world, in the name of the highest values of the spirit, to which a solid biological, and therefore scientific, logical, and persuasive foundation is given here. It is no longer time to deceive ourselves. The current method of living and conceiving life is completely wrong. The world today is, in fact, off track. This statement is not found only in the mind of some isolated seer, who would be easy to ignore or silence, but it is in the very laws of life, which no one can ever escape. Generally, man blindly obeys the instinct to grow. An elementary instinct, which begins in the cell and expresses the fundamental will of creation, which is to evolve. And man throws himself into growth like a madman, selfishly, chaotically, in isolation, and desperately. The principle of growth is fair, but the average man has no idea of a rational method to follow it. Only a method that harmonizes us with the dominant directives in the organic functioning of the universe can be satisfactory, that is, without the dispersion of energies, leading us to a substantially useful result. The life of today's man is a convulsive stirring, to seize as much as possible, from all sides and by any means, for himself and his own. It is a desperate struggle, without method, without guiding criteria, without awareness of the laws that govern life by divine will. Naturally, with this mad system, modern man can only reap disillusionment. There is a disillusionment that is almost normal at the end of life, which is entirely due to our poor position in relation to it. In this respect, we often behave like true unconscious beings.

The first person we meet on the street knows very well that the fundamental problem of life consists in their own material well-being. The supreme dream, the ultimate horizon, beyond which lies the paradisiacal Nirvana of rest. Hence the unscrupulous struggle to achieve it, limitless selfishness, adoration of the supreme god money. What does a society of such individuals turn into? A battlefield, where anyone who gets distracted is run over; a hell, and this from birth to death, for the whole life, without any rest. This is the reality. The rest is exception, or dream, or hypocrisy. Thus, the world has created the vortex of its own suicide, without the strength to escape it.

37

No one can explain how, in the midst of such vaunted civilization, amidst the wealth and well-being of civilized peoples, life still contains so much pain and such bitter disillusionments, to the point of astonishing anyone who is not unconscious. The reason is this: man does not live by bread alone, and it is not enough to satisfy him by quenching the instincts of hunger and love, because he possesses another instinct, as fundamental as those, which is the instinct of progress. This instinct is less concrete, but no less powerful than the others, because it presides the fulfillment of the highest purposes of life. It is also the most difficult instinct to satisfy, and therefore man tries to evade fulfilling it, without understanding how profound is the disillusionment that remains—albeit vaguely, in his consciousness—due to this refusal to comply with the will of the greater laws of life. This disillusionment is a vague, impalpable, intimate pain that he does not understand but must endure, as an inevitable reaction of the Law, which thus punishes any betrayal. Modern society is poisoned by this pain, which no one knows where it is located, but which is found in all things, because our actions very often constitute a rebellion against the laws of life.

Despite the absurdity of the modern arriviste system, there are some who succeed. And when they succeed and satiate their belly, they indulge in sensual pleasures, parade their honour and power; it is precisely then that they feel, most bitterly, that disillusionment which does not reside in human things, but only in their way of using them. And they are astonished, then, to find nothing but a great void in their spirit, astonished to realize, just when they thought they had achieved everything, that they have achieved nothing. There is nothing to envy in these splendid winners, internally consumed by disillusionment. Their happiness is only apparent, they know it well, it is a betrayed happiness, as it is fair to befall the traitors of biological laws. One cannot betray with impunity the fundamental instinct of life, of which the other instincts are merely instruments. Life imposes the work of evolving. Work that requires such great effort that, being lazy, we would like to avoid doing it. To not hear the voice of conscience that warns us, we try to dull it by all means, we seek to not understand and forget the supreme purposes for which we were born, thus plunging from fall to fall, ever lower, into despair. It is useless to try to escape. It is useless for our civilization to scientifically refine its wisdom in the art of pleasure that poisons, the drug that stupefies, the cunning that evades, the force that rebels. From both a scientific and religious point of view, life must be evolution, ascension, that is, an effort of redemption. There is no pleasure, drug, cunning, or human force that can exempt us from this fatal law. If we do not willingly embark on the path of human ascension, towards the divine, we will be compelled to do so by despair. This is precisely where the world of today has arrived, and it must do so, no longer by love, but by force. At the end of the second millennium, for European civilization, this is the only possible directive to continue living.

This book aims to present another system of life, in which it is not important to become wealthy, to gain power, honours, pleasures. No value is placed on that dispersion of work for the production of things so relative and random; but, on the contrary, all value is placed on the moral construction of oneself. This book aims to demonstrate how one can make life a great edifice, without touching money or honours, and even fighting these things. In our world, we think that happiness lies in one place, when it is in another, that is, not in the advantages of the opportunist, but in order, in harmony with one's neighbour and with the laws of life and of the entire cosmos. True happiness, which satisfies us, is not outside, on the material plane, but within ourselves, on the moral plane. Not in clothing ourselves with fictitious and transitory garments, but in the construction of ourselves, in the acquisition of qualities that are imperishable goods, eternally linked to our personality. It cannot be denied how much effort the earth imposes on itself, yet what yield they would give, if they were better directed! It is true that life is an experience that one tries. But what a waste of energy when one does not know what direction to give to one's

efforts! Thus, entire lives are completely wasted, lives whose result is summed up in understanding that so much work was useless, and that the direction should have been another. Thus, destinies unfold stupidly, pursuing chimeras, and do not end except in a sad harvest of bitterness. Thus, entire existences are consumed in unheard-of efforts to conquer those things that are the secondary products of our work, having substantially no other value than that of transitory and relative instruments. It is useless to shout, then, that life is "vanitas vanitatum"³. When all principles were wrong and the highest instinct was betrayed, the divine command that cannot be escaped.

How different is the conclusion for those who have worked satisfying that instinct and obeying that command! What joy shines through the necessary pains of life, what harvest of intimate satisfactions sweetens and rewards the effort of ascension! Then, at the end, one does not reap disillusions, but understands the great utility and constructive power of pain. And, although suffering, one praises God, because an intimate satisfaction of the spirit convinces us that we have not wasted time and the true objectives have been achieved. An inner sensation, which cannot deceive us, an instinctive satisfaction, despite everything, assures us that we have not fought and suffered in vain, and that something imponderable and imperishable is found in us, conquered by us, deserved, and, therefore, truly ours, forever. However, how many lives remain betrayed by laziness, by ignorance, by the stubbornness of not wanting to understand and follow the true purposes of life!

Science and reason have promised various paradises on earth, but they have not been realized. We say this not to combat or underestimate the immense past and the current, heroic and just effort of the world to place itself in a new order, but to add that the new civilization, which can only be that of the spirit, will not be able to come into effect until each one,

³ Vanity of vanities

individually, seriously modifies their conception and system of life. If the world does not transform, in fact, through each of its components; if, not only in words but also in the reality of life, a new scale of values is not inaugurated on a large scale, a new civilization will not form. Just as today we laugh at the sense of honour of the Middle Ages, which consisted in putting enemies through the sword, so future centuries will laugh at some of our concepts of respectability and honour, based on wealth, titles, and social positions, born of the selfish individual struggle. The problem of happiness - it will soon be understood - is not solved by material wellbeing, but only by reaching, beyond that, a high degree of consciousness, of which material well-being is no more than a means. As long as we make wealth an end in itself, it will remain poisoned and will poison those who possess it. Happiness is not a form of abundance, but an intimate satisfaction of the spirit, a moral equilibrium, "an individual harmony in cosmic harmony." Man also possesses, undeniably, a spirit that cannot be deceived and satisfied only with material advantages and pleasures. Beyond these acquisitions, there is a whole other world, with broader horizons. The spirit instinctively feels the need for conceptual orientation, for purpose in actions, for the coordination of its own efforts toward the goal of itself in the whole. It feels the need to accomplish something serious and imperishable, for when it reaches the end of life. If man does not also possess these imponderable things, he frequently feels, without knowing how to explain, dissatisfied, unhappy.

As long as the world occupies itself with material constructions before spiritual constructions, and does not regard the latter as the main priorities, life will be wasted, biological laws will be betrayed, and it will be senseless, in this regime of senselessness, to expect to harvest happiness instead of despair. One may smile with scepticism and dismiss the tedious preacher of this truth, but the dilemma today is tremendous: either create a new civilization or return to barbarism. The laws of life demand and press for the resolution of two millennia of preparation and waiting, and there is no room for the unconsciousness of those who sleep or indulge. If there is no effort to create a new civilization, the barbarism of substance, regardless of being varnished with mechanical civilization, will be a punishment for all.

A MAN AND A DESTINY ARE BORN

He was born in the mystical Umbria⁴, at the end of the 19th century, almost in the shadow of Saint Francis, a figure who loomed large in his spirit. The penultimate of a numerous series of children, unexpected, he found himself in the world almost by mistake and provoked special attention. He was born on an August afternoon, in the simplicity of a simple house, in an old neighbourhood of narrow streets, while the group of siblings had gone out for a walk to bring peace to the house. And just as he was born, he lived, far from the vain complications of wealth, free from the slavery of so many demands. Happy is he who is born in simplicity, where the necessary is not lacking but one is not a slave to the superfluous, where life, which always desires to grow in everything, starting from the humble, has space to ascend. What path remains for those who are already born accomplished, rich, and powerful, other than to decline? Life is a becoming, and one cannot stop. A path is necessary. If it cannot be done in ascent, it ends up being done in descent. This is the fatal law of life. There would be a remedy: for the privileged to immediately rid themselves of their position of privilege, of the injustice that weighs upon them demanding justice, to rid themselves immediately of the debt contracted with their fellow men by

⁴ Foligno, near Assisi, cities in Umbria. (Translator's Note)

being born in a favoured position, a debt which the just laws of nature demand to be repaid. But freeing oneself is very difficult, both for the wellborn, who grow up weakened by life's easiness, which does not teach them to struggle from an early age, and for the parents who love them. This misfortune of having been born already accomplished does not deserve, therefore, as is usually done, our stupid envy, but rather the right to our benevolent pity and our assistance.

Happy, on the contrary, is the one who is born with the wealth of the spirit, which is more easily found and developed in the poverty of human things. The treasures of the earth can be lost, but not those of Heaven. Amidst the confusion of human uncertainties, there is that incredibly secure way of investing our riches in the imperishable values of the spirit. These initial references are made here precisely because they express the fundamental tone that will dominate this story throughout its development. From the beginning, there is an absolute opposition between spirit and matter, the struggle of moral principles against the utilitarianism of the world. From the beginning, the evangelical inversion of human values is shown here, very clearly. In this account, we will see the harsh events of this tragic battle unfold, not always victorious. This story of a man is, therefore, in perfect harmony with the substance of Christianity and with the revaluation of the forces of the spirit, today, under certain aspects, openly sustained.

Like everyone, he carried within himself the traits of his race; the Umbrian characteristic, marking the general Italian type. It is said that the ancient Romans possessed the gift of will and balance, the Tuscans that of expression, and the Umbrians that of intuition. Thus, his birthplace and the nature of his people, taciturn, sober, and hardworking, already sketched out a bit of his destiny.

Also, the hour, the day, the month, the year, the constellations, astrology tells us, influence a man's destiny. And it would be absurd to deny it "a priori," out of simplicity or materialistic ignorance. Radiesthesia, the science of the vibrations of all things, including humans, transmitting and receiving, is just being born. And already there is serious and scientific justification for the suspicion that there are many subtle things in Heaven and on Earth, undeniably real, although imponderable. Certainly, amidst all that exists, man transmits, and above all receives, an infinite amount of vibrations, which affect him, even if his current insensitivity does not allow him to perceive them clearly.

It doesn't matter what name the protagonist received at birth. The reader may give him any name, whichever they prefer. The true name of a man is not given by social records, but by his character, his destiny, his works. Our character here stands as an anonymous soldier of life, in whom anyone may see themselves. It is a type that can only be given a name at the end of his earthly journey.

Thus, he found himself living on this earth, an immense field of exploration, as a progressive force in a sea of forces in action. Around him vibrated effects of nearby and very remote causes, of which he had no knowledge. For this newborn, the world appeared as darkness, in which the spiritual spark, concentrated in the self, must learn to see on its own. His childhood seemed uncertain and precarious, and each hour, each step, was a conquest. To inquire, to explore, to experiment, is his desire and his task. He first learns the great words of life: "mama," which is the genesis; "I," the centre of consciousness; "I want," expansion and concentration in the self; "why," the great question to which he can never give the final answer, but which contains the endless search for God. He learns to walk, for materially and morally he will walk all his life. But he knows how to cry from the moment he came into the world, because pain has already taken him in its claws and will never let him go.

As soon as a child is born, a thread begins to unravel for them, a march begins that will be beaten, until death, by the inexorable rhythm of

time. But neither the thread unravels nor the march advances by chance. The child's consciousness is a seed that develops and expands, but it is a germ that carries within it all the fundamental characteristics of the future personality. The central traits are already set and will not change. This happens with all plant and animal germs. Then comes the education to which the child is subjected, and to which he adapts or reacts, according to the cases. Then external forces intervene: the demands of other beings, the impositions of social coexistence, and the moral restraints of duty and virtue, which override instinct. And the original type, constructed by its biological history, in order to adapt, more or less, faces all the pressures, transforms himself a little, learns a little to lie and hide his true self; some external forces bend before his will, by others he ends up bent. With his original self, with the good and bad qualities, with the resources and deficiencies, he must know how to reach the end, making his way in a sea of forces that surround him, and that from all sides put pressure to invade him. Each force, in its own likeness, says to him: "I" and "I want", and does not find peace until it realizes itself. Thus begins life, which is struggle, and, in the way it is biologically implanted on our planet, can only be a struggle without truce for the strong and for the weak, for the evolved and for the unevolved. A true school, woe to those who exempt themselves from it. Woe to the young to whom their parents, out of excessive and prolonged affection, which exaggerates the protective functions of the child beyond natural limits, give the easy means to exempt themselves from the struggle. Certain comfortable and easy educations are paid for, afterwards, harshly. It is not possible to exempt oneself; everyone must exercise themselves on their plane, on their level, according to the fundamental type given at birth. The struggle is not violence and subjugation except at the bottom. And not all know how to rise. Neither laws nor religions have been able to act so profoundly to civilize the depth of human nature. But for those who want and know, there are higher forms of virile and generous struggle that are not a condemnation to animality, but an affirmation of the highest potency

in the spirit. In this field, it is necessary to learn to fight. Struggle is a law of nature, necessary, and it is not within human power to avoid it. But what we are responsible for is the form of struggle, a form we must choose according to what we are and, above all, according to what we want and know how to become. "Tell me how you fight and why you fight, and I will tell you who you are."

We have spoken of destiny. Is there really a destiny, and in what sense? Life is a chain of causes and effects that can be traced back far before the moment an individual is born. Thus, children are a consequence of their parents. But at birth, that common thread transmitted from generation to generation becomes particular, unique to each individual, and is called "I." It stands out from the previous "I," on which it heavily depends, and remains distinct from the successive "I's," in which, however, it continues and almost survives. Now, in that "I" which is strictly ours, the part that is a consequence of the past, that is, the fundamental constitution of the germ from which the type of personality derives, is already outside our free will. For us, at least, who possess it in its already crystallized form, defined in the germ entity, it is something already solidified into a type. And thus, without any inquiry, we receive it at birth. We will not delve deeper into this work. Some minds become disturbed upon hearing about reincarnation, and one does not have the right to disturb them. Certain salutary ignorances will be respected. Salutary because humanity is still too wild to be acquainted with certain knowledge. And those who possess it do well not to divulge it, for it cannot and should not be conceived except by those who have deserved it, that is, by those who have acquired it through maturation. Without this, it cannot be understood or accepted. Here, therefore, we speak simply of the past of physiological and psychic heredity, and this cannot be denied, because science touches it with its hands.

Undoubtedly, there is a zone of determinism in our personality. It lies in the depths of our destiny, it is the instinctive, indisputable subconscious that sometimes imposes itself on our will before our own consciousness awakens. But, upon this hereditary background, in every possible sense, a child of the past, rises a zone of free will, a field of new and free constructions, because the "I" is constantly forming and reforming, never stopping, and it is especially constructed through the explorations and experiences that we undergo in this earthly environment. And it is precisely for its construction, at least as far as the time of human life is concerned, that we go through it.

By destiny, therefore, we should not understand a blind fatalism, an inexorably imposed fact, but rather a prior impulse which can and is within us to correct. To the crystallized past, we can oppose the force of our present will, which can correct the trajectory of that mass, which does not move solely by inertia but is guided by the impulse of our current, intelligent, and free will. If this implies a zone of relative, transient irresponsibility, which is so only in the present because the subconscious is a child of the past, it does not, however, violate the very vast zone of conscious responsibility of the present, always free in its corrections and creations⁵. And if we must admit, under penalty of understanding nothing or accusing the Creator of injustice, a past of ours, free and desired, even if it now presents itself fixed in the form of determinism, it is clear that, in reality, responsibility encompasses our entire destiny. Human destiny, a moment of the eternal and necessary becoming, is therefore the unfolding of a struggle between determinism and free will, between the past that wants to resist and the present that must correct it. And the scales of justice tilt according to a responsibility in the present linked to a fatality, and

⁵ For an exact understanding of the subconscious, see *Mystical Ascesis*, by the same author, part I, chapters 19 and 20. (Note from the Author)

according to a freedom that, to win, must now break the resistance of determinism, which is in destiny itself.

5

IN SEARCH OF ONESELF

Thus, the thread of our man's life began to unfold. There are linear, simple, evident types, of superficial consciousness. The personality can, therefore, reveal itself immediately. There are individuals who easily manifest intelligence, with brilliant minds; they externalize everything quickly, and can be appreciated immediately, and enjoy their position in the world. The centre of consciousness, in our man, was, on the contrary, so deeply situated that it remained hidden from himself for a long time. He felt something immense within himself, in his past, and such a vast complexity in his own being that it took a long time to rediscover himself, and he could only do so slowly and laboriously, seeming, in the meantime, inept, shy, mediocre. His consciousness had to be found not only on the surface but in depth. He could not live by imitation, nor accept truths already made for practical use. It was not enough for him to guide the actions of his life by simple current ideas or by the simple guidance of instincts. He felt the need to penetrate the substance and to directly understand the reasons for life. He did not know nor could he act in any way other than consciously. He could not do otherwise. Such was the determinism of his type.

His childhood was outwardly insignificant. Nothing remarkable, nothing particular, that distinguished him from the others. While he suffered and endured his environment, he observed everything. This could be called

the period of exploration, preceding the period of experience. And by observing and recording, he prepared himself to judge. He prepared the first chords of future spiritual symphonies, shuddering at the shock of his first encounters with the earthly environment. Beneath the appearance of an insignificant childhood, of a docile, obedient, and studious boy, he concealed the complex work of a self that was weary in its search for itself. If outwardly he appeared to have a common, simple, and ordinary personality-the one that others saw and would continue to see, almost all, throughout his life-he felt vaguely revealed within himself, and avidly sought, driven by a profound instinct, a second personality, with a second life, so much more vast, beautiful, and profound, that it seemed almost not to belong to Earth. With his inner perception, he sensed this enigma but did not understand it. Deep within himself, there was an abyss that seemed unfathomable, an indecipherable other world. He had a vague perception of an immense pain and wondered why. He felt a vague sensation of a terrible fall, similar to that of a resplendent star that, having fallen from its light, became a prisoner of Earth, deprived of the immense freedom of the spaces, in the abysmal depths of a dark and terrifying ocean. He perceived only something fleetingly, as in a sudden re-encounter, like a revelation. Life then appeared to him as a terrifying experience, which required heroic courage to overcome, yet one that had to be overcome. He was facing a tremendous trial, beyond which, however, there had to be some light, because a secret and uncontrollable instinct told him that God is just and good, and that the universe is a work of wisdom, consciously guided. Thus, the fundamental guiding motives of his life were being sketched out. The seeds were developing; he was maturing in silence.

The first conscious sensation he remembered was linked to the third year of his life. It was an indistinct sensation, but even so, so impregnated with subtle anguish that he could never forget it. He remembered it perfectly at first, that is, in his psyche, the memory appeared direct and immediate; then, it became the memory of the memory; then, again, the memory of that last one; and thus, successively evoked, the impression survived the continuous erasure of the superfluities of human memory. Psychologists, always in search of psychopathy, ready to confuse subnormal, abnormal, and supranormal, will hasten-perhaps to satisfy that fundamental instinct of struggle, which drives the individual to surpass others, by judging and demolishing types different from themselves-to discover, also in this case, some neuropathological symptom. Because the individual, to be sane and normal, must possess a simple psyche, without superfluous and incomprehensible complications. Otherwise, he will be abnormal and therefore an outlaw, who can be annihilated with impunity. What greater satisfaction, in the struggle for life? The impulse is so instinctive and irresistible that it becomes almost a duty. And does not the law of struggle play, in their subconscious, a terrible trick, since the very struggle that leads each one to discover defects in his neighbour, to surpass him? And were not the best always the geniuses? And is this not the intimate and unnoticed determinant of Lombrosian theories? And is this mania for the pathological not an offense to Nature, which balances everything and compensates for every deficiency, everything, even what may seem pathological, making it useful, and giving everything a function, for some of its purposes?

Here is the fact. Nothing external, all subjective. The picture of the memory consists of a poor room, with a low earthen stove, with the fire extinguished, next to a window, through whose dirty panes filters, with infinite desolation, the gloomy and pale light of a slow dusk, sad as a weeping at twilight. The motif repeats, returns more strongly, later. There was still a dark kitchen, at night, a little oil lamp, and a desolate sound of a distant bell. What do these childish terrors contain, these vague yet profound impressions? Where do they emerge from, and how do they possess such strength to carve a furrow in the spirit, over which they always return? Why, then, always, that feeling of distressing sadness, at the sound of a bell in the afternoon? Why do certain things, rather than others, fix

themselves in the personality of some types of humans and never fade, but, on the contrary, reinforce with the years? Are they memories? What memories? They are, without a doubt, attractions, repulsions, sympathies, loves, hatreds. Why? By virtue of what laws, from birth, are these motives and connections of the spirit with things revealed? Why the foresight, why these diversities, if souls are all created at birth? Or is there a past in them that comes to light at these moments? Only inert and sleepy spirits can live without feeling a burning need to understand. And whoever vibrates in a spirit like this cannot, absolutely, reduce themselves to such spiritual suicide, as if the insensitive ones wanted to impose it on all those who are not, like them, stillborn of the spirit.

The substance of the fact was neither the place nor the time, but the revelation of the dominant note of a life. Each life is a motif that develops. It is given right at birth, inexorably, whether it be joy or sadness, activity or laziness, goodness or wickedness, intelligence or stupidity, and so on. The fundamental colouring is given and will accompany the being throughout their life. It is the wave of the soul, the type of vibration inherent to the personality, the constant emanation, the indelible flavour of every individual. Even plants possess it and reveal it everywhere, with their sympathies and antipathies, such that we sometimes observe, among them, enmities so strong that if they grow close, they annihilate each other mutually.

Later, this motif often resonated in the spirit of the boy who had become an adult. It reappeared, condensing into different scenes, because life is always in motion, though repeating, and as it returns, it retouches and modifies its motifs. In the ancient medieval towns of his Umbria, the old stones would then tell him strange, macabre, and harrowing stories, as if of beloved people, murdered on the narrow threshold of one of those narrow doors, called the "door of the dead." Those stones would come alive and speak to him, as if transmitting ancient vibrations of distant events that had taken place there, vibrations with which they had become

saturated and were now returning. When, on those bleak winter nights, already a man, he wandered through the old streets of Assisi or Gubbio, the cities of silence and dreams, the old walls seemed to him to be animated with that profound life that dead things possess, which, nevertheless, cannot die. He questioned the old walls that had lived so much, among which man had passed for so long, with his struggles and his pains. Certain winding alleys, where he liked to wander, especially in the uncertain light of the evening, sometimes provoked in him a strange stupefaction, like an unforeseen revelation. And there he would remain, attentive, with his soul suspended before the great mystery of time, the mystery of that inexorable and eternal pulse, held there, no one knows by what miracle, in those stones. He would stay there, attentive, watching the magic of these fixations and these returns, these survivals of distant things, reborn to the flows to repeat, with a strange and profound music, the eternal identity of the human drama. And his spirit would scrutinize, seeking the hidden image of the eternal through the breath of the centuries, the image engraved in the soul of those cities. His spirit questioned, seeking to find, in the voice of the trees, the rocks, the wind, in the voice of the earth and the sky, in the depths of the great voice of silence, the voice of God.

At night, he would listen to the buzzing of the storm, howling along the old walls, as if dragging with it a fleeing of spirits, hissing ancient stories of hatred and vengeance. And he felt that the darkness watched him and spoke to him. And he questioned them, and like a dowser searching for underground water currents, he wandered indecisively, stopping between the old houses. Was it here, was it there, where, how? He found nothing, understood nothing clearly; yet, he was connected to those cities by an indecipherable, anguished nostalgia for a great affection, tragically shattered. Who knows? Later, in his writings, he described and exalted his Umbrian cities of silence, which he had loved so much. And the current inhabitants of those cities saw in this a natural exaltation of them. But he did not see the present in those cities, and he was searching for something

55

else. Thus, there was established between them and his spirit an attunement that became profoundly dear to him. More precisely, he managed to awaken within himself the sensation of this attunement, which was already present in his innermost being, like a primordial instinct, even before any conscious perception. And especially in the sad and obscure evenings of the sleepy autumn, under the yellowing leaves of the great friendly trees, he sought and managed to find again the chords of that attunement that came from the past, a past that resurrected and that he felt was his own. There are, undoubtedly, immense and terrible mysteries in some souls.

But not everything in his spirit was tragic sadness. There was also light, and how much light! He remembered having been touched, as a child, more in his inner vision than in his eyes, one afternoon, in a church, by a friendly light that flowed from above, he did not know how. He told others about it, but no one understood, so he remained silent. But he never forgot! Later, in his Umbrian cities of silence, overcoming the terror of medieval atrocities, he found again, with the same anguished nostalgia, the charm of a simple and humble figure who went about doing good. This figure radiated such spiritual splendour that all darkness dissolved before it, all terrors dissipated, hatreds disappeared, and sorrows were consoled. It was the figure of Saint Francis. And in his life, he followed it in silence, beyond Assisi, to La Verna, to Greccio, over Lake Trasimeno, and to many other smaller cities, wherever he could go, kissing the holy footsteps with anguished devotion. And in each place, he asked himself: Was it here, was it there, where, when? Thus, he first loved Assisi, then he loved Gubbio, as his little Franciscan sister. He later came to know all of Italy, Europe, and the Americas, but no city did he find that he could love more than those two. San Damiano, the Porziuncola, the tomb of St. Francis in Assisi, the Chapel of the Stigmata in La Verna-these were the places of most intense and evident resonance with his spirit, like so many other stages of his passion. In those places, he rediscovered the deepest meaning of his destiny, found that first light of his childhood magnified, attained the vision of that affirmation which surpasses the terrifying trial of life, and found the strength to redeem himself by overcoming the terrors of the past, natural consequences of his great faults and deviations. These were forces unleashed by him at some time, which now desperately hurled themselves against him, inexorably bound to him by the determinism of his destiny.

He had certainly committed a fall, which now inexorably demanded justice and expiation. One day, he went to Versailles, to reconstruct within himself the vile frivolity of the world of Louis XV and that tragic hour of the prostitution of power and wealth, from which the horrors of the French Revolution were born. And upon arriving there, he again asked himself if he did not recognize them. Who knows? Even there, for certain, something still held him, attracted him, like the deceptive siren's song, like the viscous tentacles of an octopus, languidly pulling him towards the depths of an abyss where death lies. In Versailles, the room with the bed and the furnishings of Louis XIV, "le roi soleil⁶," still remains in the centre, everything oriented by the grandeur of the sun.

He had looked at his portrait, which was in that room, made of wax, with long real hair, expressive, and he looked at it with antipathy. He detested the arrogant, particularly that arrogant man. But he had touched with interest the quixotic and frivolous tapestries of Louis XV's room, had made his way to the Grand Trianon, the Petit Trianon, the Queen's House by the small lake, and had explored the recesses of the park, searching in the small chambers of Versailles for the figure of Marie Antoinette. Louis XVI barely appeared, coarse, dull, insignificant. But the most decisive vibrations remained and spoke to him. A whole world of madness, frivolous and tragic. From Versailles, he followed him in thought to Paris, to the Tuileries, to the tragic flight to Varennes, to the Temple, and finally to the guillotine of Louis Capet and Marie Antoinette. And the vanished Dauphin. Here is the period of terror, the prisons overflowing with condemned

⁶ "The Sun King" (Translator's Note)

aristocrats. Here is Robespierre, elegant, the incorruptible, and Danton and Marat, devoured by their own revolution. And everything sinks into blood. The terror of the revolution was his own terror, and as he delved into its causes in the imposing halls of Versailles, he shuddered, as if faced with a real sensation.

He asked himself: What do I have to do with this world? How can its faults be mine? What is the meaning of this attunement that makes me resonate with its episodes, this attraction that binds me, for I feel all of this reviving within me? Is there, perhaps, the cause of my current explation, which therefore takes on such a precise and specific form, to the point of seeming like the correction of those faults? Why such a correspondence of sensations and positions? The fact that pain does not strike at random, but persists, almost with logic and method, on certain points, which in a lifetime are almost always the same, gives rise to the idea of a specific expiation. And it is also just that a pain should be the correction of certain errors—one's own errors, and in proportion to them—not the errors of a mystical and distant Adam, about whom so little is known. Only in this way is life a school, a field of trials, where previous mistakes are corrected; only in this way does one acquire a sense of complete justice in pain, of its specific utility and its logical functioning. Pain thus has a precise explanation and justification, a more convincing meaning, and results, not only vaguely, but also practically and exactly, in our benefit.

He thus satisfied his need to see clearly the reasons for his life and actions, and to chart the course of his destiny, because this also contained his objectives. One thing, however, he did not understand: how could his fellow men live without feeling the need to orient themselves, to define the specific meaning of their lives, and the content to give it.

It was certain that he perceived this instinctive and unquestionable attunement with historical environments containing life conditions that he realized he was now reliving in an inverse and contradictory way, as a form of compensation. Why this attunement, this sympathetic attraction precisely to those environments, and why was there never this correspondence of opposing positions? He could not scientifically deny, "a priori," the possibility of this vibratory impregnation of things, nor their current irradiation after saturation in the past, nor the possibility that a hypersensitive person like him could research these vibratory currents, register them, and attune to them, whether through agreement or dissonance, sympathy or antipathy, according to the nature of the psychic waves themselves. The latest scientific discoveries led him to admit the possibility of establishing connections with distant waves; the new science of vibrations led him precisely to such conclusions.

Only those who vegetate without suffering can remain asleep in ignorance and be content with simple philosophical explanations about pain. Beautiful theories are very useful, but only for the pain of others. However, those who seriously suffer their own pain do not find peace until they at least discover its causes. If for others the fundamental sensation of life may be one of enjoyment, and the normal position one of tranquil unconsciousness and inertia, for him, for whom the sensation of life was one of pain, the normal position could only be one of activity and search. He was, therefore, a born investigator. And he wanted to solve not only the problem of knowledge in its universal sense but, above all, in the particular sense of his own destiny.

By dint of observing, of seeking diverse attunements, guided by a special sense and an ever more refined sensitivity, with the advance of life through the school of pain, driven by the need to escape from an existence that was a prison for the spirit, by dint of experimenting, confronting, meditating, he managed to establish comparisons, and then relations of causality, which thus gave him, at least by means of hypotheses, a probable explanation of his current state. Because a working hypothesis was the minimum necessary to be able to work on the development of his destiny.

59

And he followed, he applied this hypothesis, because it corresponded to that intimate instinctive conviction that is beyond all reasoning, and that is the one that most persuades; he applied it because it agreed with the laws he had discovered governing the organic functioning of the universe, and this harmonized his spirit; because, finally, it was the only thing that gave him a logical explanation of everything, allowing him to satisfy his need to understand and to act, with knowledge and righteousness.

He was thus able to reconstruct a bit of his own history and deepen his knowledge of himself. Very few, we believe, can answer the question: who am I? To find an answer, he undertook the great adventure of selfexploration, thereby managing to rediscover some aspects of his true, profound, eternal personality. He succeeded in establishing parallels and correspondences between hypotheses and experiences, and in discovering an explanation for present facts, his own instinctive impulses, innate ideas and attitudes, the development of his life's trajectory, of the nature and significance of his destiny, and therefore in finding the direction to give to his own activity, to make his earthly existence not a vague attempt, but an organic and conscious work. And he was able to specify the meaning of that intimate feeling of fall, of his uncommon temperament, of his inadaptability to the human environment, of his so painful sense of life.

His past was, without a doubt, extensive and rich in profound experiences. We can only allude here to the most typical and decisive ones. A knowledge had been acquired, and though later overshadowed by the fall, it still remained, because what is once conquered can never be lost. Even when human consciousness, oppressed by the weariness of a thousand pains, might naturally have faltered, there existed within him a gigantic subconscious that no assault could destroy. Even marked by a thousand fatigues, dragged by a destiny of crucifying, inexorable, and tenacious atonements to the very doors of his soul, that past was indelibly written in his subconscious; it was his, as an inalienable product of his work. In the face of these substrata of personality, pain cannot destroy, but only elevate, perfecting the indestructible. In such cases, the pain that annihilates and debases the ordinary, on the contrary, exalts, elevates, and beautifies; it is an instrument of resurrection.

There was, however, between him and that light from his past, a period of human darkness, of serious errors willingly committed, for which he was responsible, and which weighed down his winged spirit, binding it to the sad vicissitudes of painful earthly experience. His destiny, therefore, while clearly revealing the redemptive function of pain, also contained, in a superlative manner, that tragic alternation of darkness and light in which the most bloody struggle of life unfolds; his, in a particular way, was the great drama of good and evil, which is the axis of the world. The meaning of his current experience was, undoubtedly, in the first place, that of atonement; given his position, so strictly individual, his life was a painful trial, meant to compensate for disturbed equilibriums, to correct wrong experiences, to achieve the assimilation of new experiences, now directed in the opposite direction, difficult to endure, but intended to build in his soul higher qualities that he still lacked. His path could be none other than that of the cross. Amid so many different paths of so many different men, this was the type of his destiny. Each one has his own, as he has his personality, his unmistakable type. In social life, destinies intertwine in actions and reactions, collide, influence, correct each other, but never confuse themselves, and each one remains naked and alone, before oneself.

But beyond the cross, liberation shone, beyond the struggle for redemption, resurrection arose. Atonement through pain was, therefore, the first commandment of his life on the path of the cross; but there was also another aspect. Even as he ascended the dolorous path of Christ, there would be room for him to render benefits, in some pause, in some rest, in some loosening of the fatal grips, there would still remain for him a

61

possibility of mission, to grant others, in the earthly hell, some reflections of the light once obtained and which had remained unforgettable.

This destiny that we narrate, we will see it unfold on the path of Calvary, in the footsteps of Christ. It is no longer a matter, now, of a simple attunement, perhaps through memory, with medieval Franciscan environments, of a love for the saint of goodness and humanity, who sought to fully experience the Gospel, but of the convergence of an entire destiny, as a trial of pain and as a mission, towards the figure of Christ. It is a supreme experience, all tense in the lived realization of the thought, the goodness, the passion of Christ. We will see, further on, the grave meaning of these words and what particular type of human experience, oriented towards the divine, the life we narrate sought to realize or, at least, dreamed of and tried to achieve. We will see an attempt, I would say, almost desperate, in the face of modern man, at a complete application of the Gospel. And we will see the world's retaliation: the resistances, the reactions, the condemnations, the failures, and the betrayals, the scorn of those who wish to do anything truly serious in the field of the spirit. We will record shocks, misunderstandings, anachronism. One day, the encounter between our man and the world occurred, and then it was no longer possible to turn back.

But Christ shone in that destiny, in his past, in his future. Like a memory and like a premonition, He enveloped him entirely in light, so much so that the brief span of that life of painful darkness was enclosed between two splendours. That light was before the fault and after the atonement. Christ was the most pulsating attunement of that life and always reappeared before that soul, always with profound emotion. This was the most strongly etched furrow, which had become indelible there. It always seemed to that man that he saw the great and beloved figure walking through the lands of Galilee, along the shores of the lake of Tiberias, from Bethlehem to Nazareth, to Jerusalem, from the poor manger to Gethsemane and Golgotha. And he would follow Him as an example, in silence, along the paths of life, loving and suffering. For him, Christ was, before birth and after death, the ultimate synthesis of all human values.

FIRST SCHOOLS AND FIRST PROBLEMS

The description of the character's inner development imposed itself, by its own inner strength, in this writing, preceding that of external events. And this is because it is naturally much more important and leads to the understanding of these events, to which we must, however, give a quick glance, overlooking the secondary, all that, being material, had no spiritual meaning. The external events of life often lack the substantial significance of inner experiences. They generally follow only a minimal and proximate causality, superficial, and the being who lives only externally and suffers without understanding it, is carried along adrift, without freedom or knowledge, without mastery, to ultimately end up bound to the determinism of the physical world. But this does not prevent even external events from sometimes connecting to the inner substance, becoming the expression of impulses from the forces of destiny, which also need to manifest in that experience. Thus, inwardly animated and illuminated, they reveal a will converging towards certain points, and take on another meaning.

In the case of our protagonist, youth represented a period of slow and tranquil preparation. The trials, being serious, waited for him to mature; being intimate and complex, they required, as a necessary premise, a deep maturation. No one from the outside suspected that seeds were being elaborated during that youth, that seemed tranquil and insignificant. That complex destiny, which could only reveal itself in the mature man, awaited, in its logical development, for him to grasp the deeper meaning of life. He, meanwhile, was searching for it.

Thus passed his youth, studying in school, like so many others. A grey, uniform life. The school, being a place of social interaction, was for him a study in adaptation to human life. He observed everything the teachers demanded of him, the conditions they set to grant him the sought-after reward: passing the exams. And he gave the school what it asked for, as one gives to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's. Even there, while cultivating his spirit, he wanted to think of himself. Having mastered the school system, he achieved various approvals, applying in this case the principle of "do ut des⁷," where his schoolwork was limited to the minimum required to pass. He asked nothing more from the school than a diploma, because he had understood that the school could not give more than that, at least for him. The effort of life seemed to him guite different from that of reviving the dead languages of Latin and Greek! A luxury pastime, exactly where everything is a struggle! The exercise of life, in school, he found not in the teachings, but in the companionship with his peers. For him, school was only an exercise thanks to social interaction, of which the teachings were nothing more than simple pretexts. For all interaction is a form of education. Among the young, a distinct social class forms, an entire reality of life, quite different from what is officially presumed and proclaimed, independent and even contrary to that of adults, distinct and separate. The youth class has its own slang, its own laws, its own morality, its particular concept of duty and honour. In this environment, the first experiences take place, the first attempts are made, and the first conclusions are drawn, later to be revisited and refined. But everything has such a virginal

⁷ I give so that you may give me (Translator's note).

biological sincerity that it seems, in fact, that man retraces, in his early years, the evolutionary path, the psychological ascent of the species. The individual then makes a rapid repetition of his biological-psychic past, before preparing to continue it through new experiences. The young are rich, exuberant, like the primitives. Humanity was perhaps once composed of adults similar to them; the humanity of the future will perhaps be constituted of young people psychologically matured like our elders.

Differing from most of his companions, he sought serious and, above all, free study, he sought a super-scholastic study that would reveal to him the "why" of things. But, in truth, if man does not possess this "why" except in contradictory fragments, the school could not give it to him. His docile and respectful temperament, yet tenacious and unvielding, did not allow him to sacrifice the original independence of his personality to unfold under the influence of scholastic formalities, ready to deform his virgin thought and crush the free development of his mind. He was strong enough to resist the school, to not submit to it, to not become entangled in its classifications, to rebel and impose himself on its constraints. He preferred, at any cost, to always remain himself, without accepting anyone; better to be the wild plant in the forest than not to be free. He wanted to find the solution to problems on his own, without intermediaries. He thus detested interpretations already made, crafted for the use of narrow minds. In this way, no one in school could frame him, nor lock his thinking into any preconceived category. He sought on his own, freely, everywhere, eagerly employing the only method then possible for him: trial and error. He searched and read everywhere, in books and in life. In a hundred books, he found only one that he could take seriously and that said something to him. But even what persuaded him was not a passive acquisition of knowledge; rather, it was a rediscovery within himself of notions already acquired, a reconstruction in his consciousness of the outlines of a previous knowledge. It was almost as if he already knew, but could not remember, and asked for help from books to do so. He took the strangest books,

of all kinds, seeking unusual connections and relationships between the most distant things, of opposing natures. Reading did not serve him so much to learn the thoughts of others but as an agent from which a reaction of thought was born, in which only he truly read. With his own instinctive sense of a personal truth, he inquired, tested, recognized. He always listened, from within and from without, to the infinite voices of the world and of his own being, to know, to rediscover, to reconstruct, drawing from that immense mystery that was within himself.

Once, in high school, he heard the natural sciences teacher pronounce the word "evolution" (this was at the beginning of the 20th century). It was a flash, a lightning bolt, a shock. Then, darkness. Boys his age were experiencing very different emotions. What idea had crossed his mind? He still didn't fully understand. But that idea would have to become the backbone of his system and his destiny.

However, since childhood, he had begun to explore the sensory and perceptive possibilities of his physical organism, like a driver testing the machine for the journey and observing it as a mere instrument of action, feeling himself distinctly separate from it. A great astonishment would take hold of him before the mysterious limits of space and time. He would multiply them, decompose them, surpass them, without being able to solve them. Within him, there was as if another conception, a fundamental sensation of being, which grew weary of adapting to the terrestrial environment and its limitations. His true conceptual element was not the limit, but the eternity of time and the infinity of space. A yearning for unrestrained freedom still stirred in his soul, and existence in a physical body seemed to him an unbearable prison. And he spent his life seeking to escape, to overcome all the limits of his human constitution, to rediscover a world he truly felt was his own and which, however, now eluded him, he did not know where, beyond his conceptual and sensory possibilities, beyond those torturous limits inexorably placed in his current life: space and time. But he had to make yet another effort: to understand the psychological mechanism, the hidden motor of his fellow beings' actions; to understand how that motor and those actions could function and how they did function; and finally, he had to learn to adapt to all the social norms that derived from them for everyone, including himself. Thus, he found himself faced with a double task: to rediscover himself and to understand what his fellow beings truly were, whether what they appeared to be or something else.

This last one was his most tiring youthful search. For being naturally sincere, he had naively believed in the sincerity of men, assuming that outward appearances corresponded to reality. At first, he believed that the respectable gentleman, so serious, revered, and laden with titles, was indeed a gentleman. He had believed that that pious and kind lady was of good character and exemplary conduct; that the holy man, so religious, was truly a believer and not practically an atheist. He believed that names corresponded to things and that the various human activities were practiced for the purposes that defined them. He believed that the doctor healed, that the lawyer defended, that the administrator administered, that the philosopher knew, that the law protected, that the school taught, that religion educated, that science reached conclusions, that the believer believed, that the altruist also thought of others. A sad reality appeared to him as soon as he dared to look behind the scenes. It was a bitter disillusionment. From that day on, he distrusted and despised man. He still had much to walk, along non-human paths, to arrive, despite everything, at loving him.

He then understood that his sincerity was taken for naivety; his kindness, for foolishness; his patience, for weakness. Thus, he learned, in the true school of life, a language very different from his own, which he nevertheless had to speak, because it was the language of the world in which he had to live; he thus learned, harshly, the true knowledge that was not found in books.

Having overcome the initial surprise of discovering a reality so different, in fact, from what he felt in spirits, his naive credulity vanished, and he threw himself seriously into the study of true human nature. Having found the key to the system, he sought to deepen his understanding through observation, to fully comprehend the technique of this human method of struggle, based on strength and cunning instead of justice, kindness, and sincerity, as he had believed. There then appeared to him, as it were, two different worlds superimposed, two planes of values, one higher, better, but fictitious, spread like a noble mantle of appearances over another lower, worse, but real. In the upper world, prominently displayed, almost with pomp, in open exhibitionism, were the recognized truths of goodness, duty, virtue, and sacrifice, highly proclaimed and professed-a plane of ideas resplendent with grandeur, generous and sonorous. In the lower world, on the contrary, was the iron and pitiless necessity: instead of generosity, convenience; instead of altruism, selfishness; instead of sincerity, falsehood; instead of justice, force. A world governed by a diverse and opposing morality, but nonetheless so organic and logical at its own level that it felt authorized to judge the higher world as something of madmen, to the point of not even dreaming of taking it seriously. In the lower world, there was a silent struggle of relentless rivalries, treacherous aggressions, a false and fierce reality, which, however, yielded its immediate and concrete returns. If appearances were gilded, beneath them there was an indisputably hellish reality, unacceptable and unbearable to him. If the forms were those of a courteous and refined civilization, the substance was the fierce law of the strongest. These were the facts, these the principles in which man, through his actions, contrary to everything he said, demonstrated his true beliefs. Why this duplicitous and contradictory structure? Why this public scandalization precisely over what was most firmly believed in private? Why this pretence of a fictitious life, this mystification? Why, if man is vile, does he not have the courage to appear as he is? The problem was certainly complex.

He thus probed deeply into the expressions of this duplicitous human face, one visible, the other hidden, he scrutinized the true meaning of the word spoken not to express, but to conceal and disguise thoughts, of actions performed with apparent objectives different from the real ones. Not that everything was absolutely like this. There were also representatives of the higher plane, of that other different morality, but they were so few, and the representatives of the lower plane were so many, that they almost set the rule. Always this game of continuous inversions, an incoherence, a contradiction in everything between reality and appearance. This made the game of life much more difficult. He wondered what the logical convenience of such useless complications could be, why everyone had to endure such a useless burden, why the fatigue of walking on ground that made everything false, so willingly sown with betrayals. And he further wondered what coherence there was, after all this, in the preaching of evangelical goodness, if in fact there existed below nothing more than ruthless rivalry. And he said to himself: Is the human environment so sadly constituted that the ideal can only appear in the form of impotence, and pursuing it? Is this tragic struggle for liberation and redemption a hopeless condemnation? If the human spirit had been able to conceive certain principles, why did it not apply them, and if it did not apply them, why did it make it so difficult to do so?

Certainly, the human system was indeed that one, and he gauged its undeniable structure. Every game has its rules. He had attached himself to that one upon birth and had to understand and endure it. Such was life, and it had to be accepted as such. But he marvelled at the fact that his instinct did not adhere to this mechanism as spontaneously as it did for others, and he wondered why this difference existed. Shouldn't man, perhaps, be blamed for this? Was it wickedness, or rather fatality? Who had established these laws? Perhaps man did nothing more than follow his own law, which compelled him to demand concrete returns from life, perhaps he only suffered an inferior necessity, made up of harsh trials, with no room for generous ideals. Perhaps man was more miserable than wicked and deserved more pity than condemnation.

Thus, on Earth, two contiguous yet very different phases of the same law of evolution coexisted, two levels of life, two conflicting possibilities vying for the field of human activity. And, according to his own degree of sensitivity, man oscillated from one plane to another; the first, a remnant of past animality, the second, an anticipation of the perfection to be achieved. And all the glaring, irreconcilable contrast stemmed from the fact that he, spontaneously, by his nature, found himself balanced on one plane, while the normal human type was balanced on another. A matter of degree in biological evolution. And if he felt unwell, it was his fault for being different from the others, those who make the law and who, at least on Earth, are right. Those forms of life of the normal man, which seemed to him infernal and unbearable, must nonetheless have been proportionate to the ignorance, involution, and insensitivity of the common man, if the latter found himself so at ease there. Everything told him that he was different, perhaps superior. Theoretical comfort, real condemnation — that is, a life of struggle and pain. The despised, the exiled, the one who was wrong in this world was him, and against the exception, the immediate sanctions of the biological law, which tends toward equilibrium, reacted. In his honesty and sincerity, he was unarmed and a fine prey at the same time. The iron law of struggle began to envelop him, to test him in order to demolish him, it took him by assault to demonstrate through facts that he was the one who was wrong, to make him pay dearly for his supposed superiority, and with it, his attempt at independence and escape. Life wanted to make him understand that superiority consisted of something quite different and forced him to prove it. The antagonism was congenital, and the first harsh clashes were already looming. The in-depth

72

confrontation was becoming inevitable. And the great duel began, subtle, in whispers, indirectly, without appearing, to become increasingly serious. The struggle soon took hold of our man by the throat. The challenge had already been implicitly launched, and it would only intensify, in encounters that would become matters of life and death. But he was still a boy, and so, things were not yet taken seriously.

UNIVERSITY STUDIES AND INNER EXPLORATIONS

He thus arrived at the University. He was able to observe what life is like in a big city and learned to detest it. He continued to always prefer, over man's artifice, the simple, good, nourishing power of nature. Higher culture did not persuade him. He only studied it to combat it, becoming more and more determined to preserve his own self. He observed its methods and applied them mechanically to his spirit, like the varnish that the times demanded, while the seeds of his personality matured. He practiced a kind of mimicry, accepting its concepts for daily life to better conceal his self, which he wished to develop alone, independently, in depth. The possibilities of any understanding were being successively removed, and he only asked not to be disturbed.

He was taken by his family to the Faculty of Law. He spent the first two years understanding the psychological mechanism of this new form of study, to acquire agility of thought and speech, and the sense of orientation of that cultural field. During this time, taking advantage of the freedom of initiative that his new studies allowed him, he learned several modern languages and completed his piano studies. Through languages, he learned the psychology of peoples; through music, he assimilated the spirit of the great musicians. He attended the University very little. Understanding the mechanism of the exams, he endeavoured to pass them in the two years that remained for him. He distinguished himself only in the defence of his thesis, because only then did he have the freedom to choose the theme. In the exams, he received no more than a meagre 18, as he could not apply his rebellious system, which was directly opposed to the professors' theories.

The absurdity of so many concepts in the legal, social, and economic fields was the only conviction that remained with him from those studies. The hedonistic foundation of economic sciences did not convince him. He smiled at the naive pretension of being able to conceptually build upon the disintegrating principles of selfishness, and he rebelled against the entire system. The conception of Roman law did not convince him. To him, there was an abyss between force and justice. These were two opposites, irreconcilably adversarial, meant to cancel each other out, not to merge. True justice could not be achieved by codifying the consequences of the struggle. He believed that one could not reach justice starting from that indelible original sin, which is force; no apparent wisdom or perfection could remedy this incurable error and vice of substance, could succeed in transporting what belongs to an inferior world, where the strongest rules, to the heights of a superior world, where only the most just should reign. He rebelled against that axiomatic acceptance, which had become the recognition and legalization of the original fact of force, which he completely condemned as an expression of an inferior biological plane that he could never consider his own. Here returned the contrast between the laws of two different planes of existence. He could take seriously only the integral justice of the Gospel, the substantial code, written only in the soul and with no other judges besides God. However, he understood human effort and appreciated the Roman conception, aimed at civilizing force by imposing order, balancing its contradictory and struggling impulses. He felt that even there, one could be a genius. He later understood that force and justice were nothing more than the extremes of the same law in evolution, and he admired in man the effort of this exhausting transformation. The right, the law, is order, and every creation of order is a step of man towards God. But that was the slow human path that reaches justice through discipline, organization, codification; it was the long road, although necessary for man, of external constraint, while he preferred the inner paths of conviction, simple but more substantial; he preferred to reach directly and promptly the centre of consciousness, in the field of motivations, to the root of human acts. A matter of maturity and temperament. Unlike his fellow men, inclined more towards the divine than the human, he felt more substance in the cross of the persecuted and humble Galilean than in the eagle of Roman dominion. Wandering through Rome, where he was studying, he felt that the underground catacombs challenged the Colosseum, and in a certain sense had defeated it. Moreover, in school, in the press, in human conduct, he then saw dominating an idea of the State so conventional and rhetorical (he was in the midst of parliamentarism) that, in his sincerity, he could not admire much. Later, times changed, proving his repugnance justified. Many juridical, political, and social conceptions of his time were later corrected in the direction that his instinct indicated. He too, maturing in these lesser aspects, revised and corrected his values, better understanding the function of the Eagle⁸, but of an Eagle that would not go beyond its specific functions in the human and earthly work. His instinct, his function, and mission were and remained in the realm of the Cross, but even this would not go beyond its specific function, pertaining to the divine realm of the spirit. Eagle and Cross, State and Church, were for him the exponents, the concrete expressions of the two laws, human and superhuman, into which he saw the world divided. Considering each law in its own plane, he understood and respected them, in the rightful position that befitted them. But his congenital irreconcilability with the human environment did not allow

⁸ Rome (Note of the Translator)

him to be fully present and active, except in areas tending to overcome it. By instinct, he was more inclined to seek escape than to immerse himself in it for work. Therefore, his realm was not political life, but the application of the Gospel. We do not present here universal and absolute principles, but only those related to the personality of our character, narrating his story. In this way things seemed to him, in his evolutionary position. From other positions, the vision can, without a doubt, be very different.

He wandered through Roman law, canon law, and the history of law, interpreting them in his own way, accepting only what he wanted, willing to make them instruments, above all, of a fantastic inner reconstruction of certain historical environments, seen also in their juridical and political aspects. The economic and social disciplines attracted him as something less intentional and artificial than the juridical ones, and more biologically true. He was interested in the statistical research of the laws of the social phenomenon, a study that trained him for the research of the laws of all phenomena in all fields. He was moved by the dispersion of so many Italians around the world, with an emigration still without direction or protection. He loved his Italy, but wanted it different, more united, stronger, more conscious. Finally, the very fact of discussing and debating these issues demonstrated how seriously he took them, how much he distanced himself from the prevailing scepticism and indifference, how much he suffered from not finding anything serious that deserved his faith, and with what anxiety he searched for it. He never pursued his university studies as a means for economic conquests, as preparation for business, or as refined weapons in the struggle for life. Another might have considered wealth as the supreme ideal and done everything for that supreme goal. He believed that in this sense one could do something, but not everything. Especially because his goals were different from those of the majority. Before the economic problem, the problem of knowledge tormented him. His hunger was different from that of others. His efforts and conquests had to be different as well, now directed towards uncommon paths. He was already,

unconsciously, outlining his program. His enemies would have to be his last connections with the biological laws of the human plane, which he would have to overcome. But first, he needed to discover the organic connection of this plane with the Universe. And the problem was immense. However, during that university period, if he had not discovered the face of creation, he had at least seen the cultural face of man. He had initially believed he had found the truth, when he had only discovered one of its phases. He left disillusioned, to search elsewhere.

He could have perhaps pursued the scientific disciplines of the Faculty of Medicine with much more conviction. Science cannot silence the great and wise voice of nature. This is the material it handles, without being able to suppress the great thought that stirs it, nor prevent the wise voice of the laws of life from emerging at every step along its path. But he had to become a lawyer. At that time, it was paternal authority that made the choice. Sincere temperament, however, he had such horror of sophistries, of inner scepticism, and of the acceptance of relative and elastic truths, that he, as best he could, safeguarded himself.

Graduated, he threw himself into life, and the true study began for him, that of struggle and experience. Another teacher awaited him to teach him much deeper things: pain; through very different books, he had to study and learn: tribulations. Meanwhile, he continued to inquire in the field of science. But science did not provide him with the final conclusions he sought. He admired Darwin and Haeckel. At that time, around 1900, they were in vogue. Later, they were partly forgotten, partly corrected. Darwin's theory did not receive the expected confirmation from palaeontology because of the "missing link" between contiguous and related species, so much so that it is found modified today. Precisely in 1900, "De Vries" rediscovered Mendel's law, adding to it his very own theory of mutations, from which our "De Rosa's" ologenesis originates. And from the Budapest Congress onwards, zoologists declared war on transformism. But all of this does not matter. Science continually changes, and we do not know what it might tell us tomorrow. Even though evolution, in today's science, does not retain the derivational sense as understood by the monogenists, that central idea of an evolutionary ascent of all beings, towards increasingly higher forms of organic, psychic, and spiritual life; that just, logical, and powerful concept, which had so deeply impressed our protagonist, remained in the facts and in his experience, and even in science, which, progressing through successive theories, also proves it and cannot deny it. He felt the undeniable truth of that concept, which is in the substance of the very religions, and he felt it with such sincerity and impartiality that he did not partake in the anti-religious and materialistic sense that, by simple reaction of the moment, the evolutionary principle had taken on. On the contrary, he conceived it as part of the spiritual ascension itself, not as a negation, "but as an affirmation of the evolution of souls towards God," he conceived it alive and operative, as in religions.

At the same time, he wandered through foreign literature. He had already studied Dante in high school; now he read, in German, Goethe's Faust, with enthusiasm. Certain scenes from Walpurgisnacht impressed him deeply. He recalled in his mind, as a memory, the vision of a medieval Germany, nebulous, dense with shadows, with ancient cities like Nuremberg, grey skies, muted winter lights in the dark alleys, between the sharpedged rooftops. He had found a bit of that atmosphere in the towers and interior naves of Notre-Dame de Paris, as if Victor Hugo's Quasimodo still wandered there, at nightfall. The Germanic north had, for him, a fascination full of mysterious attraction. Especially the old and great Gothic cathedrals appeared to him in a dreamlike light. He could not write by hand, in German, except using the old Gothic letters. Attraction, instinct? Why? As soon as he graduated, he stayed a few months in the United States of America, which he travelled through to California, visiting all of its natural beauties, truly grandiose. He saw nothing else. He found the cities monotonous; the language, the customs, the way of dressing, all standardized,

from one ocean to the other. A world rich in resources, space, dollars. But from an intellectual point of view, a childish world compared to Europe.

The Asian Orient, from the Palestine of Egypt to the Indies, he sought it in books, reconstructed it through all means of photographic documentation. And, as it concerned historical environments, of dead civilizations, he could rediscover them with sufficient approximation and satisfaction, without visiting the places. Often, the raw reality of the present, so different from the historical past, becomes an obstacle instead of an aid to these reconstructions, which are better reached by the inner paths of the spirit. He was particularly attracted to ancient Egypt, the great temple of Karnak, with its immense columns, the hidden wisdom of its priests, the mystery of its rites, its magical powers. He was also drawn, in the same line of thought, to ancient India, more distant in time, more veiled in memory, more mysterious and profound in its consciousness. His dream would return along the lazy and muddy waters of the Ganges, from its mouth to the burning steps of Benares, it would trace the Brahmaputra to the borders of mysterious Tibet, to the heart of the Himalayas. What was there in the sacred city of Lhasa? But where his soul vibrated violently was in the memory of Palestine at the time of Christ. This was, for him, a vision of extreme sweetness and spiritual depth. The blessed land of Galilee appeared to him, like music, like a vast orchestral background of concepts, over which Christ triumphed, like an arpeggio of cosmic harmonies. The lake of Tiberias smiled at him with gentle undulations, deep and tranquil like the smile of an angel. It seemed to him that the figures of the Gospel moved in this environment, like so many musical motifs, intertwining with each other and with the great background motif, with the supreme motif of Christ, in a gigantic spiritual symphony, very sweet and solemn. Through that blessed land he seemed to see the figure of the great Master and his disciples walking, and he heard his voice and his thought still echoing in his heart, and he felt his gaze calming and resolving within him all the pains, all the longings, all the problems of life. He questioned the

Gospels, the great book of the good news, and, rereading them, he never tired of traversing them, to always better understand and feel the path of Christ, from the manger to the cross.

He continued thus the exploration of the external world, and with this, slowly was defined, within himself, the vision of the outlines of his inner world, where the central knot of his destiny was found. But how much path to travel, what an exhausting series of experiences! Many seeds had already awakened, various forces were in motion in that destiny, and acted, advancing and maturing. The small superficial occurrences, offspring of the determinism of physical life, had, for him, no profound meaning in the logical and organic development of destiny. They are the stones of the great road, which, nevertheless, teach how to walk; they are stumbles, stops, small resistances, which, however, make one think and understand; they are lateral shortcuts that induce us to error, tempting digressions, so that we learn to correct. It is the secondary, lesser maturation, like a refinement of details that, as it can, fills the interstices of the great central work. When time and strength are lacking, it is allowed to drift, and it remains incomplete, without harm. The account of these small vicissitudes is of no importance, and we pass over them. Instead, we follow the main paths of the development of that life.

THE THREE PATHS OF LIFE

Freed from the effort of official studies, and having achieved with them the practical result of a diploma, he found himself faced with three great problems to solve, three grave trials to overcome, three powerful enemies to conquer, for his destiny was already then maturing, and his impulses, favourable or contrary, had to manifest themselves with full efficiency. This twenty-year period, from twenty-five to forty-five years old, is the darkest of his life, outwardly insignificant, inwardly tempestuous and tragic. It was the period of the harshest atonement. He, who had hardly known the recklessness of youth, nor enjoyed that instinctive joy of living, which aligns more easily with spiritual inertia than with laborious maturation, had no more respite for twenty years. But those who have qualities must bear their weight and pay their price. Those who carry forces within themselves must learn to handle and dominate them, for they unleash themselves uncontrollably and seek to manifest and act. Those who have charted a course must hasten, without leisure or rest, to take it and fulfil it, for life is brief and destiny is in a hurry. The more one has, the more one owes. The stronger one is, the more one is attacked. The farther one must go, the more one has to run.

First of all, it was a matter of understanding: that is, solving the problem of knowledge. He was not like the others. He could not act except after feeling clearly oriented regarding the functioning of the universe that surrounded him. This premise of a crystal-clear vision was absolutely necessary for him to act with awareness and in awareness. He needed to give a convincing and exhaustive answer at least to the fundamental "whys" of life: where do I come from, why do I live, where am I going, why do I suffer? Questions that children ask and to which wise men often do not know how to answer. He had been sent to school at the age of five. He had always studied and would study all his life. At twenty-five years old, after having interrogated all fields of human knowledge, he knew only one thing: that he knew nothing. And he realized something even worse: that the wise men knew nothing. Who, then, would give him an answer? And what useful thing had man done until then, and how could he have guided himself, if he had not even understood the reason for life?

Only later did he understand that the current system, of action directed only by instinct, and not by broad knowledge of the universe and profound awareness of one's own function within it, was the practical and economical system of nature. In order to be more easily prolific, given that life is its primary concern, nature simplifies constructions, making them in series, driven by simple, unconscious, and instinctive guidelines, yet sufficient for a precarious life, composed much more of struggles than of thought, like current human life. Thus, if the normal individual leads a gregarious existence, it saves a lot of energy. Nature, which is above all economical, avoids the expenditure of superfluous efforts; it has not endowed the masses with certain more complex directives, with centres of broader orientation, which today, in most cases, would become disproportionate in the face of a human life still so primitive, ferocious, and random.

Our protagonist wanted to understand and began to question science. However, this science started from doubt, and this premise of destructive uncertainty tainted and destroyed everything, before it even began. Indeed, bound by its objectivism, that science did not conclude; bound by

experimentation, it always remained in the relative, unable to reach the principles he sought. It was a materialistic science that denied the spiritual world in which he primarily lived, and it was still a professorial science, more presumptuous and dogmatic than the religious dogmas it fought against! He questioned faith. He thus freed himself from the long path of reason to throw himself into the great avenues of intuition. The doors of the immense world of the spirit opened to him. But religions did not give him a complete, precise, persuasive answer, not even to the elementary "whys." They did not reach, as he needed, the depths of the questions, and many things they left undefined, without solution, in the shadows. He also disliked their exclusivism and illogical rivalry, contradicting their fundamental principle of fraternity, in their obeisance to a God who should be the same for all religions. He could not accept some of their explanations, which made that God unjust, a dissonance for him inconceivable, precisely at the centre of order. He had questioned the scholars on the subject. They repeated to him formal, memorized phrases, not assimilated, not felt, not lived. One of them was sincere enough to tell him that he had understood nothing and had been forced to give up trying to understand. Despite this, later, this same one made a fine career in the chosen path. Another, even more sincere, confessed to him, as a conclusion to holy considerations on the value of the spirit, that what really mattered to him was only wealth. And he said it with such conviction, in such a spontaneous outburst, that he fell silent. He then became convinced that many of those from whom he sought the truth were, in fact, atheists, and he was no longer surprised by the prevailing religious indifference.

He had looked into the soul of his fellow men. And very often, he found there nothing more than darkness; dominant motives—animal instincts. A terrifying spectacle. Where then would he turn his gaze, and who would give him an answer? If man did not know how to provide him with that knowledge, which he absolutely needed, he had no choice but to discover it for himself. He did not have the strength to take seriously the abstruse

85

and arid elucidations of the philosophers he encountered, which tired him without having the power to convince him. Only later could he approach the best of our time, such as Boutroux, Bergson, Blondel, Petrone, I. Caird, Whitehead, Von Hügel, etc., and the less recent ones like Rosmini, Gratry, Ravaisson, Kierkegaard, Lotze, Krause, etc. There was nothing left but to courageously and alone devote himself to the work. And perhaps this was a good thing, for how could he be guided in human knowledge, given the difficulty of orienting himself amid the organic functioning of the Universe? It was urgent to read, to live, to question books, science, religion, and above all, life. There were so many scattered truths in the world, fragments of truth, separated, contradictory. He needed to strip them of the superfluous, discover their substance, rediscover their connection, and reassemble them anew. He needed to remain free, not to be bound by any of them, yet still to traverse them all. He needed to penetrate them but also to know how to escape, so as not to remain imprisoned by any preconceived limitation, in any of those circumscriptions of human interest that had formed around the various truths. He needed to search beyond man, to question first the spirit through intuition, and nature through science; he needed to direct himself directly to the observation of the Universe in its organic functioning, to discover its technique, its logic, its meaning, its purpose. He felt, through intuition, that the Universe must be a system of laws. It was necessary to find the key to this system, which must be the truth. This order could only be the external and sensible manifestation of the universal cause that is called God. This truth must be the expression of God's thought.

But soon another serious problem presented itself to him. Having acquired the knowledge of the great universal plan, he needed to fit within it the plan of his own life; to find, finally, in the universal order, the meaning of this smaller order, its causes, its trajectory, its objectives. He had to clearly understand himself and his destiny. Perhaps the common man could live without this knowledge, relying solely on instincts to act. And in following them, blindly, he would be obeying the laws of God. In practice, there is no need to know the why of things, the reason for putting them into execution. Nature is concerned with being obeyed, not with enlightening us about the reasons for its orders. Knowledge is perhaps a useful necessity, but only at a certain stage of evolution, when it is felt, and thus cannot appear before that stage. The fact is that he felt this necessity and had to satisfy it. His level of evolution did not allow him to act unconsciously, like animals, through instinct. He could not, as he was, transform himself into a blind instrument of unknown forces. To obey, he needed to know; to guide himself, he required direction; he felt the right to remain conscious and to take a conscious and responsible part in the direction of his life. His life was spiritually too complex for a few instincts to suffice in guiding it. He needed to be conscious of his actions, a deep, complete consciousness that would harmonize with the consciousness of the universal functioning. Through a sense of inner conviction, he felt he had the right to participate in the direction of his destiny, the right to know it, to correct it, and improve it. He felt he had the power and the duty to assume responsibility for this direction. He could not be "a thing," but wanted to be "a man," an honest, conscious, and responsible collaborator in the divine work. He then faced, directly, the biological laws and, without concerning himself with man, ardently questioned the tremendous "why" of his own destiny.

From this smaller and closer truth, he had a necessity, to orient his life in the field of actions. He wanted to know the principles he should follow, the content he should give to his hours, the direction he should imprint upon his steps. Without a precise direction to imprint upon his steps. Without a precise direction guiding our actions, life becomes an empty container. Life is a vessel to which one must give content, a means that needs an end. And a generic end, of general use, made for everyone, was not enough for him. He felt irremediably different: he sensed a task, but also a special purpose. He could not possibly reduce himself to the situation of a sheep in the flock, of a man constructed in series. His path was inexorably traced, painful, dangerous, exhausting, but his, unmistakably his. Though it be with humility and incomprehension, alone, under the cross of pain, he had to walk it. It was his sacred duty to know it in order to walk it. It is a fact that no one can, even in the depths of the most terrible misfortunes and under the most severe condemnation of fate, destroy the consciousness of intimate and personal nobility, which is not pride because it remains silent, and cannot arouse envy because it is often buried under the most squalid misery.

He wanted to have so much consciousness of his actions that he felt the duty to first know the universal plan, in order to, in the midst of this, discover his own particular life plan. This was, for him, and could not fail to be, an organic construction, a complex building, for the construction of which an exact plan was indispensable. How distant from certain unconscious frivolity, how much seriousness in the face of certain epicurean pleasures! Despite this, perhaps this account risks not being of interest, for such profound consciousness will likely be considered by many as the behaviour of a madman. What a grave bronze tone then acquired the sound of his thoughts and the meaning of his actions! He was thus preparing himself for a very serious work, for which he felt he could find no help except in himself: to understand the universe, to understand himself; to interweave his life with the life of the universe.

However, he already felt how little he would have accomplished by achieving all of this, and he already saw how much still remained for him to do. Reaching that point, he would conquer nothing more than a cold light, for the mere acquisition of knowledge did not change anything, did not act, did not make one mature, did not transform. The lighthouse indicates the way, but it does not traverse the path. After understanding, it is necessary to throw oneself into the field and follow the route. It was a rough spiritual path, in which he would be even more solitary than in the pursuit of knowledge. After mobilizing all the resources of intelligence, study, observation, intuition, it was necessary to light the great flame of the heart, of feeling, of passion, because only those who burn realize, mature, and transform themselves. He needed to act, he needed to change himself. The thinker risks remaining a theoretician: the more he thinks, the more he flees from action. After the illumination of the mind, it was necessary to launch the heart; and after the heart, his own being, entirely. The problem was no longer to understand, but to burn, to consume oneself. Conceptions had to transform into sensations, the concept of God into the sensation of God. What a tremendous biological transformation awaited him! He had to continuously change the forms of work, modify his capacities and aptitudes, adapt, and know how to transform himself according to the changing demands of the path to be travelled. Today, search and reflection; tomorrow, passion; later, action and transformation, and afterward, sensation in the world of the spirit. And what was the supreme objective, the highest achievement? The dream became, at that moment, gigantic, beyond the possibilities of his comprehension; the yearning for ascension reached such an intense vibration that it surpassed his possibilities of perception. Thus, it initially appeared to him confused, but it would always emerge clearer and more evident, that zone of light that was in his destiny, at the end, beyond the dark abyss of trials. In that light, the cycle of his life was fulfilled. In that light, he reencountered Christ.

But a third problem immediately arose for him. The problem of trial and pain. His life contained nothing less than an abyss of suffering, a sea of obstacles to overcome; he faced a will tenaciously adverse, which opposed this supreme realization. It was necessary to confront, suffer, and overcome all of this; it was necessary to know how to cross this hell without losing oneself, to know how to emerge unscathed and triumphant. His edifice of thought and passion had to withstand this tremendous shock without being shaken. Graduated, he entered life. He had a premonition of the dreadful and stormy hour that awaited him. No one can obtain help and change the trials when destiny "wants." He then found himself in his zone of determinism. There was no salvation. He was alone, against those unleashed forces. We are always alone in the face of our own destiny.

In conclusion, his youth presented him with three paths, along which he was to traverse a threefold journey: "to understand, to act, to suffer." A threefold school awaited him: the school of thought, the school of the heart, and the school of pain. His entire being was to be deeply stirred, with all its resources: intelligence, feeling, will. All his fibres were to be set into action, to work and yield their outcome. His life was worthy of him.

In his youth, the three paths opened simultaneously. In the logic of his destiny, they were a single itinerary, with one meaning. For "to understand" meant finding, by intuition, within himself, the great truth, the universal being itself; and within its bosom, his particular truth, the human being. To find, because certain supreme syntheses are not reached by reason, are not improvised, and whoever has not achieved them through maturation, does not possess them, does not find them. Then, "to act" meant his mystical catharsis from the human plane to ascension in the divine plane. And to suffer meant to undergo his purification in expiation.

That threefold road that opened before him was nothing but a threefold form of realizing himself, in three ways:

- 1. Finding himself in the knowledge of the universe and of himself;
- 2. Purifying himself from pain, that is, achieving his own redemption through expiation;
- 3. Performing his own transformation, the spiritual ascension that would lead him to the vision of Christ and his union with Him.

The three roads were connected by a profound bond and converged to the same point. The unique trajectory of his destiny was clearly outlined and complete. The meaning of his life and the path to be followed were evident, from premises to conclusions.

THE PAIN IN THE LOGIC OF DESTINY

"Without pain, there is no redemption"

We have no more, in this account, than to walk the path alongside our protagonist. It is, without a doubt, a small individual event. But in it is reflected the great drama of the world, the struggle between good and evil, the redemption of man through pain. And the event is not presented as theory, but in a lived, pulsating, experimental form, of real life. In antithesis to the also real life of the world, of the human majority. And both are in absurd contrast. The challenge is grave, the clash is gigantic. For, if the world belongs to so many and will repel him, our man is not alone: he is with the pain that oppresses man everywhere. On the path of redemption, he follows Christ. Therefore, we can say, in principle, that here lies a bit of the history of all. In pain and atonement, he is a bit of the brother of all. If this man is considered mad, his madness also includes the most elevated and venerable things that man possesses.

The most active agent that led him to find himself, the most vigorous stimulus that forced him to understand his own self and to undertake his formation and ascension, was pain. This was the first and most intense reality that presented itself to him in life, the force that most deeply acted upon his spirit, the shock that wounded him, shook him, awakening in him the strongest reactions and the most intimate resources.

He had initially believed that knowledge should be the result of cultural research, a product of erudition, and that it could come to him from outside, conquering it through intellectual work. Then he realized how superficial this type of knowledge was, compared to the other, which came to him from the experience of his own pain. This other appeared to him as something much deeper, more substantial, truer. It was like a revelation that emerged from within, rather than being received from outside, and was born, not from cultural acquisitions and the reflective processes of reason, but from an act of intuition that sprang from the sensitization of his being, and that was like a new perceptive capacity, a power of vision resulting from the maturation that was occurring within him, through the struggle in pain. And he realized that the work of his transformation, the conquest of his spiritual ascension, could only result from this deep, intimate, and intuitive knowledge, which fused with his own maturation and was born from the great experience of pain.

What was his pain? What form did destiny choose and offer him, among the infinite bitterness of life? There are the great heroic pains, which grant the right to the gratitude of the homeland; the exceptional pains, fiery and clamorous, that provoke admiration and enthusiasm in others, and carry a sense of grandeur; the pains caressed by commiseration, warmed by the understanding of others; those that awaken a sense of pity, the pains for which help and comfort can and are given, and for which relief is found in affections, in pity, in the kindness of others. These are the luxurious pains, which have the right to tears, to compassion, to consolation. Then come the poor, disinherited pains, which grant no right to any of this; pains without glory, obscure, mute, cold, which give a sense of inferiority and misery, hidden in sadness, that do not ennoble nor exalt, but debase and depress: small pains, sickness and weakness, of body and spirit, foolish pains, stupid, ridiculous, without grandeur, without understanding, without commiseration. For these, there is no help, no comfort, no pity. They do not grant the right to compassion, to consolation. They provoke laughter, insult, attract contempt. It is a duty, it is a virtue to condemn and persecute them. There are cursed pains and desperate pains, which do not move anyone, instead provoking hatred and horror.

There is the pain of the guilty and the pain of the innocent, the conscious and noble pain of the wise and the stupid pain of the fool. There is the pain that changes and passes, and the pain without hope and without remedy, that in vain seeks peace in death. There are our own pains, which always seem so great to us, and the pains of others, which always seem so small! There are physical pains and moral pains, the coarse pains of matter and the subtle pains of the spirit. There are pains so refined that they consume the entire soul from within, in silence, without externalizing, and they softly kill without wearing down the body.

How many different pains! But all leave their mark on the body and the soul; each human face is marked by them and expresses them. Among so many different forms, each man has his own and advances, dragging his own cross. Among so many different forms, they are all pains, and in them, something grand is always fulfilled that leads to redemption. Only God sees all, weighs them, judges them with justice, and gives them, in each one's destiny, the compensation.

What was the pain of our protagonist? The name and the form do not matter, what matters is the substance, which is pain, what matters is its illuminating action, its work of redemption in our spirit. The reader should give to the sufferings of our man the form and the name they understand, place their own pains in his and say: let us see how he resolved his problem, which is mine, the problem of pain, which is the problem of all. Whatever the form of his suffering may have been, what matters is to understand and follow the attitude and position he chose in the face of pain, which are the antipodes of those preferred by the world. The world views it with hatred and terror, seeks to escape from it or destroy it, without realizing its indispensable creative function as an agent and stimulant of evolution. The greatest wisdom of our protagonist was to love and thus domesticate pain fraternally, transforming it from an enemy into a friend, using it as a means of resurrection, turning evil into good, from human suffering and negation into the affirmation and joy of the spirit. His wisdom lay in his attitude, not of aversion and revolt, which leads to despair, nor of passive resignation, which dulls the mind, but of active, dynamic reaction towards good; it was in knowing how to transform the hostile resistances of life into a set of exercises, into a school of acquisitions, and in turning an apparent condemnation into an instrument of conquest, of redemption, of happiness.

It is then important to understand the logic with which these impulses of pain act, the way they present themselves, the points they strike, the method by which they succeed one another, the goal towards which they are directed. Destiny is undoubtedly a development of forces, not random, but directed according to a principle and a law, adapted to each case. If it were not so, pain would be a crime and madness of the Creator, and all the facts demonstrate the absurdity of such a hypothesis. Given this, it is important to know the system according to which the phenomenon develops. All organisms, whether on the physical or spiritual plane, that is, both our body and our soul, have a point of lesser resistance (locus minoris resistentiae). Now, it seems that nature chooses precisely this point of greatest weakness, of greatest vulnerability, to converge its most vehement blows upon it. This point, preferentially, it wounds in physical diseases as in moral imperfections. Nature does not like weak points; it strikes against them, either to test their resistance, and if this is low, to promptly open a breach and resolve the case by killing the individual, or to stimulate their reactions and with that push them to strengthen themselves, to reactivate their defences, and teach them salvation, forcing them to overcome, to

learn to be strong, to always know how to win. The response depends on the individual and will be life or death, liberation or pain. Thus, each pain is a disease and each disease a trial. In each case, pain has a meaning, a useful purpose, and it affects us for our own good. It is a healthy attempt to correct some error, to reestablish equilibrium, the divine order of things, in which only happiness exists. Nature, in inflicting trials upon us, seems merciless. But with them, the great school of life is completed, in which each person learns, on their own, to correct the misguided impulses of their own destiny. In fact, it is we ourselves who, being born with a given physical and moral constitution, already carry within us, defined and located, the points of lesser resistance, our strength or our weakness, already implicitly marking our victory or our condemnation. The environment tests all people indiscriminately: our response is what differs, the causes of pain are within us. Nature is impartial, it is just. If it were merciful, it would not be just and would betray the greater purpose of life, which is to evolve, which makes us progress and perfect ourselves.

Why are we born in such diverse ways, with such different baggage of strengths and weaknesses, of rights and duties? Each one must justify their own trial and their own pain, so grave and diverse. This is a problem that must be resolved by those who believe in the creation of spirits from nothing, all equal at birth. For pain to be just, it is necessary that we be responsible for the causes that attract it, because we have provoked it. It is urgent, as a precedent, a cause that is free and ours, so that there is justice when a painful and inexorably ours effect strikes us. Vague theories, which clarify nothing in this area, are very good for the pains of others, but do not serve to understand, resolve, guide, and endure our own. Without that free and ours precedent, we are left with nothing but the horrible idea of an unjust or unconscious Creator, or the atheistic idea of chaos. If to do well, we must renounce understanding once and for all, there is nothing left for us but to complete our spiritual suicide.

Nature, which seems pitiless, is just and benign. Deep down, the apparent negation of pain is an affirmation; those assaults against life are in favour of life. Whoever observes their own destiny will see that its forces do not strike at random, but tend to follow particular directions and to maintain them; they prefer certain points, different for the various individuals, but almost always well-defined and consistent for each one in particular. Like each destiny, pain, for each person, has a dominant character, a sense that persists from birth until death, and to each destiny corresponds a specific form of pain. Who can deny, a priori, that all these forces, which act so profoundly in our lives, do not possess an intelligent nature? At times, they appear so precisely measured and directed, that they bring to mind a master outlining the disciplines of a course and the classes of a school. Often, to those who look deeply, this greater order, which controls the apparent disorder of particulars, becomes evident. Nature, that is, the intelligence of the laws of creation, or the thought-truth of God, does not lavish upon us qualities and aptitudes gratuitously, but imposes their acquisition through effort, compelling us to learn from experience, when not determining them through reactions, forcing to the surface what was already latent in our spirit. It acts, therefore, moving in the opposite direction, we might say almost by inversion. To reach affirmation, it starts from negation. Satan serves God.

Thus it happened with our man. If the forces that were preparing to subject him to the test had all been unleashed at once, hurling themselves upon him with all their impetus in a single blow, they would undoubtedly have crushed him. However, they surrounded him little by little, giving him the possibility of a progressive adaptation and a relative comprehension. Thus began to form around him a sort of siege of adversities, and this siege, step by step, was strangling the vital ganglia of his human life, occupying the strategic points in the paths of expansion of animality, of the realization of the lower self. To each of his impulses, to each of his desires of exuberant spirit, it was as if a coalition of forces was saying, almost premeditatedly: no. And the negation was directed at specific points, constantly, with tenacity. Turning, like everyone, to the easy external projections, he felt himself plunged into darkness, blinded by the beating down of life's brightness. Only later would he understand the meaning of the negative forces. The condemnation to earthly blindness was the condition for the conquest of the light of heaven. Destiny acted upon him by provoking the reactions of the spirit, and began by mutilating him in everything that referred to the human plane. Inexorably adverse, that same life that for others is naturally blissful seemed to him infernal. Relativity of position and destiny. Congenital incomprehension.

How much effort in the depths of these human darknesses to find one's deepest self! Whoever finds the doors wide open to the outside, throws himself through them and ignores the torments, but also does not reap their fruits. This one can spend life satisfied with all his small things, can continue to believe in illusions and to follow chimeras, continue to swear, convinced, about many very foolish things, and only in old age, faced with death, question them and perceive the truth. Then, between doubt and remorse, he wonders in astonishment: why live? Our man asked this question right away, he placed himself immediately before death and eternity. Pain struck him and did not allow youthful forgetfulness. It forced him to become aware of the great abysses of life from the beginning. It was sad, but it hardened him. Nature awakened in him, in this way, all the defences. He mobilized his energies, reacted and strengthened himself. Thus, from a small negative human life, he would make a great life of triumphant spirit.

He did not understand, but God was watching over him. What he felt as suffocation was actually the path to expansion; what he felt as mortal was an introduction to life; that slow oppression that distanced him from human things led him toward divine things. This is the substance, the meaning of his trial. If this trial presented itself in a negative form, almost as punishment, bitter and inexorable like vengeance, if it had a compensatory logic and an expiatory function, it also had a positive, recreative, benign action: it was the illness of resurrection. To fall into anguish and struggle in darkness, to be able to understand on his own, to find himself this was what the method of action of his destiny imposed on him. He ended up defeated, fell to the ground destroyed. The attacks followed one another with progressive intensity. He found himself alone, mocked, desperate. He dragged himself with nails and teeth, leaving pieces of his own flesh on the thorns of the road. But he understood. To the gigantic trial, he reacted with a gigantic response. His spirit could respond, and it did. And the entire centre of his life moved and shifted forward, to transfer itself entirely to a higher plane.

The Via Dolorosa, the path of the cross, which would later find its Gethsemane. The first steps were harsh, not compensated by spiritual achievements, not illuminated by the light that emanates from them. There was only human pain, without divine comfort. God guided him, no doubt, but he did not know it. A scattered frustration throughout all the circumstances of his life pursued him, spiteful and malignant. Yet, he was so good, docile, sincere, disinterested. Perhaps precisely because of this, he had fallen into the world's ditch, where the most opposing feelings emerged to wound him. Opposites attract. He found himself surrounded by the greed for money, he who was never drawn to wealth. He asked nothing more of life than peace, and peace he needed, in his desire to solve the problem of universal and particular knowledge; and there he was, young, with two inheritances on his shoulders, a highly coveted position for anyone, but one that created great responsibilities. He had no thirst for riches, no ambitions. While he sought to solve the meaning of his destiny, the base, banal struggle of material life surrounded him, demanded all his attention, required all his activity, crushing him with responsibilities, taking his time, tranquillity, and freedom of spirit, absorbing those faculties in whose exercise, for him, life existed. But within that spirit, there was a force that, the more it was compressed, the more energetically it was driven to react. Eager for goodness, he thus subjected himself to human contacts that nauseated him to the point of horror. And in his first experience, he had to study man in the grim face of Judas. Instead of the sweetness of careless joy, he had to drink the bitterest gall of the human spirit.

It was in his destiny this force that seemed malignant, to undo the constructions, to poison the satisfactions, to entangle and complicate everything, in innumerable annoyances, to heap errors upon errors, so that he might see in the exterior an invincible labyrinth of evils. The best intentions, the most prudent forecasts, the most cautious attitudes, his and those of his own, always ended in that tangle. Something wanted, against all human predictions, to maintain this network of small and great adversities, to surround and suffocate him. And he, who understood the game, had to suffer the humiliation of being considered inept, while feeling that he was not. Wealth, to not be lost, must be defended, and not being able to defend it meant, for him, a grave moral responsibility towards his family. A culmination of weariness, of concerns, of displeasure. An insoluble conflict of duties. The current customs were really those of selfishness, and with this and by this everything was resolved. But he was on another path, and could not serve it.

His destiny presents itself as a typical case of trials in reverse. He was rich in spiritual qualities and eager to exercise and develop them, for in them lay his life, but he found himself in possession of the most precious material gifts, the most coveted by the average human, the least desirable for him, and which thus turned into a condemnation. He had to outwardly appear fortunate and suffer the envy of others. He would say of himself: I am like a plant that must live, if it wants to live, upside down, with the leaves buried and the roots upward. Of wealth, he felt nothing but the weight, the responsibility, the slavery, the dangers. Eager for other conquests, he soon cursed it. He sought the rich endowments of the spirit, intelligence, kindness, righteousness, sincerity, and was led by wealth into contact with the foulest filth of the spirit; he had the sensation of dying suffocated in a dung heap. Nausea arose in him, then an invincible repugnance for that kind of his fellow men, hatred for the wealth that attracted them. At this point, what was considered fortune by others was not so for him, and it also turned into fortune for him, but in the spiritual sense. The oppression of the trial stirs his reaction, in which he reveals himself. He loved noble, disinterested spirits: wealth, on the contrary, attracted to him the basest and most greedy souls. Then, to escape the suffocation of the spiritual stench that emanated from them, the thought of freeing himself from the cause that attracted them—wealth—arises in him; he begins gradually to carry out the practical realization of the evangelical program, the backbone of his spiritual ascension, for which he was born and for which he wanted to live.

Through this path, he began to find himself. His true being was revealed. Thus, he began no longer to suffer the will, the conceptions, the units of measurement that the majority made for themselves and wanted to apply to him, but to act himself, as he was and as he wanted to be. He took, therefore, a step forward simultaneously on the three paths that awaited him: he advanced in the knowledge of himself; he learned, through pain, the first lesson of liberating renunciation of the spirit; he initiated his own transformation, advancing towards Christ. Destiny knows how to propose special challenges to certain spirits, it possesses wise methods of distributing trials. It surrounds a soul yearning for spirituality with the coarsest human temptations, offers man wealth, but surrounds it with such nauseating human baseness that he sees in it only falsehood, injustice, dangers, and suffers its burdens, thus learning to detest it. He rebels against himself, opposing everything and everyone. This reversal, freely desired, was the first step in his ascension. The first decision was made, the first lesson was understood. And he felt such disgust for wealth that he hated it for as long as he lived.

THE PROBLEM OF WEALTH, WORK, AND THE GOSPEL

"He who does not work, does not eat" (St. Paul)

It is not wealth in itself that deserves condemnation: for it is a force that can, when well-employed, be a powerful means of achieving the best. What deserves condemnation is the psychology of greed that is its natural halo, the suffocating atmosphere that constantly emanates from it, the evil that one does not fear to practice in order to acquire it, the aberrations it provokes, the horrible kind of souls it attracts and surrounds itself with, the slavery, the suffocation, the spiritual abjection that are often its price. To free himself from such sad company, it would be necessary to rid himself of its cause.

It was not easy. It is not easy in the modern world, where everything related to property is precisely regulated by thousands of legal mechanisms, a complex network of interests in balance. It is not as simple to solve the problem as it was in the time of Christ or Saint Francis. There was, therefore, a complicated conflict of duties, where the rights of others were at stake, which could not be harmed. How to resolve the case amidst so many duties pulling in opposite directions, all of them justifying, before the conscience, demands for satisfaction? How to fulfil some without harming others? Saint Francis, for example, had to neglect the duty to obey his father because he had to obey a greater duty. And what, in our case, was the greater duty? Everyone always talks about their rights; among his duties, he found it difficult to choose. It was not enough to forget interests and selfishness to resolve the issue.

His assets were hereditary, that is, obtained gratuitously. They were not the fruit of his labour. The society of his time accepted this form of acquisition, which his conscience declared unjust. He did not condemn others but hurried to correct himself. The free acquisition of assets through inheritance was, *for him*, according to his moral and personal law, something illicit, immoral, inadmissible. He took care of himself and respected the law of others. But he had to live his law consciously.

And this was not only the instinctive law of his conscience, for it was also the Law of the Gospel. He heard the distant voice repeating to him:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God!

But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your consolation!"

And also:

"Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes what is yours, do not demand it back."

And finally, the maxim:

"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."

He felt the Gospel deeply in his heart, to not take these words lightly. And he was sufficiently irritated by the elasticity of conscience and compromises, to not feel the duty to take a well-defined position between Christ and the world. He preferred Christ, but the world condemned him, and the struggle began. In fact, he did not intend, in his heart, to apply his law to others. He did not condemn, he did not judge; he forgave, thinking that as we measure, we will be measured. He could not help but feel the original injustice that lies at the foundation of all accumulation of wealth, which very rarely can be formed solely through work, without at least an initial fortune. This original injustice was aggravated by gratuitous hereditary transmission. He found it absolutely anti-Christian, even if only in part, to live at the expense of anything other than the fruit of one's own labour. To live off the labour of others, that is, of that neighbour whom one must love, and upon whose shoulders it is therefore not lawful for a Christian to settle in order to be carried along.

He found this selfish conception of life, the basis of exploitation and the cause of struggles, absolutely anti-Christian because the poor are instigated by it, perhaps even compelled to seek justice through cunning, theft, and violence. Religions preferred to be complacent themselves, overlooking this fundamental point of evangelical equity, but he wished to remain innocent of anti-Christian indulgences and their sad moral and social consequences. Saint Paul, speaking of himself, said that "he worked with his own hands, so as not to be a burden to anyone" (Acts XX 33-34). The systems of the world represented conventions, were consecrated by customs, and were an admitted contradiction. All of this was accepted, commonplace, and legal in the world; however, his conscience did not accept compromises and clearly defined his positions. He could not endorse all of this without becoming an accomplice; he could not accept the benefits without incurring responsibility.

The unjust distribution of wealth was the problem of his time, and against it, men, social classes, and nations struggled. The spirit of his century rose up against that injustice, which cost so much struggle. The world wrestled to prepare the advent of social justice. The instinct of greedy, selfish accumulation was biologically just, but it corresponded to evolutionary phases of the past, which now must be overcome by another phase of more just collective organic coordination. And if this preparation cost so many efforts and sacrifices, could he, for personal interests, set himself against the future?

He felt that the fundamental injustice of economic exploitation should be corrected by "Quod superest date pauperibus⁹," for the surplus is indeed stolen from the poor, who needed it to live. Beyond this, a great commandment came to him from Christ: "Love your neighbour as yourself." He also had to fulfil this duty. It was not only a matter of freeing himself from the burden, the bonds, the injustice, the wealth. It was about, in order to love one's neighbour, who in the majority are poor or nearly poor, embracing their life, sharing their struggles, enduring their tribulations. It was about working with the majority and earning one's own just daily bread. It was about seriously walking with the people, starting with oneself and not with others, with duties and not with rights, practicing before preaching. He felt, in his conscience, that only the fruit of his labour could honestly be his. He felt that this was the form of true evangelical fraternity and the true realization of social justice.

He considered work not only as a duty towards others but as a right, in the school of his individual formation. According to the old conception, the greatest values are represented by wealth, before which man is a means. According to his conception, which was that of the new times, the greatest value is man, before whom wealth is a means. If before wealth was placed before man, tomorrow man must be placed before wealth. Work, then, is no longer a means of acquiring economic goods, but a form of exercise and acquisition of new capacities, to which everyone has the right to be admitted, because this represents their formation and evolution.

⁹ "Give to the poor what you have left over."

Thus conceived, work became something he desired as both a duty and a right.

The fact of having taken, spontaneously, the part that was his in the weight of life, provided him, finally, implicitly, greater stability in social position, which is always more solidly balanced the lower it is, the closer it approaches normality and moves away from exception. But all of this was not easy to accomplish. Who would help him?

With action, the difficulties began. The entire network of interests formed around wealth reacted. Everything that has already formed and stabilized, in any position, represents a balance that defends and resists itself. Everywhere and at all times, these coalitions, these tacit consensuses, are readily formed, in which men so spontaneously harmonize when they see a benefit in it, and which are true armed organisms against everything. To free himself, he also had to free many of his dependents, that is, to dislodge them from their positions, to which they were well attached, because they thought in a very different manner. He experienced, on a smaller scale, what happens to certain leaders who are servants of the caste, which sustains them in their position as long as it suits them. He thus soon learned to know the true face of man.

His particular experience led him to the conclusion that managing can be synonymous with stealing. It was enough to allow oneself to be managed to promptly achieve liberation. But he was not an inept person, who lets himself be destroyed by laziness or incapacity, and he absolutely could not do so to benefit theft. He could not be an owner without becoming a responsible accomplice. Thus, he realized that the liberation of a patrimony, to achieve Franciscan poverty, was a very complex moral and material problem in our modern world. The same humanity that asked him for fraternity prevented him from realizing it, with its fierce greed, showing him how little the world is willing to understand such sacrifices, which nevertheless has the courage to preach and request. He realized how difficult it is for an individual, in a world structured in the opposite direction, to know how to solve the problem of economic exploitation without causing any harm. This is also because everyone wants to understand the reasons for the acts of others and is always suspicious. Now, no one could understand his reasons, and even if they did, they would not accept them. All society was driven by a will in the opposite direction: to plunder, accumulate, and enrich. All paths led in that direction, and everyone walked those paths. All institutions, laws, and customs presumed those motivations. Far from admitting the possibility of an honest man who distances himself from wealth out of a sense of justice, the world arms itself with distrust against the man who, full of scruples, is in a hurry to rid himself of wealth. And everything turns against those who go against the current.

His duties were not selfish, utilitarian, those that allow one to make a good impression and at the same time yield a good return. They were real duties, of conscience; duties foreign to the most distant profit, duties incomprehensible and, therefore, inadmissible. These duties scandalized others, who desired concrete results in order to evaluate. The cunning of the world judged him to be more cunning than they; they believed that, for the sake of profit, he disguised himself as an altruist. The men of common sense, even more cunning, came to discover, through very complex means, his hidden real objectives.

The struggle was long and hand-to-hand, but it made him know man. He discovered that it was very difficult to know how to give without causing harm. He saw that the poor man was, almost always, nothing more than a frustrated rich man, very different from the poor in spirit, full of all greed, insatiable, with a soul clinging to money, and each magnanimous act served as a stimulus to those feelings. He realized that man, frequently, preferred being active in plundering to the passive act of receiving; he preferred conquest to charity. And this is biologically normal, but it tends to make man, ultimately, a wrongdoer. His sign, however, is positive, and nature entrusts to him the work of selection, and not that of conservation, which is the task of the woman. He discovered in man his aspect of a more or less blind executor of biological laws; he was astonished by the immense, unbearable distance that separated him from the Gospel.

In the hand-to-hand struggle to carry out his plan, he was the supreme utopian, mocked and misunderstood. This was the very clear answer that the world frankly gave him, according to its natural logic. The biological laws, applied to man by instinct, though without his understanding them, rebelled against him, rushed towards him, as if facing a violator. In the world, he was wrong. Certainly, his way of fighting was very different from what the laws of nature imposed on the earth; he sought a very elevated selection, very complex and with very remote results, for his actions to be accepted in a world where another struggle was unfolding, directed towards another kind of selection. Moreover, that world was well solidly situated and balanced, and, in its iron logic, within its plan, it was right. The great majority lived by that law, while he was alone or almost alone; therefore, he found himself displaced. Our utopian had the Gospel with him, and he had set out precisely on the path of its full application. He was shocked by the enormous difficulty of realizing it in practice and the glaring antagonism in which the world finds itself with the Gospel and the Gospel with the world. And he wondered why the biological law, destined by God to govern human life and engraved in man's instincts, had to be at the antipodes of the evangelical law, equally destined by God to govern that same human life.

This book aims more to report experiences than to formulate theories. So, let us narrate. He remained unwavering while recording these observations within himself. Our account is brief, but for him, the struggle was long. We simply report, while he was building a man. He continued. He had sworn faith in the Gospel and wanted to go to the end with the Gospel, if necessary, to the extremes of despair and death. He had now decided to

give his life this content: the supreme experience of the Gospel, fully lived. What would happen? He observed and recorded. The great duel was taking place within him: who would be right, the Gospel or the world? As his life progressed, he observed the clashes of the battle. Would the world defeat the Gospel in him, or would the Gospel conquer the world? In this second case, his life was no longer a utopia. He was not a madman, as they said; the triumph of his spirit would be complete, the exceptional path he was following was not wrong. His path, however, was so contrary to the laws of the world, through which he advanced, that a continuous miracle would be necessary, the never suspected presence of a Divine Providence that would save him at every step from everything and everyone. And he looked around to see if the miracle would occur and if it could occur. He trembled in the depths of his being because he understood that his attitude, deep down, was a challenge of obedience to Christ. But he also knew that he was giving himself entirely, staking his life, and those who act in this way might have some right more than others. And if, on the contrary, the world defeated the Gospel, demonstrating to him, through facts, in this decisive experience, its practical absurdity? If the Divine Providence, on which he relied, abandoned him; if this imponderable force slipped away in the shadows, what means would he have to keep it present and active, what right would he have to consider himself a chosen one, particularly aided by God? His faith was great: he committed his life on trust, under the word of Christ. Was then the voice of Christ within him so terribly strong? And if this Gospel, on which he committed his entire being and invested all his actions and all the capital of his life, betrayed him, what would remain for him? There would remain a very simple thing; the right to say in full conscience, with a soul laid bare before God, and in the name of divine justice, that by following the Gospel, he had erred, and that it is not wise to believe without seeing. A terrible upheaval would have taken place in his soul, which would have been his destruction. But what would his soul matter to him, when in that upheaval, his Christ and his Gospel would also have fallen? The dilemma was merciless and tremendous. The reader should not be surprised, however, because when a conscience acts rightly, it is never abandoned by God.

POVERTY AND WORK

"There is no conquest without renunciation."

Our protagonist began methodically executing the program of his own dispossession, an intelligent dispossession. His attitude was not one of escape, like that of someone who, without concerning themselves with the consequences, with the reactions of this force that is being abandoned wealth—hastily gives everything to the poor and turns their back on the world, to withdraw into their solitary mysticism. On the contrary, his task was to work among the dispossessed, to bear the burden with them and understand the meaning of their lives. The school that portrays the benefactor as a rich person and the beneficiary as a poor one does not bring people closer, does not bridge the abyss that divides them, and does not resolve the injustice of economic disparities. This charity is a palliative that the rich resort to because, costing them relatively little, it offers the advantage of soothing their conscience and giving them the illusion of securing paradise. The calculation indicates a greater advantage for the sacrifice, making the act convenient. But the poor, who may perhaps only be frustrated rich, and therefore worse than the rich, asking for justice only when it means the defence of their selfishness, and being almost always undeserving of alms because they themselves were the cause of their poverty, through laziness or wastefulness, do not need so much the pious surplus of others, as much as they need a fraternal approach, for others to descend to their own misery, to live it daily, experiencing all its bitterness,

even its degrading baseness. Only in the face of this descent to their level does the poor feel that justice has been done and that they no longer have the right to ask, because only then is the abyss crossed, the distance destroyed, because then the being who lived another life and seemed of another race has become one of them, living the same life, with the same needs, psychology, and pains. This is the vehement selfishness of the poor, so full of greed that he does not grant the rich even the surplus that the rich gave him. But our protagonist, who felt the justice of God, also felt that this selfishness was, in large part, a right to life and progress, and that it was his duty to share his advantages, for it was nothing less than true theft to try to monopolize them for himself. He felt that charity is not complete if one does not take upon one's own shoulders the cross of the poor, to carry it with him, by his side. He felt that only this is true charity, which unites, which makes us, without distinctions, all equal, as children of God. He felt that, - no matter if religions neglect this vital issue -, only in this way could the Gospel be applied and have the right, without lying, to call oneself a Christian.

Thus, he, as a Christian, did not want to flee from the fulfilment of his duty, nor accommodate himself in passive contemplative solitude, where there is an excess of time and peace, or in idle poverty of resigned and inert acquiescence, indifferent to the fatigues and pains of the world. But he opened, as a Christian, his arms to the fatigues and pains of others, making them his own, and he wanted, as a Christian, his place of struggle in life. He felt that no kind of penance can justify the immeasurable sin of isolation, which distances us from fraternity in struggle and pain, or the capital sin of idleness, which distances us from the great individual and social duty of work. Is the pain of the world not sufficient matter for penance, that one must artificially seek it in another way? Having fixed his position, he prepared to act. He who truly believes in something, instead of preaching it, begins to practice it. He loved creative faith, dynamic and diligent virtues, and threw himself into the work. Until his intentions did not manifest in concrete facts and did not become clearly visible externally, things proceeded discreetly. Misunderstanding defended him; his actions could be interpreted in different ways. They let him live. But when, little by little, they began to understand what he truly wanted to do, those dependent on him, who feared losing their positions and being stripped of their utopias, secretly united to take control of everything before anyone else could, and they began the siege. When they began to understand his true intentions, they started with assessments, judgments, and with these, condemnation. Thus began, economically and morally, the work of his demolition. These were the normal and natural laws: he had to endure them. They act inexorably in their plan, following their own justice. It does not matter if it is a martyr or a saint. Their reactions belong to other worlds, which earthly nature ignores and of which it takes no account. The compensations will come later, in another place, not here on earth, where the law of the strongest reigns. He found himself among the defeated; down here it does not matter if one of these is destined to rise later. He had to suffer, therefore, the merciless fate of the defeated. To endure all the vileness of annihilation.

He did not ask anyone for help, because he knew that this was his path and he wanted to follow it to the end, so as not to renounce the Gospel. And, furthermore, he knew very well that those who know how to negotiate like to do so only for their own benefit. Thus, he overcame the temptation to turn to relatives and friends, and the siege continued. While those interested in the case attacked and plundered him, the world judged him. The first assailed him with deceptions and betrayals; the second surrounded him with an atmosphere of silent contempt. Contempt, because he did not know how to succeed in the human realm of common values; contempt, because he was losing the power he once possessed and had to fall among the poor, the dispossessed, the beggars. He had to, therefore, suffer the same fate as these, be considered a failure in life, just as they were considered: ownerless things, flesh made of misery, which can be

trampled on with impunity, made precisely to be trampled on. He felt the injustice of the judgment, but found comfort in the tranquillity and satisfaction of his conscience. However, the humiliation remained, and it burned. Not as humiliation, because he placed his interest in quite different things, and he knew that the judgment of others could neither elevate nor diminish him, but it burned because isolation is painful for everyone, especially for the most upright and sensitive spirits, who feel the need for human fraternity more keenly. He was judged mercilessly as inept, for only in this way could his impoverishment be explained and admitted. They condemned his ineptitude, suspected his bad faith; the more ignorant his neighbour was, the more eager they were to judge him, in the most inexorable manner. He lost all respect from others. He bitterly understood that esteem and attention depended on his social position. He became the fool, the preferred target of easy critics, triumphant, always heroic in front of a defeated man, but timid and obsequious little animals in front of a strong one. He learned to know all human vileness. The experience of the true imitation of Christ began to become tragic. What would become of him? Behind his social position, would his soul also have shipwrecked? What hours of despair awaited him, the madman?

The judgment of public opinion, in his environment, was fixed, consolidated, and disseminated. Around him, in place of the former halo of esteem and attention, there now spread an odour of decay. There are vile beings in society; they live, like certain filthy worms, on all products in disintegration, and they smell them from afar, to promptly rush at the first sign, in search of prey. They fulfil the biological function of hastening the end and transforming that rottenness into another form of life, even if it is inferior. He had dared to challenge the laws of the world; it was just that the world would take its revenge. No one could stop him now. At first, the sacrifice is beautiful, free, generous, heroic; but, in the end, we are inexorably bound to it, which is then miserable, forced, atrocious, pitiless. His new position brought with it the worst Judases of the business world, crafty individuals, eager to liquidate him, sucking out everything that could be taken advantage of. Bitterly, he studied those greedy faces and their psychology. With what caution they sniffed out the victim from a distance, how they then circled around him, cautiously ensuring that he could no longer bite! With what feline grace they surrounded him with all sorts of tricks, binding him, as the spider does with the fly, so that he could no longer move, and then, backed by justice, they enveloped him in their saliva and sucked him dry! With what a vampire's greedy gaze they watched his last struggles, to deliver the final blow and feast upon the enmeshed victim! That wealth that attracted such spirits now appeared to him as horrifying. He cursed the demon's dung, the idol of the world!

Let us go to the end. The vampires, after all, have torn off their masks. And the fight became, then, without quarter and without scruples, the true hand-to-hand combat, the fierce fight for life, without truce and without mercy. And soon he found himself on the ground, poor, abandoned, despised. The first great act of his destiny was being fulfilled. We are at the most desolate moment, at the deepest point of the descent. And now he has to abandon his nest, he has to set out to wander the world without having his home anymore. They tore him away from his dear and old habits; all of his delicate vibratory attunement, which he had adjusted to his environment, was destroyed; all the sweet affections were torn apart. All of his belongings, memories of other times, which were his past life, were thrown, scattered everywhere, served up, pieces of his soul thrown to the wind! What destruction! It was his very brain that was dispersed. What desolation to no longer have a little place of his own to rest his head; a place to put his things in order, so as to be able to order, upon them, his own thoughts. Disorder that also penetrated his soul, especially his mind. He suddenly found himself far from his home and his loved ones, lost in a desolate region of Sicily, in a poor boarding house room, with a bed and a table, poor and not his own. And the prudent ones despised him, repeated to him wise and prudent advice from their own experience-and they did

so with even greater authority since the facts proved them right. He had been a rebel, stubborn, and in his intransigence, without following his absurd aim, he attracted the enmity of acquaintances and relatives who did not value having the poor close by, as they are a continuous danger, people to be kept away. However, how much more attractive and likable is the one who triumphs! How respectable, what an estimable person! Such is the sympathy that everyone voluntarily closes one eye to issues of honesty and other things. What a fascination wealth holds! But from such a project of poverty, what could be born, if not always new defeats?

The evangelical experiences of this kind are made only in theories; in practice, if they are done, they are done very superficially. Generally, this more real and substantial part of Christ's teachings-which were said not only to be preached but also applied—has been prudently left in oblivion, and everyone avoids drawing too much clear attention to it. It is preferred to emphasize the aspects that give authority, power, and that reinforce, rather than weaken, man on the human plane. And of the conquests and exaltations of the spiritual plane, one speaks rhetorically, without thinking that they could be a reality of life. The ordinary man considers the difficulties of the first trials astounding and the spiritual triumph of which they are a promise inaccessible; after all, both things-condition and resultare equally beyond his capacity. And without effort, solely by human instinct, he clings to a tacit agreement with which the majority agrees and which becomes general practice: to take care of the beautiful things that are said but not done. This gives the impression of falsehood and contradiction, but man is what he is, and how can one expect him to have the heroic courage to hold on to facts instead of words in these so terrible evangelical experiences? It is indeed natural that if some exceptional temperament wishes to convince him, the common man does not understand, does not accept, and even condemns him. He knew all this and expected nothing and asked nothing of his fellow men. But he asked everything and expected everything from God, that is, from the strength of another order and another plane. He knew that there was no other path left for him to follow and that he should behave this way if he wished to progress on the road of spiritual ascension. For the just and inevitable law is that without limitation on the human plane, one cannot achieve the corresponding expansion on the divine plane; that the growth of the spirit demands the mortification of matter; it is also law that no conquest can be realized without renunciation.

TRIBULATIONS

Another fact aggravated his position. He was ill. A grave and unforgivable mistake! Because an ill person is a weak one who must be expelled or a burden that must be endured—always equally detested.

In the struggle for life, there is no room for aid nor rest. And what was his illness? Doctors had circled around him for twenty years, without understanding or concluding anything. And he, patiently, had become an experimental field for their fruitless attempts and a source of income. Expense and suffering, the only result. There are people who believe that to heal, it is enough to go to the doctor and take their medicines. And this can certainly happen, in many cases, especially in those evident and welldefined by their nature, more accessible to a science necessarily mechanized in its application. But there are illnesses that are a temperament, and there are temperaments that are an illness.

There are constitutions that, by congenital organic structure, carry with them an insuppressible discouragement of living, a fundamental sensation of discomfort instead of well-being. The prevailing medicine of today clings to the physical side of the individual and does not cure the spiritual side which, in some people, can be predominant.

He had no lesions; all his organs were in perfect condition, therefore, theoretically, he should have been fine. He had been given the most absurd and irreconcilable diagnoses—so much so that medicine no longer seemed to him more than an opinion. Yet, everyone clung to this or that organ; they remained outside, analytically partial though synthetically totalitarian, while the key lay in a dissidence in the most intimate functioning of cellular exchanges, almost a dissidence between spirit and matter, between the directing electrical apparatus, rebellious to those who wished to control it within the biochemical metabolism of his organism. In the end, he was advised to undergo surgery: cut to see. But certain things cannot be seen even under a microscope, nor in chemical analysis; they cannot be perceived by mechanical or rational methods. They are felt only through intuition and are reached through synthesis.

A doctor who had understood the special case would have honestly said that he did not know the cause of the illness and could do nothing about it; its origin was a matter of temperament, and the patient should find and follow the most suitable regimen on his own. But how can one expect the antibiological, that is, that the man who resides within the doctor, the biologically normal man, would acknowledge his own ignorance and the structure built on affirmations would destroy itself to admit its own incapacity? And exceptions cannot be found at every step. Certain medical visits are planned in series under the necessity of profit and made to a public that, by the fact of paying, more or less imposes its psychology on the doctor and offers alterations of great importance situated on the physical plane.

These medical visits are merely, by their very nature, a quick external examination in which it is the patient who, by declaring the symptoms, prepares the diagnosis. They cannot be a long and deep observation, which only the patient can make by being in constant and direct contact with the phenomenon. This kind of medical aid could only bring him disgust. This would end with the usual oral prescription, or worse, by injections, that is: the most violent, unassimilable, and lethal form. But his organism was of iron: he resisted for twenty years. One doctor treated him with gastric lavages and, to suffer less, he ended up doing them himself: swallowing a long rubber tube. Another had declared a chest disease due to various signs discovered in the radioscopy. The diagnosis depended greatly on the doctor's specialization. A homeopath naturally applied homeopathy. Once he sought out a famous doctor for nervous diseases and was treated as neurasthenic. He had not missed, during the visit, the nervous and agitated aspect of the doctor and had not understood how such a luminary had not been able to cure himself. He narrowly escaped falling into a clinic where such wise complications were already being projected that it would not have been easy to leave there alive and well.

They are not harmed by this—the marvellous and beneficial advances of medicine—nor the merit of the great ones who, with such self-denial and fatigue, have conquered them. Nor is it stated that the doctor is always like this; but only that this is how it appeared to our protagonist. The reader will know whether the case is frequent or rare.

Undoubtedly, there exist in medicine healthy orientations alongside the systems of equilibrium that nature teaches and desires; but official medicine often tends toward forced and unilateral intervention; instead of imposing itself through synthesis and intuition within the conscious life of the patient, it attempts to convince him through analysis and cerebralism, succeeding only in disturbing the complex equilibriums of nature with this masculine instinct of imposition and constraint.

All of our time—also in other branches of science, such as music, painting, and literature—is a hypertrophy of cerebralism, of technical virtuosity, of mechanization, where the light of the synthetic, intuitive, and creative spirit is suffocated and extinguished. But this is the hour of matter, and it must be lived until the cycle is surpassed.

And so he became disgusted to the point of nausea; he was exploited as long as he had money, and his organism became saturated with medications. Behold what the world had given him. It was not science, not medicine—it was man who was responsible, who, under any social pretext, always hurled the same biological truth at him: to fight is the law; woe to the weak who do not know how to defend themselves, woe to those who beg for help! This is the permanent, infallible substance present in all diagnoses, even the most discordant. And so, this was his conclusion from this experience: to defend himself.

And one day he said, "It is better to die than to call the doctor"—and he kept his word. This was one of the first advantages of his poverty—the necessity of learning, above all else, through a wise regimen, to defend his health, for only he could know it well, avoiding the danger of seeking help, of placing it under the management of others. Moreover, he had already realized that, in any matter, that which is entrusted to the administration of others is lost. These are the dangers of wealth. It suggests that one can escape struggle, sacrifice, and the discipline of life's laws. All of this is an inescapable rule of nature, and the invitation to rest and arbitrariness is nothing but a lie.

Life is serious and harsh. Each one must know how to defend and discipline it by themselves. The task of protecting one's own health cannot be done through payment. Economic laws have a limit, and money cannot do everything. Health will be naturally safeguarded through the observance of the biological laws that grant it—not in exchange for any wealth, but only to those who deserve it.

However, he had learned to know his own organism: the study, even elementary, of medicine, had been very attractive to him. As with everything else, he desired, above all, to understand himself. To survive twenty years of treatment, his organism had demonstrated exceptional resistance. And indeed, his suffering did not prevent him from being always active, always working—dynamic, creative, tempered by physical and intellectual fatigue, rich in continuous production. In that lean body, all thought, nerves, feeling, and will, there existed an extremely rich, indomitable, inexhaustible spirit, which communicated to every fibre of the organism its strength and resistance. It seemed to burn him and certainly did, demanding from him an activity that is natural to the spirit, but which the body cannot follow.

This spiritual exuberance seemed to sustain itself at the expense of the physical, which it continuously impoverished. The secret of his suffering seemed to lie in this imbalance of proportions, in this psychic and sensitive evolutionary hypertrophy-an imbalance that was continually compensated for by some mysterious contrast at the core of the fabulous process of life, which is the exchange of cells. There, certainly, the spiritual qualities of the individual come into contact with the most complex processes of organic chemistry. It is there that the lower zones of the spirit, represented by the nervous system, intertwine in a tight embrace with the higher zones of the life of matter. And there, surely, was the imbalance not perceived by doctors, not accessible to medicine. The inevitable contrast between spirit and matter, which was in the line of his destiny, was so deeply imprinted in his being that it projected itself actively and sensitively in his organism. Just as his too intense spiritual life did not adapt to the human environment, so too his spiritual organism did not adapt to his physical body, with which it was not in harmony, but in continuous discord.

The man of our century, dynamic and athletic, will not find it appealing that the protagonist is presented as an ill person, becoming justifiably suspicious of the exaltation of elevated mentalities in sick bodies, which applies to the average, as normal creatures must, above all, be healthy in body. But his was not an illness in the common sense, implying organic inferiority. It was the pseudo-illness of evolution, it was the pseudo-pathological that misleads so many, characterized by greater fecundity and constructive dynamism, with the fever resulting from the intense maturation of the spirit, due to the imbalance of profound biological transformations.

Indeed, at the core of his suffering was the germ of his most powerful intellectual and moral creations. His attempt at human overcoming had roots so deep in his entire nature that it manifested first in his organism. From the higher planes of the spirit to the lowest planes of matter-he was one and the same phenomenon, the same tension of destiny, the same transformation, soul and body-his entire being was projected forward in evolution. Deep down, he was the most dynamic among the dynamic, the exponent of the twentieth-century type, the type of spirit that is above all active, the biological type of the new civilization of the third millennium. Truly, he loved work and had the courage for the most risky spiritual adventures. Lean, agile, always in motion, resistant to walking, mountain climbing, to heat and cold, bronzed by the sun, robust, the child of longlived parents—he was destined to be long-lived as well. Always outdoors, a lover of baths, he took them hot and cold at all hours, despite the supposed chest illness-nothing more than a cold. He detested heating and lived among rugged mountains, in a hut exposed, in winter, to all the winds.

This was nothing but an effect. The centre of his life was in the spirit, as were all his greatest joys: to conceive, create, conquer, progress. He seemed like the nerve cell of society, projected forward, specialized in evolutionary functions. It was useless to expect that medicine could understand and cure the intimate physical-spiritual dissension of his being and that it would be possible to calm his torment. He could not be rebalanced on the human plane. He was built for struggle, born in a century of struggle, and had to run with everyone and ahead of everyone. He had no choice but to find balance in the struggle. In rest, he did not live. This was his nature, from his moral qualities to his cellular characteristics. Such was he, soul and body. And if he could have the appearance and suffering of a pathological case, he had learned to understand the biological function of this pathological condition, such is the evolutionary significance of those appearances and the reasons that justified those sufferings. These continued, but the spirit resisted. The spirit endured, faced, resolved, and overcame everything. He allowed the great wisdom of nature, which desires life and not death, to act and protect the laborious gestation of evolution.

THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE

That first year of exile in a remote region at the far end of Sicily, so spiritually distant from his mystical Umbria, was one of profound suffering. This was the first sip from the cup of his bitterness. It seemed impossible to descend any lower. What desolation of soul, of work, of environment! The inhabitants of that place, very courteous, would say to him: "But, stay with us. It is so beautiful here!" And he thought: "Oh, to be able to escape!"

It seems necessary, in order for some higher law of life to manifest, that a soul must first be stripped of everything; it seems that before revealing itself through acts, those laws wait for the soul to have been scourged to the extreme. It seems that these laws demand as a guarantee the proof of the utmost that the individual can endure, according to their strength. The spirit must reach a peak of tension and despair, which is the critical moment in which the phenomenon of spiritual catharsis occurs. Then comes a resurgence by which the attacking negative forces are overcome. From negative, they transform into positive, and instead of demolishing, they construct. For such prodigies to occur, special conditions of spirit and environment are necessary. Even without knowing it, guided by his instinct, he had prepared them. These culminations are not improvised. They can only emerge from long periods of subterranean preparation that progress without the consciousness being aware. When everything is ripe, then the phenomenon precipitates quickly and irresistibly like an explosion. As soon as the forces of destiny made him touch the bottom of the abyss, they immediately transformed to elevate and save him. Instead of the impulses that could appear to him as enraged demons wanting to destroy him, he found himself surrounded by impulses that were like angels who, lovingly, surrounded him, comforting him.

What had happened, and how did this transformation take place? He was compelled to act in his heroic experience - but, certainly, it was a question placed before that Providence, awaiting a decisive answer. At this critical moment, there had been a complication in his destiny, and he had connected it to the name of Christ. Had Christ chosen him? His destiny was at that crucial moment where the tragic question arose: "Would the Gospel be humanly applicable," or "Would whoever applied it be destroyed?" This question was a force, because it was based on facts and demanded a concrete answer from the heavens. And it could not be silenced. Our man believed he had the right to impose a question upon himself: Had the Gospel deceived me? And to raise the dilemma: If the Gospel is true, God must save me; if God does not save me, the Gospel is not true! With his commitment so sincere, full, and definitive regarding the evangelical teachings, he had given the forces of life such an impulse that his current position demanded a solution and an answer.

He liked to retreat, for his prayers, to the solitude of a rocky hill, overlooking the region, among thistles and wild fig trees. There, he awaited a new inner revelation. Outside, in the course of life, he awaited the passage of divine Providence in its now necessary manifestation. He indistinctly felt that something was about to be born, from within and without, and that this moment was the converging point where the results of all the preceding preparation of his life would manifest.

Divine Providence operated its intervention on two fronts: the internal and the external. Let us first observe what happened externally. In the

state of poverty to which he had voluntarily reduced himself, work was no longer merely a duty; it was also a right and a necessity, because he had no other means to live. He felt that his conscience gave him the right to ask for and obtain from God, in the name of His own law, which he had applied-a job suited to his abilities. And when, in conscience, he felt authorized to obtain it-miraculously, it happened. He already regarded his fellow men as wills not always autonomous, but moved by higher motives. This time, he saw that indeed a higher will guided human wills. There was a marvellous convergence of the most different circumstances, of acts always directed toward the same goal, in succession, due to the most diverse people—a fortune so shrewd, provident, and intelligent that he absolutely could not conclude, if he wanted to remain objective, that the results obtained could be fortuitous. Chance does not construct, cannot construct an entire edifice that bears the features of evident logic. And these were external facts, combinations only understood later; it was not a matter of attitudes of the spirit, but of radical changes, from which an economic and social position was derived-things that do not occur by suggestion. Not always do aspirations prepared for a long time, with sagacity, carefully tended with attention and effort, and defended by a strong will and skill, come to fruition-and here, everything was realized at once. A complex result, barely prepared and uncertainly desired.

Who had prepared and desired it in such a way, so adapted to the needs, measured with such precision by the strength and capacity of the one concerned? Who, in his place, had done this for him? The result was there, and there had to be a cause. He thanked God and concluded that Providence does not abandon the just and that, at least until now, the Gospel had not betrayed him.

His utopia had been confirmed by reality—an objective confirmation of the experimental method, demonstrated by the intervention of divine Providence. This intervention was not a theoretical and generic affirmation, a mere act of faith, but an experimental act, for him, at least, an indestructible document of indisputable probative value. He had put the Gospel of Christ to the test, and miraculously, it had answered him: Yes.

Released by justice from his hereditary possessions, in a few months he found himself in a truly just social position—because it was solely dependent on his work. And behold, he would not suffer the lack of necessities, as he had feared and as, due to his conduct, from a human point of view, one could logically expect. And now, this profit was his. He could live now, also economically, as was just.

The intervention of Providence, the presence of its assistance, the proof of the truth of the Gospel were demonstrated not only in external facts but also in interior events, in his spirit. For him, these were more conclusive. The greatest transformation did not occur on the physical plane, but on the spiritual plane; not in his human position, but in his soul. Everything appeared to him illuminated by a different light, which gave everything a deeper meaning. His entire personality had transformed in its means of perception, and the universe appeared to him under a new revelation. The change in his social position was of secondary value to him. The true result was this, spiritual. Here was the true yield of all the tests overcome; this was the greater end, before which everything else was merely a means. And what evolutionary significance would the trials have if they were not directed toward the spiritual field?

He had sown and had already reaped. A new phase of his journey begins for our protagonist, one that spans from forty-five to fifty years. This period, which is the logical continuation and maturation of the preceding ones, as well as the preparation for those that will follow, has a typical and particular content of resurrection. It is, above all, a harvest, but it is also sowing: it is the conclusion of the preceding period, but it is also the beginning for the next, in which that destiny will unfold. For ten years, the triumphant note is the dominant one. We will later see where this Palm Sunday leads.

The three paths that he had thrown himself into as a young man had, for twenty years, been paths of work and martyrdom. And now they transformed into three paths of ascension and triumph. Those three motives of his destiny were now inverted. To each previous negation, there now succeeded a corresponding affirmation; to each renunciation and constraint an expansion; to each sadness—a joy. Everything now resurrected on the plane of the spirit, everything that had been stifled on the plane of matter. And these observations expressed the laws of those phenomena. It seems that the negation of human things is the condition for resurrection in divine things.

The roads he had followed for twenty years converged into a first result, in his own and first solution. "Understand, Act, Suffer" arrived at a single end.

1. Understand. - The problem of conscience that he had set for himself in his youth, upon entering life, was finally resolved. After his university studies, he continued to search in books, questioning philosophies, religions, and science. This source had dried up. Few books had profound meaning. He abandoned them. He replaced them with inner maceration, silently directed towards the immediate intuition of truth. He felt that only this would satisfy him. By intuition, he obtained a vision of the organic functioning of the universe. He had from this the profound sensation that only persuasion offers. He had set aside the paths of reason, impotent before the absolute, and approached God through the paths of faith. He had made the system of intuition a true method of research.

In his spirit, complete light had arisen. He had resolved, at least for himself, the problem of knowledge. How had this happened? He had achieved it, not by following the common paths of acquiring culture, but by a very different route. He had not filled his mind with erudition, but had

conquered a new sense of understanding, like a new eye to see. Knowledge was, for him, a new form of consciousness, resulting not from study but from maturation through pain. This maceration had produced in him a transformation of personality, leading him to a new state in which knowledge is like a new sense, a spontaneous quality of the spirit. These are not common things in the world of others, but they are phenomena that, though exceptionally, do occur. While culture would be nothing more than an external acquisition, a cerebral veneer-in this case, his entire being had acquired, through evolutionary maturation, a transformation of consciousness. In other words: he finds himself in the depths of himself, where there exists the most complete consciousness of himself and the universe. It is a process completely different from the acquisition of culture with which the ordinary man seeks to understand things. It is achieved only through the experience of life, in the school of trials, in struggle and pain, for it is not something that comes from outside brought into our self, but a revelation of its depth. It can only be achieved through purification, for it is like a sensitization, a dive into the consciousness of the deepest layers of the personality. The world of sensations and latent conceptions contained there resurfaces alongside consciousness, for evolution is merely the expansion of consciousness, especially in the inner planes of the self, which are the superior planes. God, who is its goal, is indeed within us. Struggle and pain have managed to refine the physical shell of the soul, making it more transparent, allowing it to reveal its inner potency. This was precisely the phenomenon that was now taking place. This discovery of his vaster self, oriented towards the organic functioning of the whole, gave him an indestructible sense of balance, of mastery over events, of independence, of peace. He published, in publications, the results of this reunion. He was understood, misunderstood, not understood, condemned—so many are the human points of view. But this did not matter. What really mattered to him was having achieved full maturity. The dissemination of the results was of interest only to culture and the betterment of others. He was now aware of his truth, and that was enough for him.

Within this broader truth, he had understood the meaning of his destiny of atonement and mission, he had grasped the unbreakable truth of the Gospel and his right to trust in it.

He had lost his wealth in such a horrible manner, with such nauseating contacts, that no longing for it remained in his soul, but rather a great repugnance for it and a sense of pity for those who possess it. Therefore, the experience had yielded full results, and the lesson had been definitively learned. In compensation, he had found an inalienable and indestructible wealth, that is, the liberation from so many needs that civilization imposes, and also immense spiritual satisfaction, a sensation of agility and lightness, and of almost moral superiority before a world that judges and is ready to scorn. He had once again found, very much alive in his spirit, the sensation of Christ, and this was his greatest joy. Now, no matter what happened, he had also understood this, and it was a compass always oriented. He knew where he was destined and where he wanted and had to follow. He saw, clearly marked, the road he had to travel.

2. Act. - Once the universal problem was resolved, and his particular problem defined and framed within it, he could realize himself, giving his own contribution, free and conscious, to the functioning of the universal organism. He knew that he was nothing more than a grain of sand in the desert, a drop in the ocean, but he was conscious and active. Being minimal, he could give everything, and by giving himself, enter the universal community of beings who act and live in the execution of God's thought. In this direction, he could now, consciously, coordinate his efforts with those of all his sister creatures, to ascend to God. He became a member and functional part of the great organism, like a wheel that, no matter how small, is indispensable to the immense mechanism. His life acquired a much deeper significance and became music harmonized with the most distant spheres of the universe. In this extremely vast atmosphere, he united with an immense realization of his deepest self. His life moved in unison with the will of God, and his destiny unfolded according to His law.

The realization of himself also acted in a more concrete manner, not only in that sense but also in the practice of human actions. His maturation had not only led him to knowledge, but to the consciousness of himself and the universe; not to the simple perception of things, but to a new way of existing that desired to be active and operative, to also realize itself externally, in others, in his fellow beings. If he had managed to feel himself a member of the community of all beings in the universe, he particularly felt himself as such in the terrestrial community, closer, where he especially had to act and realize himself. He then understood that the great step of his transformation did not concern only himself, as important as that was—but it was completed and valued with another purpose. Finally, the transformation implied the explanation of his earthly mission, which now manifested itself through the forces at work in his destiny and which was the practical valorisation of his life. He could not keep the results he had achieved only to himself. By disseminating them, he could make an immediate contribution to the knowledge and to the good of the human collective. His efforts would not remain enclosed within him; they would not yield evolutionary benefit for him alone. He could finally explode and expand also in the souls of his fellow beings. He had to give public testimony of his intimate experiences, for the good of all, but this period of his life also led him to a more intimate action.

The interior transformation that had reached him had spread and in those ten years, it continued to develop, strengthening as a sensation, progressing as power and elevation. The realization of the great dream of understanding everything continued, completing itself in the realization of that sensation of divine things and the union with Christ. The inner maceration that had matured him to the synthesis of knowledge now guided him along the paths of mystical ascension. In the ten-year period that awaited him, he would traverse these paths extremely hurriedly, as he desired to reach the deepest assimilation, the greatest depth. This way of acting found its development and thus completed itself.

And all were paths of affirmation, of maximum expansion. Expansion of thoughts, of activity, of feeling. Every fibre of his being had been sifted, but now gave its elevated yield to the superior potency of the spirit.

3. Suffer. - Pain, as a means, had now reached its end. It had been set aside because it was necessary to assimilate the results achieved. Without this assimilation, the trials would have no meaning. He had bravely overcome them, and fate granted him a truce, for God's law does not desire pain for pain's sake, as an inexorable punishment, as malevolent revenge. The goal is not to make one suffer, but to make one understand, to macerate in order to progress. Through pain, he had achieved a certain purification, attained luminosity, and realized a refinement-which allowed him to emerge, live, and build, in equal measure, on the spiritual plane. Now, the negation was converted into proportional affirmation. That fate reemerged, demonstrating that one does not suffer in vain, especially when one knows how to suffer. The past bore its fruits. The law of crushing was converted into the law of expansion. The Gospel of Christ was true. He had not only become learned but had been abundantly compensated in spirit, and the things of the earth had been given to him in abundance. The vow of poverty was replaced by a new social position. The knowledge of great problems had been achieved and would be triumphantly disseminated. The trials had been understood by him, had yielded their results, and his personality had been transformed. His destiny, having overcome the dissonances and harmonizing with the universe, was at peace. The mission of good now revalued his life. The mystical phase would crown his spiritual maturation, completing his biological transformation. The phase of atonement was now followed by fulfilment in all fields. The three paths converged toward a complete revaluation, on the plane of the spirit, of all that in his being had been destroyed on the plane of matter.

SPIRITUAL AFFIRMATIONS

For ten years, his life was a celebration of creation, a continuous exuberance of spirituality, an intense joy of living, doing good and ascending, in the deepest realization of himself. He had harmonized with the Creator, and all his acts were a hymn of gratitude to the Creator. His existence had become a continuous fervour of conception, and this was his greatest sensation of the joy of living. He, who had never been able to find joy on the human plane, finally found it on the plane of the spirit, where the centre of his life had shifted. All of this represented, for him, truly a new existence, full of new satisfactions. He enjoyed this sensation of freedom and mastery that only flight can give, and that reptiles will never admit as possible. It seemed to him that he possessed new senses, senses of the soul, through which it could finally reveal itself, now that his corporeal shell, worn down by pain, had become more transparent. His being felt as if it were immersed in a splendid and vibrant ocean where he multiplied and expanded, where his consciousness could now transcend the limits imposed on human nature-the limits of space and time. He, who since childhood had deemed them unacceptable and suffocating, felt that he had now found the true dimensions of his own being, which reached to the infinite, and of his true free nature, which resided in the spirit. Thus, intense and intoxicating was this joy that it seemed almost an orgy to him-the orgy of overcoming and escaping that exists in velocity; the orgy of freedom and light to which the prisoner finally freed from the narrow and dark prison surrenders himself.

He had found himself, his spiritual joys, the true joys, his life, the true life. Paradise is not a place, but a state of the soul. It is the complete realization of the noblest part of oneself—and he had achieved this realization.

The paths of the world open before everyone, so well adapted and proportionate to their desires, as paths of affirmation, but they had been, for him, paths not adapted to his nature—paths of negation. He had been, in the world, a clumsy, inept person, and the world had condemned him. He had rebelled. He had destroyed the life circumstances that the environment had tried to impose upon him, had pushed them away, and now had found his true life, which could not be of matter, but of spirit; it could not be with the world, but against the world. Adversity, by diverting his spirit from its natural outward projection and forcing it inward, had guided him not to natural dispersion but to a dynamic concentration, up to the point of explosive compression—forcing him into that profound inner elaboration from which great maturations could be born. A salutary and precious pain that had compelled him to react in search of an escape that he could only find by elevating himself to higher forms of life.

It is in reaction that man reveals himself. All this forced him to demonstrate his true nature and to emerge, to find himself in a greater world, thereby conquering his position. Later, he would come to understand even better the creative functions of trials and pain, to whose harsh sting he owed his timely awakening and the path he had travelled, which, otherwise, he would never have had the courage to undertake. If it were not for pain, what else would have the strength to move and make man advance along the exhausting path of ascension?

In most cases, human beings fight with their fellow men and vent with the opposite sex. He would repeat with Beethoven: "If I had sacrificed vital energy in any way, what better would have happened?" He was idle, but on another plane. He had chosen his terms of comparison—his rival and his love—as an ideal type and had set out to fight desperately to reach the supreme embrace in identification. Only on this ground did he feel worthy to fight. He had to crush himself to overcome human animality. But one cannot abdicate one's own nature, nor the fundamental affinities of one's own type and destiny. In this field, of which most do not even suspect the existence, he had to move, because there he heard the call of destiny, the only true realization of himself, because he was irresistibly attracted by that holy envy to externalize himself, in which the clash of contrasting forces manifests, which are the basis of evolution.

He had achieved a way of thinking and acting where there was no frustration, no deviation, no outlaw, or expulsion from normality. There was balance and harmony in his law, with which he imposed himself on the attention of his fellow men. The world could only accept him as a challenge. The world only understood its own law of struggle, which imposes rebellion on those who do not want to be destroyed. Top of Form

Finally, a new fact had come to transform the situation. A fact that emerged from mystery, sent by divine Providence, incredibly determined to protect that same resolute faith he had in it, in that iron will of his that the world so much condemned and that now bore such high fruits. And all those who had despised him now looked at him in amazement at the unexpected revelation of ability from an inept man and questioned his face without understanding. The mechanism of instincts is sufficient to guide a primitive existence; It is, however, a very inappropriate instrument for understanding the more. Effects arose in his environment that could not be touched with hands but were of real presence. The causes, for people ignorant of the complex organism of the forces of destiny, were to remain an enigma. He now walked firmly on his path, without worrying about other things. The new attention that arose after so much disdain left him indifferent, just like the previous ones, which were of condemnation. The incomprehension remained the same, in defeat as in victory. The deep and inner reality of his life continued always equally distant from the psychology of his fellow men.Bottom of Form

As they had not been able to understand his greatest suffering, which was the reason his spirit remained irreconcilable with the world, nor that original temperament that prevented him from participating in earthly life, now they could not understand his greatest joy, which was to have found in the spiritual plane his true vital centre of activity. From this new state, from the misunderstood spiritual affirmations, the consequences remained, the facts remained. And the facts cannot, even for those who do not understand them, cease to exist. The tangible consequences of the invisible intervention of the forces of divine Providence attracted general attention. He now had a social position. He wrote and published; his books were sold. He was full of vigour and enthusiasm. An indefatigable worker, he gave proof of intelligence and willpower. Instead of being crushed by his economic failure, he showed himself very satisfied and courageous; in many ways, he proved to be a winner. "Whims of fate," some said. "Everyone has their own taste," said others, without knowing how to go any further.

What impresses people are the effects. The causes are many and can be an opinion; but the effects are not up for debate. People look, judge, and run fanatically, blindly, after those who succeed. They are attracted by instinct, inspired by the biological law of selection. Fascinated, like moths, they circle around a flame until they burn their wings. Here were the facts, here was success, this stupendous thing which is no longer reasoned about, so admirable that it does not admit questions or inquiries about its origin, the merit within it, or even the mistakes it may contain. Victory is victory—one worships it; just as defeat is defeat—one despises it. Such is the world. If the winner is a murderer and the defeated a martyr, the world only understands later, when the martyr has been liquidated without remedy. And the world will erect a monument to him, not to glorify the martyr, but to stifle the remorse of having massacred him and to better use, to its own advantage, that pretext of merit and virtue.

And he, now, in the eyes of everyone, had won. The inept, the useless dreamer, the wretched one—he now knew how to do many things, and therefore, his dreams could not have been so idiotic if so many truths were found in what he wrote, and the most important thing was that he was doing well economically because his work earned him enough to make him independent. The intriguers, those who despised him, began to lift their heads and look at him, astonished. They were convinced that the reality of the facts was undeniable and, faced with the irrefutable realization, they could not resist the urge to admire him.

There is nothing more unstable than psychological states. It is what is said of others that is worthy of faith. It seems that despite all the mania for judging, no one knows how to judge themselves. The admiration of others, of strangers, the one that comes from outside the home, from afar, is the most convincing. And the farther it comes from, the more convincing it is. And so, to be admired and recognized by the neighbour, it is sometimes necessary for admiration to have travelled around the world, because if it comes from the opposite cardinal point, then yes, it is plausible. If it comes from abroad, it is interesting, and if it comes from the other hemisphere, it is irresistible. Thus, admiration is reinforced, grows, extends, and becomes esteem—that is, that current of favour with which an individual is socially surrounded and defined.

Thus, slowly, the strange reversal occurs around him – strange to those who attribute a serious meaning to life, the one who is sustained here. A reversal that was like the slow turning towards the sun of that flower which is precisely called the sunflower. And, it seems unbelievable, he was now admired and esteemed even by those who had previously laughed at him, even by those who, when he was defeated, most despised him. Such are human convictions. After all, it is logical that victory is all the more admired and defeat despised the more the individual who judges is weak, vile, and constrained to lie.

He looked and smiled, always far from the human clamour. This first experiment in notoriety, instead of exciting him, left him disillusioned. Worldly triumphs did not seduce him, because he saw them from behind the scenes. He saw that glory did not give him the love of his fellow men, nor esteem, nor the satisfaction of having improved them. On the contrary, appearing prominently on the psychological horizon was equivalent to arousing greed, the instincts of exploitation, envy, and a secret destructive reaction. He repudiated such fruits as a reward for his work. Being known, therefore, meant losing freedom and peace-things so necessary for his intellectual production and deep spiritual life. How many empty people who run at the first rumour were now interested in him! And these people judged, measured everything-and it was necessary to endure their vain chatter! What tribulation, those senseless appreciations! Then, he remembered that the books no longer belonged to him. He had put his own soul into them; he could no longer add, avoid, or modify anything, as they irrevocably fixed his spiritual figure. The crystallization of himself, alive, in a formal past, suffocated him. The completed work imprisoned, at least on one side, his spirit, and closed off his life. It then occurred to him that the man who has reached glory is a travelled road, a corpse from which life wishes to rid itself quickly. His thought was no longer his own; it was now the thought of others, and, moved by another will, it went wherever others wished. And that was enough for him to feel the bitterness that lies at the bottom of human interactions; the vanity and illusion that exist in the things of the earth. And then he felt very clearly that if he had followed the ways of the world, nothing would have remained for him but the final sensation of nullification.

He turned his gaze to broader horizons and comforted himself in the verification of his new spiritual achievements. When he triumphed humanly, he valued himself less than before, when he suffered; because that was the greater hour of sowing, and this was only the hour of harvest. He rejoiced at the result of his efforts. The chosen spirits understood, and he could do good. It was a time of spiritual abundance. The harvest is done under the hot sun, quickly, under the intoxication of victory, which is always, in every field, the greatest exaltation of life. There is no time now for the mind to pause and predict what the severity of the next winter will be. When it arrives, we shall see. Now is a time of celebration, and that is enough. He was entirely committed to the great harvest and reaped the abundant crop in great quantity, and accumulated. He was in a hurry to harvest everything. He did not want, could not lose anything of the intense, yet always fleeting moment. His soul was a fire, but he was fully present in consciousness, and though burning, he observed and recorded everything. A great, impetuous, destructive current of thought crossed his spirit, and he had a hard task to contain it, within the obstacles of the word, to channel it in the form of writing, to discipline it in the conceptual development that poured from his pen.

During those ten years, he developed an enormous activity, without resting for even a moment, in a state of creative tension that later had to calm down, otherwise, it would destroy him. But, the very fever sustained him. And, in that state, he launched such a vast literary production that later it would astonish him for having been capable of so much. The rapture and triumph of certain feasts of thought cannot be explained to those who have not experienced them and are not spiritually developed to understand them. Human orgies are nothing in comparison. The whole being has a sensation of expansion beyond the suffocating limits of space and time; it sails in its infinite element, above all human dimensions of power, of dominion, of clarity of vision. In a non-sensory exaltation, not superficial, but so spiritually deep, so immersed in the substance of being, that it could be defined as a rapture. The true conception is, indeed, an ecstasy and a vision. And so it was for him. A whirlwind of spiritual currents enveloped him, dragged him out of himself, he did not know where, from vision to vision. His inner gaze watched, astonished, the expansion of horizons in the vastness of the planes of intuition, carried into new conceptual dimensions, until the sensation of the infinite greatness of the organic functioning of the universe. Thought appeared to him as true lightning bolts, unforeseen, vivid, blinding like sparks. His poor pen followed with difficulty; he could not record everything, and his heart swelled in the exaltation of the joy of conception. It even seemed to him that this thought was born of a new kind of spiritual love that descended from heaven, inflaming him like a whirlwind of fire.

And there he was, a poor scribe, but a conscious recorder, faithful and enamoured executor. Around him, upon the earth, silence. And the great field asleep under the starry sky. The faint light of a lamp, a pen runs quickly and silently, just as the stars run silently through the endless space. There is nothing beside him but a stack of blank papers. But within, there is a fire of thoughts, of faith, and of love. Certainly, from on high, the good God looks and smiles, merciful and benign, because a wretched one, at the bottom of earthly hell, raises his eyes to Him and, full of faith, believes he feels Him and obeys Him. Who knows? Who can say what is the mystery of those sublime hours? Who can say what things, truly, burned in that fire? Does science know? Does religion know? No one was a witness; common measures do not serve to measure the soul's expansions. He knew only of his great and sincere faith, and in the simplicity of this faith, he burned, eager, only to obey and give himself. Is it such an unforgivable fault to the world to believe and give oneself? And why is it said, then, that faith alone suffices, and altruism is so exalted? He believed-and that was enough for him. And he abandoned himself to the infinite creative power of faith.Top of Form

However, before the practical and sceptical world, a man who acts like this is despised. And his faith was not inert, but made of fatigue and

sacrifice. In the effort to follow and fulfil it, he gave and consumed himself. Why did the world consider him naive? Why, in practice, are those who demonstrate selfishness and are skilled accumulators of wealth esteemed and exalted, perhaps so unscrupulous that they can constitute a true social danger? They had thrown in his face that his efforts did not yield money and returned to the theme of his unforgivable ineptitude... But he was absolutely at the antipodes of the current type of money-accumulating machine man. He accumulated other values, and in his field, he was the farmer and the scrupulous saver. If, by a higher principle, he despised economic return, what moral return he had in compensation! How skilled he felt in this field, and what results he obtained! He seemed to be idle; the more intense his work was, the more he sought to hide himself, so as not to be disturbed. He seemed to be resting, and everyone said: "But he does nothing!" - but then they were surprised to see such evident results sprouting from that nothingness and idleness. In every step, in every movement, in every attitude he took, he found himself in irreducible contrast with the world. Naturally, he could not be understood, nor admitted, because he gave the things of the spirit the utmost importance.

For the time being, he was protected by a misunderstanding, thanks to which the world appreciated him for the secondary effects derived from his new state, which he did not give the slightest importance to. Indeed, only a misunderstanding could serve as the basis for an agreement, which was in truth fictitious and brief, between him and the world. He could enjoy the invaluable advantage of being left in peace. What more could he ask of his fellow men? The misunderstanding could persist and extend because he worked in silence, without making a fuss about himself, without using the propaganda employed by those who wish to stand out in the world. His goals were different. He was moved not by vanity or by material advantages, but to obey the compulsion that derives from the understanding of his destiny. He had nothing to show off, because he asked nothing of others. He expected nothing from others, woe to them! He sought to build as best as he could, alone, with full sincerity, believing in God, driven by an intimate sense of mission. Also, in method, he was at the antipodes of the world.Bottom of Form

But beneath the misunderstanding, discord was incubating, which was of substance, profound, and incurable. On one side, he, active in spirit, connected to the Gospel, always progressing on the path of mystical ascension, and on the other, the world, active in matter, living in disagreement with the Gospel, increasingly bound to earthly interests. As his destiny unfolded, the two paths became more divergent and irreconcilable. The challenge was, for now, latent, but it was already a seed that would develop and slowly reach maturation. Many trials had hardened that man so that he could personify the challenge and lead the battle. Sooner or later, the misunderstanding would dissipate, revealing the inner discord and leading him to a confrontation, for everything is a struggle in life, also in spirit, and nothing is achieved without struggle.

His joy was great, and he was now enjoying a great triumph. But in the continuous progress of all things, no goal can exhaust itself within itself, and no conquest can halt with its achievement. Every victory that, resting on its laurels, does not want to turn into decay; every true, healthy, and positive victory contains within itself the germ of a new battle, it is the preparation for a new effort. But only in this way can it also be the preparation for a new triumph.

SUFFERINGS AND VISIONS

His great celebration of the spirit, his exultant euphoria, the flourishing of that complex destiny lasted ten years. During this period, he fully abandoned himself to the joy of fulfilling his mission. In the only two months that, in the summer, his work left him free, he managed to write a thousand pages, which he published in articles and volumes. He felt the conception so mature and ready within him that it took him no time. The normal work of cultural preparation, bibliographic, and assimilation of the subject was already automatically accomplished. He needed only the indispensable time for the material compilation of the writing in two phases: the first, illegible to others because it was done with extraordinary speed, and the second, careful, clear, for the editor. The sentences were almost always born automatically harmonious and coordinated; the word vibrant and spontaneously fused to the thought, in a refined style, without doubts, without painful uncertainties, without the need to correct or redo. The prose was an impulse of passion and concept. Alternately, according to the subject, he felt his mind or heart burning, and he lived in this flame from which he felt he had emerged and through which he was always nourished. This flame had the function of creating the ardent writings that were born within him in a rapid blaze and of transforming our man, operating in him an even more intense spiritual maturation.

Several elements and moments intertwine, cooperating for the maturation of this period:

1st The maturity of a destiny in full productivity. The subject in high spiritual tension, from which flowed continuous production and in which resides his fulfilment in the accomplishment of the mission. A state of great productivity also as a practical result.

2nd On the outside, a deaf and negative world that admires only the spiritually insignificant side of the phenomenon, that is, the economic position granted to the subject by Divine Providence, only so that he would have on earth something to support himself, without lacking the necessary. He is, temporarily, removed from this world by a misunderstanding that will turn into aggression as, with the continued publication of his works, his thought is better understood. There is, however, a small minority of chosen ones who will be called to collaborate; who understand and encourage. Support granted by Providence so that the mission could be fulfilled.

3rd The high spiritual tension, the subject's permanence in this elevated atmosphere, in this state of grace—allowed him the acceleration of evolutionary maturation, to such a rapid expansion of his whole being upwards, that the phenomenon hastens from the inspirational phase into mystical catharsis, and the conceptual record transforms into contemplation and vision. With this supreme realization, he concludes this period.

The great force that sustained everything was his inner spiritual fire. At the time, he lived off it, and even while exhausting himself, he did not give up, did not feel tired. Then, to the inner satisfaction was added the pure and intense joy of external triumph. His writings had suddenly found the best publishers and were being translated and disseminated abroad. As a writer, unknown among the most unknown, he was surprised and explained the miracle by the intervention, also in this field, of Providence, which now so decisively opened new paths for him. In his private life, he had already obtained surprising evidence. Here too, an intelligent convergence of forces wanted, prepared, and acted. He, a first-time sailor, navigated the open ocean, in the storm, among so many reefs, without avoiding them and succeeding. Someone must certainly have been directing for him, for he was absorbed in the work of execution. He advanced with security and success, without hesitation, letting himself be guided by an instinct that resolved and concluded, without revealing to him the analysis or the secret of its operations. It was the time of abundance, and no help was refused. His name was spreading and becoming well-known. For a moment, he was almost so humanly naive as to believe in fame. But, he had only experienced a small part of it - and had already understood the bitter deception it meant, and he sought to rid himself of that illusion into which one so easily falls. The world saw the practical effects, admired and applauded – precisely this world that was again preparing to condemn him. Some, of a chosen spirit, had understood not the rumours, but the original joys and sorrows.

However, not everything was always a celebration in his work. There were the moments of intoxication in conception; there were the aids from Providence, which seemed miraculous; there was the realization of himself in concrete results. But there was also the exhaustion from work; the stupid resistances of a blind and inert world; the torment of a thousand small difficulties that he had to overcome by himself. He was already overwhelmed by another work that was draining his strength and energy. He had to steal hours from sleep, and his body felt it. He violated the law of equilibrium by imposing on himself an excessively violent effort, which nature would eventually make him pay for. The high nervous tension was exhausting him. Around him, everything remained indifferent to his fragile state of hypersensitivity. He continued to walk his path, ignorant of the tension that sometimes pushed him brutally. No one understood, nor acknowledged this second work, this second invisible life in which he tormented himself. His superiors rightly demanded constant performance from him. Life has its pitiless laws. And he had nothing but his poor means to move forward, and he feared that his strength might fail him before completing all his work.

Summer vacations officially meant rest. When he, exhausted from his work, returned to human occupations, his superiors awaited him to say: "Now that you have rested enough, work." And he worked.

It was monotonous, insipid work, so anti-intellectual that it stupefied him. He was caught precisely during the period of most violent production, by a superior without energy or discernment, but in compensation, annoyingly nitpicky to the extreme. Poor wretch! Who knows in what physical and moral misery he may have struggled for survival! He was not capable of understanding that he had no right to seek help from someone in worse conditions than himself. When, finally, he went away, it was a liberation for everyone.

The mother of our protagonist has died. Yet they had the audacity to not even give him a single day of leave. Once, they made him return from over a hundred kilometres away, while he was on summer vacation, losing a day of travel, only to make him write two forgotten words in a minute. Madness! Our man loved work, efficient work, not useless bureaucratic formalities. The waste of time always seemed to him a crime.

In these small contrasts, in the daily resistance of a simple and poor life, he was tempered. Certain humiliations had the power to deepen his thoughts and sweeten his judgment of his fellow men, who are more sick than wicked, though relatively guilty. Evangelically, he endured and practiced the virtues of humility and patience, despised by the world that exalts strength and victory. At certain moments, he would unfold, and as an aesthete of moral beauty, he contemplated his life conditions. And he found some violent contrasts morally artistic: he found some conditions of human abasement morally comforting. At every moment, he was always the irreducible enemy of the world, to the point of finding his own exaltation only in renunciation, in subversion, in the destruction of everything the world exalts.

His work was carried out in the location of an old convent. Sometimes he had to stay working until late at night to finish any delayed service. It often happened that he had before him one of those terrible minutes, senseless prose in which the superior would later examine, even down to the commas. And he had to prepare several of them. His mind would escape elsewhere. Inside, a fire of living, yearning thoughts burned, thoughts that did not know how to ossify into a minute. He had to write, and his rebellious mind would wander, all the more active the more detestable the work to be done was. The building was cold, desolate, eerie in its silence and in its solitude! From those bare walls emanated heavy vibrations that gave him a painful feeling of sadness. The pen would stop, and his mind would wander. That monastery seemed to him like the Charterhouse of Valldemossa, where Chopin, terrified by inner fears, composed his bitter preludes on his poor Majorcan piano, alone, in the stormy night. And also, like Chopin, he saw a procession of chanting friars passing through the eerie, silent corridors, under the uncertain light of lamps. He stared into their dead eyes and asked: "Who are you? Why life and death? Why did you live? Why do I suffer? Why must one suffer so much?" And the procession continued, disappearing who knows where, with their slow, harrowing chant. And he would awaken over the minute. Life struck him with it in the face, like a slap.

He returned home late, following dark and lonely paths. In winter, it was very cold in that mountain village, and he lived precisely in a gorge between hills, where the wind blew violently. But what he feared were men, not the elements.

Your little house was situated among rugged crags, open to the valley where the wind prevailed. It was simple and poor, and around it, the force of great telluric movements seemed to have immobilized the masses in the

postures of giants. This landscape was in perfect harmony with his spirita landscape entirely made of strength, with evident bold and violent outlines in which the vertical was dominant. It was in perfect harmony with his spirit, expressing the same painful yearning for ascension, this tormented, twisted landscape as if the spasm of an intimate creative pain had been imprinted on its martyred flesh. How much must this strong and daring land have struggled to rise to this altitude! Those cyclopean telluric contortions seemed to speak to him of the profound constructive torment of ascension, which he himself suffered. The earth, too, in its evolutionary plane, had struggled greatly and certainly suffered to reach the formation of those superb cathedrals of rock, obeying also the law that commands that without profound and intimate work, nothing can be constructed. He, who with similar audacity, attempted to construct the cathedral of thought, saw himself in the tension of those stone spires and found himself, meditating on how, to also reach the pinnacle of the spirit, it was necessary to traverse and suffer the same convulsions, the same collapses of entire planes of consciousness, and similar reactions of salvific emergences.

In his room, there was nothing but the bed; there were no other human beings to dispute the path with him, free to communicate with heaven. When he returned, the little house was deserted. Everything was in order, as he had left it, but the warmth of affection was missing. The temperature of the house was very cold, but that was nothing. It was cold, especially for the heart. It was distressing. Sometimes he would sit, alone, on the steps in front of the door, without the courage to enter, to avoid feeling that cold. Here too he was being tempered. Certain solitudes, intensely dynamic and fruitful, are a useful and precious suffering. His solitude was neither peaceful acquiescence nor inertia of spirit. It was a desired and merely external silence, to better hear the voice of God; it was an apparent calm, full of the most tormenting storms and laborious maturations of the soul; it was an inertia of things, admitted only to not disturb the burning inner dynamism; it was a suffocating external compression that conditioned the internal creative explosion. The icy deprivation of human affection is, perhaps, a necessary constraint to find evangelical love for one's neighbour.

He spent the long mountain winters in those frozen and restless solitudes between the storms and the peaks. Solitude is both terrifying and sublime. The common man almost fears it. He finds himself alone before the great mysteries of life that cause him vertigo. The great silences suffocate him, where the Eternal is absent and the soul listens. It is as if he does not have the strength to lean on the reference points located in the absolute, above his relative everyday life. But our man did not fear that silence. Icy solitude, worthy of being lived. "Well," he would say, "at the door of my house, humanity hesitates, falls silent, and does not enter." And his figure, beaten by thought, bent by pain, his sad and deep gaze, would once again turn upward, toward the sky. Visions would then descend to comfort him, and then the whirlwind of his spiritual life would grow stronger, and his being would expand upwards, intoxicating itself with freedom. He felt how much good these great and terrible silences do to the soul and how necessary they are to reach the depths, where the reality of things lies, beyond human appearances and illusions. He renounced the life of all to conquer a new life; he received revelations which he later disseminated in his writings.

He had to descend very deeply to hear the voice of God. His readers thought that the inspiring muse, which seemed to create everything suddenly with such spontaneity and ease, came to him freely, without effort. No! The law is that without pain there is no creation. He knew how hard he had earned that dizzying inspiration; with what profound maceration in pain and with what slow maturation it had been prepared. He knew that only under the tremendous lashings of destiny could certain pages be born that seemed written with blood; that only under the shattering of the spirit

could those words arise that sounded with the timbre of bronze, that dazzling and profound conception that seemed to move the essence of things. And he knew as well, and very well, that the life of the spirit demands everything for itself, not being able to compete with profits, interests, or human satisfactions. Therefore, he needed to do the minimum of what is human, of what is earthly, and deny comforts to his body, to be free in spirit, independent of everything and everyone, so that no material need would make him court earthly goods and those who possess them. It was urgent to have the heroic courage of not pitying himself, for without sacrifice and renunciation, one cannot fulfil the mission nor reach a high destiny for the good of others. He knew that to create it was necessary to purify oneself, and that to purify oneself it was necessary to burn and consume oneself. To hear the music of God and make the irrepressible inner song explode, he would have to live Beethoven's tragic deafness, Chopin's consumption, and Catherine of Siena's torments; he had to turn his back on the world to be able to turn his face toward God. He knew that the path undertaken implied a serious and tremendous commitment with God and with himself, to persevere in the continuous struggle of the spirit until achieving liberation in spirit. He had to die to be reborn; he had to have first felt all his pain and his share of the world's pain, because only those who give themselves as a holocaust and have overcome the martyrdom of their own humanity can resurrect in paradise and hear the divine music.

Each of his words screamed to the world that, without profound suffering, no great creation is possible; without shattering the soul, inspiration does not come, because one does not reach heaven. To reach triumph, it was necessary to always carry high in the name of God the sacred flame, to burn oneself in the fire of the flames so that the voice of his soul could reach God until the last breath. He knew all of this and threw himself into hard work, fighting tenaciously, in silence.

Thus, he lived in simplicity, reducing to a minimum, in order to be free, the human needs that serve matter, totally bound to a gigantic life of the spirit. On the outside, in the wonders of the creator, the magnificence of God's work - on the inside, a cyclopean storm of thought. Other things closer brought suffering to his soul. The village was small, and, like all villages, it was eager to inquire about everything, to supply itself with that cerebral nourishment necessary to all. Gossip reigned like bothersome mosquitoes, constantly buzzing around him. He had reduced himself to the life of a friar: solitude and work are poor food for the appetite of the curious. It seemed to him that he lived on a stage, before an audience. That continuous observation and, above all, the frivolity with which it was exercised, bothered him. Nothing is more terribly pitiless than irresponsible unconsciousness. Only the greatest imbeciles are capable of committing the most atrocious cruelties and for this very reason deserve forgiveness. The young men who walked the roads of that mountainous village felt it their duty, as soon as they saw him, to insult him with curses and, naturally, out of an excess of courage, always from a distance. And he wondered what level those young men represented in the spiritual evolution of humanity, what biological law of the unknown instinct moved the insult, so promptly and sincerely felt by those unconscious ones. Born yesterday, they knew perfectly how to repeat the old scenes of twenty centuries ago, but always new and renewed, of Christ's crucifixion. Certain judgments they made of him, with superficiality and haste, embittered him. There are obscure lives, sadly imprisoned in silence; mute pains that, more than others, deserve respect. He could not explain a certain persistence in malice except by attributing it to deep unconsciousness and complete insensitivity.

The scornful laugh of the judge is disturbed by the terror of being able to understand and having to admit that, in that silence, there exists a drama that one does not dare to confront, and, consequently, there is also a heroism that looks from above on everything. Perhaps there is in this a destiny of work and pain that, to be more tragic, dresses itself in ridicule. The most absurd judgments were made of him. Certainly, almost no one understood. Among other things, he was not considered religious because he was not very observant. The bad odour emanates from the crowd even when it is in churches. The real concerns that he felt dominating his spirit suffocated him. The spiritual emanations of those gatherings stifled his breathing, and he had to flee. And thus he passed for a misanthrope, arrogant, unbeliever. He suffered from seeing in many devout people virtue reduced to a pretext for censoring others, from seeing so much zeal in the subversion of the Gospel.

On the other hand, how could they renounce that if they had managed, who knows with what stratagem, to accomplish the difficult task of reconciling the drive of aggressive instincts with the persuasion, although illusory, that they could thus conquer paradise? He forgave and did not miss an opportunity, in secret, to help. Instead of feeling hurt, he sensed that he should not give any importance to the judgment of a small world, as it was very easy to understand how little that was worth.

When he found himself faced with the ill will of others, he said to himself: "whoever wishes to harm me can only do me good; they can only harm themselves. I cannot and should not deprive them of the right to experience and, through suffering, understand. They are not to blame for their involution, insensitivity, ignorance of the laws of life. It is good that they suffer. But I must forgive them, and I must help them to redeem themselves."

He appreciated the continuous retreat of things and people – because it detached him from the earth. That silence, that desolate solitude, that discomfort in the struggle against the elements, the work, the tolerance, and the incomprehension – he felt deeply in his heart – were the conditions of his spiritual ascension. What depth of intimate sensations in that sadness, what intense inner life, what fervour of maturation! He, who understood, appreciated, and so loved these things, found great reward in them. He knew how necessary the conditions of suffering, especially moral suffering, are for achieving certain spiritual conquests: lacerating, they detach; destroying, they create. And a whole inner elaboration that renews. And he deeply enjoyed it.

Something from the world of the spirit descended to compensate him for the lack of satisfaction of the most elementary and fundamental needs of the life of feeling. While to strangers he seemed misanthropic and selfish, he was, in truth, a fervent and passionate soul. He had a need for higher expansions. Ordinary people, even good ones, seemed to him terribly superficial, empty, inert, and utterly incapable of understanding how they appeared to him. An intimate voice always spoke to his soul, and he set himself to listen. They were colloquies in spirit, made only of thought, without sounds or form of words, but full of concepts and goodness. There was the whole substance of a thinking being, but none of its appearance. His senses neither saw nor heard; yet he perceived with the senses of the soul a well-individualized vibration that addressed him and touched him. And it was comforting. It seemed that this voice had the faculty of dissipating his sadness, of filling his solitude, and always persuaded him toward good, as if it were a living person. He listened with affection. And the voice never reproached him, but advised and encouraged him. How many times, in the anguish of some adversity, had he become calm! No human voice from the outside had ever been so convincing as this inner voice. How could an illusory creation of his imagination reach such extremes? How could a hallucination persuade and calm? How could an unfolding of consciousness contain a thought different and opposed to that of the subject, to the point of provoking discussion, a thought so superior as to disagree with the other thought and yet leave the individual satisfied? And then, that voice was so wise, so elevated, so kind! It seemed to him that he heard the voice of Christ. And the sweet dream, sometimes vivid like a memory, lulled him and, in all his tribulations, always pacified him.

Sometimes the colloquy became so intense, the thought knocked so strongly at the doors of his soul, that it seemed to him to incarnate into a white, luminous, and diaphanous form, which reminded him of the figure of Christ. And he would look at it to fix its features made of light. Sometimes, sitting at the table, the impression of the presence of this figure was so vivid that he, without intending it, would set another place, as if he had a guest. And this one would smile at him with a smile all his own, of someone who understands and forgives, and looked at him with a gaze that seemed to pierce his entire soul. What surprised him most of all was the penetrating power of that gaze which, nevertheless, was barely distinguishable. It seemed that nothing could hide from him, nothing could resist him, and that every thought became, for him, transparent. That gaze was such a synthesis of life, a vibration so intense and complete, a ray so powerful, warm, and deep, that it persuaded with his simple presence.

Such phenomena are not explained by merely giving them Greek-derived names and defining them as abnormal or pathological. The science of vibrations is only just beginning, and we do not have the authority to deny 'a priori' the possibility of suprasensory facts, simply because they cannot be measured by our crude instruments. And even if they were illusions, a science that wished to deprive the soul of this comfort, without knowing how to provide anything capable of replacing it, would be committing a crime.

Thus, unnoticed by the world, in the peace and solitude of a simple and obscure life, protected by silence, this sweet, fervent, and tranquil dream flourished, in which the memories of Galilee throbbed. It was as if heaven, at times, wished and could descend to Earth, to this our infernal earth – but stealthily, protecting itself with subtle and evanescent forms, which, to the world's coarse senses, remain invisible and can thus escape its aggressive and destructive intervention. And so, the higher can, with tranquillity, operate its irradiation of strength, flooding some beings with it, producing those deep spiritual saturations that are the necessary premise for certain explosions that the world will later limit itself to verifying, accepting, without being able to trace their mysterious preparation.

He absorbed them slowly, in a state of idyllic simplicity, still protected by the misunderstandings in which human ignorance and insensitivity fall, which, seeing nothing, can destroy nothing. No one could imagine what storms were being prepared in that serenity, how much pain already contained within that joy. Nothing strange, after all. If certain phenomena were understood, one would see in them the law that, for the great and the small, is always the same.

Just as the profound elaboration of matter in the formation of the fetus takes place hidden from the external light, protected by coverings, entirely devoted to an intense fervent work, and only under these conditions can the new being come to light and utter its cry of life, so too the profound elaboration of the spirit in mystical catharsis develops equally hidden and protected, and only at the cost of the interior work of maceration and perfection, of destruction and reconstruction; only when a period of peace and joy has produced complete saturation can the new man come to the light of the world and affirm himself here with his cry of defiance. Years of silence, of hidden life, are necessary to make a man, to prepare him, to equip him with the means of combat. The naivety of this idyllic dream, of the Gospel felt as joy descending from heaven before being the battle that will have to be fought on earth, as a springtime sweetness of love instead of a storm of ruthless martyrdom, was not gratuitous satisfaction, but a necessary premise.

And in this waiting, destiny gave a moment of rest. Thus, in peace and joy, the mystical catharsis of our character was fulfilled. There was a culminating moment that must be narrated.

One afternoon, returning to the small town where he lived, a winter afternoon, alone, in a third-class carriage on a small, freezing, and rattling train, he had settled on the hard seat, with his soul embittered by solitude, with a premonition of something painful that was being prepared. No one awaited him at his arrival. The house was cold and empty. He felt his soul tightened in a vice, a mortal sadness. He began to pray, thinking of the passion of Christ, reviewing, in contemplation, especially the intimate spiritual scene of Gethsemane, and reliving its profound anguish. He had just plunged into this inner vision when it seemed to him that, on the seat in front of him, there appeared, emerging from the shadow in which the uncertain light left that corner, a kind of phosphorescence, a vague luminosity that was becoming more intense and defining its features in a form that, once again, without a doubt, took on the resemblance of Christ. And, as in other times, the gaze was born first, and that gaze spoke to him.

He observed for a long time, to orient himself, to decipher the thought that was in the vibrations of that gaze, which was a sad and compassionate gaze in which all the pain of the world seemed to merge. That gaze seemed to descend from a vertex of love and pain — the Cross —, it seemed to evoke it as a means of redemption. And the voice internally said:

"Behold, my love brings you suffering. The world flees from me and deceives me, rejects redemption because it does not want to suffer. I gave the example. You, who love me and follow me, prepare yourself. Behold, your hour is approaching, the greatest trial. Prepare yourself. I gave the example".

That foretelling gaze fixed itself on him and on the world. And he saw it reappear in the gentle figure of Christ, bent over each man who suffers. How many different pains! And each man has his own pain, and over each pain, that figure and that gaze bowed. How many faces of Christ appeared at the same time in so many different places, beside so many anguished souls, with so many different pains, offering comfort to each one! He saw, in an infinite row, the figure of Christ multiply for the immense multitude of the world, and to each one repeat: "Prepare yourself. Behold, your hour is approaching. I gave the example."

A stronger jolt woke him up, alerting him that he had arrived. He jumped out of the car and went, alone, to the empty house, through the dark and deserted streets. That gaze had fixed on him for the last time, leaving an unforgettable feeling of love and pain imprinted on his soul. Perhaps it was a warning of passion, a proof of union, a command. This was a culminating moment that he could never forget.

THE ASSAULTS

There are as many types of destiny as there are men. Destinies that elevate, that stagnate, that descend. Some burn with the yearning for moral perfection and submit themselves to intense trials along a rapid path; others stagnate, wandering idly along the margins of life; others destroy their spiritual values, brutalizing themselves in matter. And each one, according to what they are, judges life – but deep down, they judge only their own life and themselves. Those destined for heaven say that the earth is a purgatory, a place of suffering, and that life can have no other value or meaning beyond redemption through pain. And they suffer, knowing that they suffer usefully, in a conscious and constructive pain. This type of destiny has its goal beyond life, and in that goal it finds fulfilment, remaining in irreducible contrast with earthly life. These are, generally, souls fallen to earth for expiation or mission.

There are also those who, balanced in a stable position in the earthly environment, do not have the function of enduring it just so that they may learn and advance, but rather to work on it so that earthly animality may evolve. And they may be honest workers, but they still do not know how to achieve realization in the highest planes of the earth. For them, here is a place of work, and here they want to reap their results. For them,

transcendence and escapes are inconceivable. In short, here is the great swamp where those who live in a state of inertia stagnate in decay. Ignorant, indifferent, hedonists, opportunists, incapable of believing in anything other than their own well-being, guided by the few instincts through which the laws of life prevail-these consider the earth not as a place of expiation or mission, nor as a place of work, but as a place for enjoyment. They vegetate in animality and are deeply attached to life and its pleasures. They sometimes find it thorny, but are endowed with such indifference, insensitivity, and selfishness that they still manage to find joy. And they remain satisfied, unable to conceive anything better. These praise life and conclude that, despite everything, one can cry very well in this valley of tears. For these, pain is nothing but an enemy to be fought and destroyed by any means. They are ignorant of its evolutionary function! This useless human scum drifts; it is the amorphous herd, the great social mass to whose level all religious, political, and social conceptions must descend if they wish to survive and act in the masses. It is natural that, with such diverse points of view and positions, judgments are in disagreement, and the same things have, for the various individuals, different meanings and values. The contrast between our character and the world is, at its core, nothing more than a divergence of individual type and goal.

The destiny we are observing here belongs to the first type, which can be called irreducible or unadaptable. They endure everything with heroic patience, but always consider the earth as an exile and a hell. And such it is, to their sadness. All the more so because they understand everything, having neither the protection of ignorance nor insensitivity, like those others. In contrast to stationary or descending destinies, these can be qualified as ascending destinies: destinies both happy and unfortunate at the same time—unfortunate for the path to be travelled, but happy for the goal they must reach, which is always a tremendous labour. To give rest and respite to the expiation, to allow the assimilation of trials, the explanation of missions; to avoid destroying man under the cross, these ascending destinies often do not follow a straight line but move in waves, where the peaks are always higher and the lows always less low. This implies an ascent of the entire whole, but also, after each period of ascent, one of descent or fall. At this point, we are at the end of the period we have been narrating. Our character had reached a peak, and it was the very height of this that precipitated him into the descent of the wave, into the depression that inevitably opened before him. At the end of this period, the dominant motives within him reached their fullness; all the values previously accumulated had yielded their result. And the expansion, having exhausted its momentum, came to a halt.

Let us continue to observe the development of the various forces that operate in this destiny which, present at birth, must develop until death, already outlined previously but continuously corrected by the free will of the individual, who used them to continue his ascent. These forces, always in action, changeable in their development, are the true characters of this book. This is not just a story: it is a study of the most intimate impulses of life, which for us always takes on an organic, logical, and profound meaning. So logical and profound that in those forces, one feels and recognizes here a driving intelligence that sparkles with divine thought, an intelligence that allows us to know how to fulfil the destiny of each character. We hope it is not in vain and that the assertions of this book, crafted to give life a serious and substantial meaning, are understood.

We will see at the end of this period, which spans from forty-five to fifty-five years of our character, that each seed has matured its fruit and that in each field the harvest has been made. Each of the three motives, continuing their development, reveals its position.

1st – Knowledge, initially awaited and sought after, was obtained first and was during this period successfully recorded and disseminated. 2nd – This represents the culmination of the performance: that life gave all its yield in fulfilling its mission. That force matured its fruit for the good of others; it had become human action operating in society. The results that this performance brought to the world, once that temporary misunderstanding was broken, would now provoke aggression. The performance is a challenge to the struggle.

3rd – The two preceding motives are completed in a third, which develops in parallel. In the state of grace during the recording and in fulfilling his own mission, the mystical catharsis we had described matures within the subject, in which expiation through pain finds a pause and comfort, with the first liberation and redemption arriving like a spiritual ascension.

After a period of primary formation and after individual affirmations, that destiny took on a collective significance. The three impulses intersected and fused into a single realization. Once the transformation of the subject was achieved, they now radiate into a broader external action, of which he was the centre. But, to reach this new yield, it was necessary to return to the great purifying work of pain, to the effort of redemption.

We find ourselves, at this moment, facing three vertices of realization, and it is precisely the vertices that attract the assault. A vertex is, at its core, a culmination of forces, a concentration of impulses at a single point—an imbalance that demands compensation. The laws of life do not see whether that imbalance on its plane was formed with a view to achieving higher and more complex equilibriums on other planes. Nature does not feel this kind of purpose that surpasses it. It will naturally be a more distant compensation; entirely absorbed in the tension of work on its own plane, it does not take it into account. Its laws signal the imbalance on its level and limit themselves to correcting it automatically. Whoever throws themselves into the void falls and shatters, even if they are a hero or martyr risking their life to save another or for the good of the world. The earthly human law says: "You will be compensated, but for now, you must pay." For these reasons, having reached this point in its development, the three motives of that destiny, which had converged into three vertices, must endure three assaults. The continuation of development can only occur through the corresponding inversion of positions. The three paths continue, the three forces must advance, but they reverse and act in the opposite direction. Each favourable impulse transforms into an opposing impulse of reaction. The Law had given freely, and now it presents itself as a creditor with the right to demand its price. It had exalted, and now it humbles. And the time of trials returns, in which the subject, triumphant through the help of those forces, finds himself now severely examined by them.

The path of knowledge had produced for him a maximum of individual and collective yield. The dissemination was being fulfilled. The seed had definitively sprouted and was now an autonomous impulse, like a child that no longer needs its mother. All that remained for our character was to be the administrator of the ideal, that is, to practically accompany the dissemination. But this affirmation implied a negation; this superior equilibrium had produced an inferior equilibrium that now required its compensation. His entire organism, at the expense of whose energy much of the work had been accomplished, was now suffering the consequences. The high nervous tension in which he had lived for years in order to produce, under the most unfavourable conditions, had exhausted him. The "matter" that had lent itself to the effort of the "spirit" now had to pay for it. When the fever of productive exaltation ceased, when normal calm returned, he saw that his health was shaken. The intense and continuous effort had reduced him to a wreck. He had reached the highest realization of himself in knowledge, but in doing so, he had violated the economic and conservative balance of nature, which now made him see, on its plane, how much he owed it. Nothing is given freely, and he now had to bear this new debt on his shoulders. And he fell into deep exhaustion.

The work demanded by the performance had produced the harvest, the joy of ripe and abundant crops. The knowledge disseminated had become an operative force in the world; the mission was finally accomplished. It was indeed an external success that provoked admiration and exaltation, an exaltation necessary for those books to penetrate and reach mature minds, ready to understand them. But it was necessary to pay. The peak of the world's exaltation is precisely the imbalance that demands compensation. It is the logical and natural preparation for the world's aggression (Palm Sunday). In the particular case we narrate, we are merely applying a universal law, always ready to assert itself at any moment for anyone who follows the path of ascension. It is a universal law, valid for individual cases as well as collective ones (historical determinism). The momentary peace maintained by misunderstanding no longer had moral reasons or material possibilities to sustain itself and had to fall. In its place, the substance of that performance, which was challenge and struggle, and the substantial irreconcilability between the ideal and the world, could not delay in appearing. Upon the dissemination of the writings, this must have been understood, as well as what the author truly intended, and, faced with this unexpected revelation, there would be rebellion. The world was there to take revenge. He had interfered with the laws of human interest, he had accused in the name of good and truth, he had attempted to destroy in order to overcome. Therefore, he had to pay. The hour of betrayal had arrived.

After all, even the path of expiation had led to its fruits, that is, to purification and, with it, to spiritual ascension in the mystical catharsis. It had even reached inspiration and visions; what more could one dream of? The realization that for him was the maximum required an adequate compensation. That vertex was a very hurried anticipation of evolution, an imbalance of the forces of nature, clinging not to renewal but to the safest stability of already conquered positions. This conservative misoneism is a position of dominant inertia and entirely negative toward biological superstructures. And while that misoneism offers the normal man a broad base of support and a guarantee of survival—it leaves those superstructures alone, abandoned to their own forces, their own responsibility, and their own destiny.

The rule protests and rises against the exception, reproaching it for its unforgivable divergent law. He remained up there, alone, suspended between heaven and earth, between two planes, between two different laws, unprotected by either. His position was the product of exceptional effort; he could not resist for long in that balance of flight. For the triumph of imbecile mediocrity, Icarus had to fall. So too, that spiritual peak he had reached required that he fall, so that equilibrium could be restored. When, one day, nature refused to supply energies in advance and withdrew from the risk of the adventure, opposing its law of conservation to the law of evolution, which was reaching too far, then the creative fever was calmed, and the enthusiasm for ascension cooled. And so that he would not be burned and could survive, the high spiritual tension fell, and the inner light went out. A fragment falls to the earth. The pious remains of the angel who burned his wings in the sun lie in the mud. Here too, he had to pay. And spiritual blindness arrived. Having lost the strength capable of reaching high tension, the sweet visions disappeared, and with them, the sense of God. He was left alone on the hostile earth that had rejected him and now denied him, too tired to know how to return to heaven, but with the memory of the great experience lived still too strong to adapt to life on earth. He then felt abandoned by God, and in his soul remained only the vision of the terrifying earthly hell. He had before him nothing but the human reality that turned against him.

Thus, with his complete destruction, he paid for everything. And these are the trials that await those who tread the paths of the spirit. And he fell, fainting, under the cross.

THE WAYS OF THE WORLD

He found himself quite exhausted when he reached the end. It is human that, when one reaches the end of the struggle, one hopes to find, if not a triumph, at least an adequate compensation. And it is indispensable to find a little relief, to comfort oneself and recover strength and courage. The normal thing for him, at this level, was to encounter the harshest trials. Such is the law of these phenomena. He who had overcome the lower animal life to rise in the higher life of the spirit. He who had emerged victorious from that trial, having assimilated all its meaning, now found himself faced with a greater task, forced to risk a more arduous trial. His new conquests and qualities were suddenly tested and examined. He arrived wounded in his very spirit, suddenly deprived of all his joys and affirmations, struck at the core of his new life, in his new consciousness.

In the decade that was now ending, all the knots of his destiny had loosened and unravelled; now began a period in which all those knots tightened again. This was the compensation he found after so much work and dedication. The harvest, too, is pain. Walk, walk! How many roads had he travelled to arrive, and behold, he was, once again, at the beginning! How much work! How much weariness! How long is the life of one who struggles and suffers! But new pains, new falls, and experiences were necessary, to avoid rotting on the laurels and to be able to rise ever higher! For now, however, there was darkness! Generally, seen from the outside, certain misunderstood feelings seem like weakness, which the world judges with disdain. But great is always the destiny of a soul that suffers and, through suffering, redeems itself. Wretched are those who do not redeem themselves, for no one is perfect. If one were perfect, one would not be on earth.

In the beautiful spiritual dream, he had forgotten the reality of human life. Until now, his existence had been projected upwards, it had been a strategy of escape from the human plane, from earth to heaven. And now the experience of shadow was set before him, as a reaction to the preceding experience of light, a phase of desolation, but also of improvement in a still unexplored aspect. He neither chose nor desired it. The reactions surrounding him dragged him, made strong by his weakness, and he was thrown fully into that state and had to overcome the merciless impact of human reality.

The first impulse of the world, when faced with a new construction, is to attack. In this way, it assesses the value and solidity of it. It is the test of the school of life, the biological guarantee. He was called to descend from his heavens and forced to live on earth, which imposed its laws on him, reproaching him for his escape. Biological reality awaited him in ambush, to fall upon his shoulders and subject him to an exam, very different from the spirituality to which he had grown accustomed. The test would be all the more severe the less prepared he was and ever desirous of fleeing. His emergence of spirit projected itself onto the earth; his overcoming made him visible, the misunderstanding that had protected his peace fell away; it was understood that he was the friend of the Gospel and the enemy of the world. The struggle would soon prove his resistance, an indication of his substantial worth. This was the biological law that imposed its iron dilemma: either to win and grow stronger, or to lose and be eliminated. The laws of the earth are more of force than of justice; and of justice only through force. Had he not, by turning toward heaven, placed himself in a position of defiance toward the earth? He had to accept the struggle. He could no longer retreat, nor allow himself to remain between heaven and earth. He had taken an extreme and decisive position. Thus forced to come to the battlefield, he had to face, in a supreme challenge of life or death, the world that confronted him and decide: Win, or die. His ideal still had to surpass the test of struggle. Was this not, after all, the essential point of his destiny, and was the fulfilment of his mission not taking place within it?

His books, his life, were against the world. The mere presence of the author and his work was for the world a reproach, a mutual and continuous accusation. This was disturbing because real life detests the Gospel and those who live it seriously. When it was understood what his true thought and true life were, that is, the serious application of the Gospel, many were outraged, sincerely scandalized, but above all annoyed by the practical consequences that harmed the compromises that had taken so much effort to be hidden from the vigilance of the spirit. With words and actions, he disturbed the world, and the world reacted. He condemned the world with his measures, and the world responded in the same way.

He was in a state of nervous exhaustion and needed rest, encouragement, and comfort. But, as he was, he had to attend to his obligations to earn his bread. And not even the fruit of his labour, which rightfully belonged to him, did he keep for himself; he gave it to help the poor. If anything was left, he considered himself only a custodian, keeping it for someone who might need it more than he did. Fatigue, fatigue — it was what increasingly undermined his health. There remained for him nothing but hard mechanical work and a life oppressed by all kinds of adversities. Nature harshly avenged those who violated its fundamental laws of conservation. The smallest of incidents seemed to turn fiercely against him. For him, who had tasted the great joy of heavenly life, there was nothing left but the bitterness of the bestial life on earth. And the great inner fire that had animated him had extinguished. The torch had fallen and lay in ashes upon the earth. He lived in darkness, where dominated a sensation, certainly unreal but no less vivid, of abandonment by God. This sensation opened the doors to infernal doubt: "Am I mistaken? Have I sacrificed myself for a dream, for nothing?"

All the values, built with such great effort, crumbled to the ground, demolished. A cold, destructive storm had passed over them. Later, after the storm had passed, it would be necessary to know how to find them again, to seize that momentum and continue to develop them, starting over from the beginning, to reassimilate them this time with more depth, calm, and awareness than in the first rushed conquest. Only this could give him stability. Now, it was necessary to resist, to survive the physical and mental exhaustion, the despondency, the abandonment, the spiritual night, the material assaults—to survive against everything by his own means and at his own expense.

In the most difficult moments, instead of despairing, he waited, sensing that there is in the very force of events a tendency to resolve themselves automatically, by the law of life. The experience was terrible. He felt finished, and everything was against him. There was no way to choose. Only one thing mattered: to survive. The triumphant motifs of his destiny now spun like an impetuous wind of death. Spring was a distant memory—it had given its fruit, which had already been gathered. Now, it was necessary to cross the winter and begin again the work of preparing, from the beginning, a new harvest. Everything seemed very far away, unattainable, impossible, beyond all hope.

The world he condemned was extraordinarily divided in opinions, creeds, schools, and philosophical, social, religious, scientific, political, literary, and artistic systems. Each one was the proprietor of its own

terminology, often the centre of an exclusivist, organic construction of interests it represented and synthesized, armed against all other schools and systems. Form dominated substance. The world was a cacophony of discordant and rival voices. He preferred the simple truth of the Gospel, unique, free from form, all substance. It would solve all problems with simplicity, going straight to the heart of man. The world was divided into many separate, exclusivist fields, always fighting among themselves, but all equally struggling for monopoly—the only thing on which they were always in agreement and always the same. It was not so much the universal truth, equal for all, that mattered, but the solution to the relative, limited, human, and immediate problem. This dominated in substance. And then, behind everything, though camouflaged in a thousand forms, behind all facades, always the same biological truth of selfishness and struggle. Amid so many distinctions, he saw that the world, in truth, made only one distinction: between the self and the non-self. In other words: "Are you part of our group? Are you with us? Then you're right. You're not with us? Then you're wrong." It was his duty to rise above all divisions and struggles, to be impartial and universal. He still needed to unify all that tended to divide. He sought, instead of division, unity—a superior unity never willing to divide or degrade itself into becoming a matter of private interest. Those singular, separate truths appeared to him like walled and armed castles, where life carried on as in the medieval era, in those fierce times, forced to take refuge to avoid being destroyed. The material barriers of medieval times had fallen, but the moral barriers remained, blocking the way at every step. The cause was the ferocity of the times.

Particular truths were ready to accept him, as soon as he confined his thought and activity within their bounds. They offered protection but imposed domestication, imprisonment. Above all, they imposed exclusivity and the interest of the men who professed them, and war against the exclusivity and interests of all others, for no man defends another unless he sees in that defence the defence of himself. Naturally, the fault was not with these men, struggle is the most imperative law of life; nothing can exist on earth—not even heaven, if it were to descend—if it is not prepared to fight and defend itself. It was not their fault if "attack and defence" are the dominant language on earth, where everything that wishes to exist must take on this form. It was not man's fault if, to succeed, everything must close itself off in groups, in coalitions of interests, where selfishness is necessary; each defends his group in proportion to how much it is his own self, defending himself. It is not man's fault if, in this way, each one becomes the enemy of the group in which he does not see himself. And so, each group fights all other groups, just as each "self" fights all other "selves." It is not his fault that man is immersed in the relative. He cannot comprehend truths more universal than those which concern his own defence and his own life.

If one observes the opinions and theories that each person defends within each group, one will see that, despite the great differences, they are invariably the same in the fact that their conclusions and the moral they bring give reason to those who profess them, placing them in a position of superiority over others. Thus, the strong will support the philosophy of the strong because they are strong; the cunning, that of the cunning, because they are. The same goes for the weak and all types of humans. In fact, each person supports the philosophy in which they triumph, never the one in which they remain weak and defeated. Therefore, truth, practically, lies in the defence of each person against all the others; each opinion and philosophy in every field is nothing more than an act of egocentric affirmation, dictated by the exaltation of the self and the disdain for others. At this level, every higher truth is reduced to the minimum. This is why great principles, great laws, and great goals are not achieved by the majority. The common man limits himself to the work of individual and collective preservation. He is not the exceptional social cell, specialized in the function of a nervous organ of selection, an antenna that anticipates evolution. This type of exception, who feels the universal, transcends particular

groups and professes broader truths situated above individual and group interests, has no defence against any of the others, for he is outside their selfishness. On the contrary, he is attacked by all. Later, if a group takes hold of him, it will use him as a banner. And so, progress is made, even if dissemination and assimilation can only be achieved through exploitation. The human starting point for the universal is the particular; for altruism, it is egoism; for the absolute, it is the relative; for collective progress, it is individual progress. To survive and make oneself understood, it is necessary to enter the group, the particular, the relative, the individual selfishness; it is necessary for the ideal (so as not to remain a dead letter, if the times lack the strength to rise to it) to descend, to debase itself to the level of the times.

All this, our character understood, but he also felt that pure and complete truth can only be both utilitarian and universal; what an enemy sees in his neighbour—is not the truth. He loved the great unitary, totalizing, comprehensive truth, the truth of God, which embraces everything and everyone. Without distinctions or preferences, the interested particularities, all equally repulsed him. He loved the truth that, even while understanding and admitting human struggles, always remains above them. He could not comprehend it otherwise. Without taking anyone's side, he denied reason to all, due to the lack of sense that was present in everyone. And because he took no side, he was repudiated by all. Thus, finding the divided, relative, and utilitarian truth unacceptable, unable to close himself within any particular castle, he remained alone, expelled from all places, but free.

The irresistible need for freedom placed all misunderstandings on his shoulders. He was taken as irreligious; unbeliever to some; excessively zealous to others. In every field, he was viewed with suspicion because he disrupted habits; he was rebellious to traditions, claiming the right to an independence of conscience that, even when directed towards good, was always seen as insubordination and scandal. The God of religions is also a king; it is not permissible to speak to Him too directly and alone, without the proper human intermediaries. He had his own conscience and sincerely took on his responsibility. He was a non-conformist, a man who could not live with the flock. This might have also been sanctity, but it surely smelled of anarchy and rebellion, filling pious souls with suspicion. They demanded of him the things that everyone did—precisely those least suited to him.

He had been judged in a hundred different ways, according to the disposition of each person who observed him. Each one placed their own label on his back. The world liked to catalogue, to frame things within earthly practice. Thus, he had been defined as-spiritist medium, spiritualist, modernist, pantheist, monist, scientist, philosopher, scholar, inspired, mystic, etc... Each person, seeing him through their particular lens, classified him definitively, according to what they believed, without realizing that, if at that moment he passed through the field of their classification, shortly after, following his evolutionary path, he would already be far beyond it. He was taken for what he was not; he was confused with the most diverse things. He was all of them and none of them. His truth was dynamic, in continuous evolution, and could only be a product of his own, born from his experiences. No one, in principle, was more respectful of all authorities than he was. But he had the need to understand and see for himself, guiding himself in the great matters of the spirit, and he could not delegate to anyone this fundamental right innate in his conscience.

What tribulation, not being able to take a step in the world without suddenly stumbling upon a barrier of thought, into one of the many human divisions—all ready to fit him in, hoping to make him a piece in their service! What a desire to free himself from all these hindrances! What repugnance in seeing all problems in practice transported from substance to the plane of interests, and seeing that almost everyone agreed on this! Yet,

this was logical. Nor could it be otherwise on earth, given that the law of struggle prevails here, which allows no other form of life but attack and defence. Pure thought, the ideal, goodness that is not encased in the shell of selfishness and interest—has no defence and cannot survive in such a world. By not risking degradation in the mud, the ideal cannot function on earth and does not affect man. If it does not debase itself in matter, matter does not hold it, does not retain its imprint. Adaptations, betrayals of the ideal are natural, and are indispensable conditions for its descent into the world. Naturally, this is what awaits the superior man who professes an ideal on earth. The cross is a biological law-it is the mathematical result of the meeting between the forces of heaven and earth. The horizontal ecstasy of the earth, combined with the vertical dynamism of ascension, also geometrically forms the cross. Without the cross, the ideal does not rise. Without betrayal, it remains inaccessible and unassimilable. Heaven can only touch the earth at one point, which is called martyrdom. Reaction is the natural test of the ideal, it is the proof of its presence, the index of its value, the measure of the substantial power of an idea.

He had crossed through all fields and realized how few true men existed in each one. And, instead of being interested in the categories that kept men divided, he sought what could unite them. He searched for the man, the true value, so rare, so little attached to interests; he sought the man in himself, without caring about appearances; he sought the substance, without being deceived by form. One thing, above all, repulsed him, and this he did not forgive in his fellow men: being a man without being honest and sincere. And one thing, above all, made him rebel: the calculated human compromises that prostitute principles for the sake of convenience. He found it preferable to be rather than to seem. This was the true, irreconcilable dissension between him and the world. He took things seriously and did in a terribly serious manner what others upheld only with words, and with more noise the less they believed and the more effort they made to make others believe they believed. To the insolence of this form, stamped on the face of everyone, he responded with substance, lived in silence. This was his challenge. His religion of work, of love for others; more than the religion of sermons and practices, it was the religion of goodness and sacrifice. He did not believe in discussion because he felt that behind the words, there was a thought different from the one expressed. He did not accuse and forgave, but he felt that his antagonism was not against this or that doctrine, but rather against man—always the same under all doctrines. He saw on earth a sea of interests that remained the same under the most varied banners. He found nothing but utilitarian selfishness and coalitions of such selfishness. And he sought only the Gospel. Disputes over form can be overcome, but when they are deep in substance, they become irreconcilable. He fled from all discussions, and a great silence formed in his soul.

18 CONDEMNED

One day, while he found himself in this state, a group of men deemed it appropriate to condemn the most significant of his books. His thought was thus rejected in that environment. The news caught him by surprise in his laborious solitude, on a sad November afternoon. And so, he renewed his daily examination of conscience and found within himself nothing but his habitual harmony with God. His soul felt that it had nothing to reproach itself for — and he remained at peace.

Ultimately, it was logical that, among so many points of view, some had to exist that could not have been foreseen. It had not been possible for him to take everything into account, as he was so occupied with his goals and methods. He was only surprised that the application of an unanticipated unit of measure to his thought had yielded that result. In a formal examination (based on what premises!), which he could not perceive, as he was entirely absorbed by the great voice of the phenomena, bound to its terminology and an individual orientation, it was natural for them to conclude that he, made of substance and not of form, harboured a misunderstanding. "The letter kills, the spirit gives life." He tried, by all means, to clarify; but the judgment remained attached to the letter.

He sought to clarify, especially through the press, that he had no intention of becoming a rebel. By a principle of order, that universal order in

which he lived, he respected authority without questioning it, leaving it with all the responsibility for its own acts. He obeyed authority, giving to Caesar what was Caesar's and remaining free, in the inviolable liberty of the spirit, to give to God what is God's. Authority, whoever may personify it, is a principle of great value, for it is a solid point in the organization of order whose aim is human ascension. To demolish this principle is to violate evolution. Those who understand have the duty, toward the rebels and the ignorant, to give the example of obedience. "Authority," he said, "must be respected. If it must be feared and cannot be obeyed, it is avoided; but it is always respected." He sought to clarify in private; it was not possible to reach an understanding across distance and through mental means, amidst the intermediary bureaucracy. His complex issue of thought and conscience could not be resolved formally as it had been presented, but only through intimate communion of spirits, in the presence of God. He felt crushed, seeing his case, so important to him, in which lay the meaning of the most intense passion of his life, so dense with sacrifice-treated and resolved coldly, according to manuals rather than with conscience. A clear retraction was demanded of him. He had already voluntarily made his act of obedience to authority, but his conscience forbade him from doing this, which would be, for him, a spiritual suicide. If he had been able and willingly wanted to humble his person, to which he gave no value and of which he had full control—he could not renounce the truth, which was worth more than his life and of which he could not dispose. He understood that, as it was impossible to understand the two different languages, he had no right to self-destruction either. He reflected on the phrase from the Fourth Lateran Council: "Quidquid fit contra conscientiam, aedificat ad gehennam¹⁰".

¹⁰ Whoever acts against their conscience prepares their spiritual suffering. (Translator's note)

Through the press, he did not seek to argue; he wanted to clarify. But even here, understanding and clarification were denied to him. Despite all sincere efforts, the misunderstanding worsened. The newspapers closed their doors to him. He had no choice but to remain silent. A final article, in which he returned to the issue to conclude it, was suppressed by a hidden hand from the opposing side. He, who had at least managed to be coherent, felt crushed by the sad proof of disloyalty, precisely from those whom he had reason to expect Christian charity. This realization was the last and irreparable blow for him. He accepted it without reacting but was deeply shaken. The impression remained indelibly imprinted on his soul. Everything was suffocated in silence. And silence was his final word. He then sorrowfully gave up on making himself understood, and fell silent. He forgave with the Gospel. But what a ruin had been made in that soul! He had believed it was his duty to explain himself sincerely. In his good intentions, in his evangelical naïveté, instead of uniting souls by elevating them, he had only caused disturbances. And these events sowed the seeds of doubt in his mind. He was shaken by that different reality of life in which man is the one in command. And here too the world was the enemy.

The world's opinions regarding the new fact of his condemnation were varied. Anyone would have seen it as an opportune publicity stunt to better promote his books. But he had no interest in such economic matters, which made no sense in light of his spiritual work. His morality compelled him to flee from any compensation for activities of this kind. To him, it would have seemed a horrendous profanation to barter and sell the sacred fruit of the ineffable joy of being able to elevate oneself to God. The means to live had to come from other occupations. He did not work with the spirit to earn, but to fulfil his own destiny. Therefore, he needed to know it deeply. He demanded in payment much more than the conquest of wealth—he demanded the conquest of souls. However, he could do nothing but observe the growing dissemination of his works which, as always happens, were condemned afterward, and in this he saw the action of Providence, which helped their spread. This comforted him. If not by men, at least God seemed to be with him, and his mission, despite everything, continued to be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, those books were being read and studied, and his thought was spreading, especially in the very field from which the condemnation had come, and this was extremely important for the good of souls. Are battles not precisely what spread ideas the most? The seed had been sown in that field, and there it could germinate in the souls, for despite distrust and prejudice, conviction is acquired in the most unexpected way. When it comes to a truth, the conscience, which receives it by intuition, seizes it, despite the will and reason, because it has already incorporated it before those can intervene. The barriers of negative resistance are lowered, finding themselves penetrated before the individual is even aware, without having asked for permission from human conventions. Conscience, which spontaneously feels and desires the truth, inevitably senses, recognizes, judges, and irresistibly attracts and compels, through this attraction, the acceptance of things that come from God. It is this intimate and secret method of the spirit's functioning, directed by itself toward the truth and built to achieve it, that explains how truth automatically dissolves all rational constraints, which are made more to conceal it than to reveal it. Truth penetrates, convinces, and conquers the conscience, not through logical coercion or struggle, but by spontaneous attraction and the soul's intuitive judgment. The processes of reasoning merely provoke the defensive reasoning of the conscience in an argument, and therefore cannot reach deep into it. Thus, the rational method, due to a simple psychological error, remains on the surface and has never truly persuaded anyone. God armed the substance of truth and protected it from the assault and traps of all human systems, communicating it directly to the spirit to which He speaks, and which hears and understands perfectly well, without intermediaries.

Others saw in the condemnation an opportunity to fan the flames, disturb souls with the seed of rebellion, and stand aside. Here, too, the world was against him, and he rebelled by all means against this interference. He did not approve of that system of particular and antagonistic truths, rivals and aggressive. He did not want to become an instrument of the psychology of the world. Even in defence and reaction, he was disturbed by those diverse realities of life in which man is in control.

Without distinguishing from which particular point of human psychology, nor from which of the many divisions of human thought the attacks came, the fact was that the battle was engaged, and it was continuous; the world had become his enemy and assaulted him more deeply each time. And this time, the assaults were aimed directly at the most vital centres of his destiny, that is, the explanation of his mission. This was repudiated, completely denied. We, who had followed the logical development of his destiny, could now understand that such denial meant paralyzing every value and purpose of his life, bringing him spiritual death. Retraction would mean, for him, accepting death and becoming an accomplice to his own moral suicide. The condemnation was formal and ignored these things, which nevertheless remained. It was aimed at destroying his faith, throwing to the ground the product of so much work and sacrifice, stripping him of all hope, and subverting the meaning of his life. Perhaps all this was not the intention of the condemnation, but it was certainly its consequence. He had the duty of respect and accepted the imposition of silence. Everything was calm on the surface, but at the cost of what destruction in the depths! He had no recourse but to numb himself, as he could not annul himself.

He had believed sincerely and profoundly, and now these results demonstrated to him the absurdity of his faith. He felt betrayed in his highest aspirations. The attack from the world had succeeded in destroying him. To avoid seeing his faith waver and crumble, he sought to numb himself, beginning by breaking his pen and renouncing writing, understanding, and thinking. Not wanting to rebel and unable to justify himself, the only path left to him was his own spiritual destruction. Would he be able to rise again from such despair? He had believed so strongly that he was walking toward Christ on the path of goodness; and now he received this blow from men with whom he should have been in perfect agreement regarding the path of spiritual ascension! And this attack came at a time when he had already been shaken by so many other things, adding to his already grave tribulations. Could his faith withstand so much? And he cried out: "My God, why have You forsaken me?"

What a distance from the easy and happy philosophy of those who so easily throw themselves at the solution of their problems, drowning them in any kind of material pleasure! In the face of a world solely eager for pleasures, it almost seemed that having a soul, an ideal, was an abnormality. Sincerity, faith in overcoming all earthly miseries—a pathological anomaly! Rebellious to the animal life of the earth, he was inexorably isolated. The biological laws drove ignorant man toward the destruction of exception, of the emergence from the swamp of mediocrity. The encounter was always between him and man, between spirit and matter. Always the same challenge—him against the world, no matter in what form it presented itself. He forgave. He repeated that sublime, yet tremendous phrase: "Forgive them, for they do not know what they do." He looked at men and asked: "Are they truly guilty of not knowing how to rise above the animal plane, of not knowing how to overcome the laws of biological reality?" And on his part, on the part of the spirit, he found Christ, and desperately clung to Him. This union was his entire reason, justification, and strength. The world, immersed in the struggle for life, also threatened his vital refuge. He did not condemn man, the blind executor of the laws of his life, driven by instincts. He observed the apocalyptic battle, which was waged between good and evil, not as a spectator, but as an actor. And he asked himself: "Why the ferocity of matter against spirit? And why must it suffer its hour of darkness and feel the weight of defeat? Why must those who rise higher face the trial of being thrown into the mud, like Christ under the cross; exposed, defenceless, to the assault of the lowest elements, and know how to resist the fiercest attempts at demolition? Why does God allow this? What do these assaults and this duty of resistance from those further along the path to Him signify in His harmony? Why is goodness, instead of being encouraged, persecuted? Why the torment of the righteous; why the condemnation of the one recognized by all as the best; why the powerlessness of goodness before strength, the weakness of the evolved before the bestiality of the unevolved; why the fight of all against all? Why the failure of the ideal, the rebellion against it from the very world that proclaims and venerates it; why the terrible effort of man to ascend, the inner struggle to escape hell, and the necessity to stay and linger? Why man's instinct to theoretically make himself a higher model and why his practical impotence to realize it?"

He rose above the human actors in the drama. He sought the substance, the meaning of everything. He recalled the drama of Christ on the cross. Was there, then, a law of rebellion by which the inferior senses the surpassing that offends him, that punishes him for his inability to rise, that condemns him as a defeat in his duty to ascend? And does this leave him no other desire than to revolt against the example of his greater duty, which he could not fulfil? Or perhaps it is the fear of the unexplored, the terror of being torn from the certainty of old paths; the resistance to the overwhelming dizziness of the unknown and the new; the hatred of exhausting labour; the instinct for self-preservation; the horror of the void; the dread of the discontinuity of certainty transformed into doubt, which implies the torment of finding a new certainty at the cost of one's own risk and effort? It is the rebellion of darkness against light. It is the struggle that, against the brain, resides in the belly of the world. Why this drama? Why does true goodness, true intellectual and moral superiority offend so unforgivably those who look up from below, unable to reach it? Why is

human animality so convinced of its own importance that it cannot tolerate surpassing? Ah! What a struggle! What exhaustion for having dared to advance! He felt terrified and longed for death. What was the point of fighting? He was not fighting against men, but against the inexorable biological laws of which they were the unconscious instruments of execution. And how could one overcome biological laws?

No matter how much he evaded the world's applause, anyone who went beyond their inner self-overcoming was accused of arrogance. All of this was painful to him. The inevitable solitary attitude was not forgiven. It was difficult to overcome the aversion to descending to the level of the crowd and to free himself from the special position that others defined as pride. He felt the injustice and weight of this judgment, and the sadness of the resulting isolation. And no help came to encourage him to endure the arduous work. Amid the terrible disarray that forced him into the solitude of the misunderstood, the last joy that remained to him was also threatened—the awareness of his position, the intimate sense of his function and mission.

And then, the new position appeared to him in all its raw nakedness. The sweet evangelical mirage extinguished from his eyes; the veil of his fascination fell, and he realized in what infernal reality of life he was playing. He understood that a new and terrible experience awaited him. He lived in the world; it was the one in command, and its kingdom prevailed. No more escape. He had to live in the world, belong to the world, and struggle under its inexorable law. He had to descend into the earthly hell. It was an entirely different experience from the previous one, complementary and indispensable. It was a matter of beginning again to examine, under a new light, of all the values already conquered and sifting them now through this trial by fire. He was too exhausted to continue resisting everything and everyone. The majority overwhelmed him. He was alone. Everything pushed him down: his fatigue, heaven's abandonment, the assaults of the

earth. Struggle, struggle, and one day the forces of the spirit abandoned him. Somehow, no matter at what price or with what means-he needed to survive. The ship was sinking. It was necessary to lighten it of everything dispensable. When life is in danger, nature rushes to save it, even if it means demolishing superstructures. The edifice, built with so much difficulty, was falling apart. It was the hour of darkness. To avoid physical death, he had to react to all the assaults, with the purely human reaction necessary for survival. The forces of destiny now arrived in violent waves. It was necessary to endure them, cross through them, overcome them before being freed from them. To fight, to rebel-that was the law of the world, and he had to accept it. Plunging from the luminous sky into the gloomy swamp, he found himself submerged up to his neck. A fierce mocking laugh greeted him. To his astonished eyes, life appeared in its bestial aspect, and he resumed the path with the courage of despair. He became normal. Then he understood, and he was understood. He abandoned the conviction of superiority, of exception, of mission; he fell in line, into the crowd, side by side with the others, and lived by the law of all. His life degraded to the common animal level, and the spirit fell silent. For now, the world had defeated him.

IN THE EARTHLY HELL

And then, an atrocious doubt took hold of him. A doubt that impelled him to immerse himself in a new reality of the earth, previously neglected. What would be the law that condemned him with such certainty and conviction? And, in the dissension between him and the world, could it not be that he was the one who had erred? Did he truly know this world that he had always disapproved of? Why did things happen in such a way? It could be that the world had good reasons and that there was a different logic in it, which he did not yet understand because he did not know it. What logic would that be, and why would it be so? Was there some unknown force at work there, one that had escaped the conquest of his knowledge? Beyond the assertions already tested by intelligence and kindness, could there exist other assertions yet unexplored by him? Who was right: he or the world? Who was superior? If the world was thirsty for material pleasures, was he not thirsty for spiritual pleasures? If the world sought to escape pain through the enjoyment of its senses, did he not equally seek to escape pain in the enjoyment of the spirit?

He then began, from this new point of view, the revision of his spiritual values. The world had surrounded him, besieged him, penetrated him; it was now inside him, and he himself was now continuing the work of the assault, fulfilling his own self-destruction. The facts led him to believe that the entire previous direction of his life had been shattered, and that he now needed an entirely new direction which, once started, he would have to follow to the end. Like a guilty man, his spirit was called to account before practical reason for his dreams and ideals. He wanted to see what had happened to them, once they were torn apart by the earthly hell. The roles were reversed. Now it was the world, into which he had been forced to fall, that challenged the Gospel with him. What would the Gospel have answered? What had happened to those delicate feelings of kindness, forgiveness, and love when transported into the realm of force, where the greatest merit lies in knowing how to rebel and conquer? If the law of the Gospel in heaven subverts the laws of the earth, these, on earth, subvert that. Thus, the fundamental motive of his life became ruined. It was no longer a matter of looking down from the heights of heaven at the miseries of the earth; but, from these, seeing how intangible and distant heaven was.

It was time to bring those airs of the superman of the spirit, who goes to the pulpit to judge and condemn the common man, into contact with the harsh reality. It was time to shrink down to their measures, taking responsibility for one's own misfortunes and miseries. It was time to become vile and wretched, a humble nullity on the paths, stripping away the pride of past achievements, abandoning the aristocracy of thought and feeling, which reduced itself to the exemptions of the privileged, for a reality that needed to be faced directly. This is what the world now told him, now that he had become one of them: it offered him a harsh lesson, in whose brutality he was to find a salutary lesson in humility. "Stay under the yoke with us, if, indeed, as you say, we are all brothers according to the Gospel." This is what the world was telling him. The experience was important. In an involutionary regression, he was to lose the advantages of liberation and face all the burdens of matter. Then, what is more important: to perfect oneself in order to escape the world, turning one's back on it, or to forget oneself, to immerse in the world, bearing its pains with one's fellow beings? Had he not, by freeing himself from wealth and accepting common labour as a duty, chosen this path? Probably, ascension cannot be complete without descent, and progress deepens and completes itself in regressions.

The descent was terrible. Had he not experienced the lesson of goodness and idealism, and had he not, at least for now, been betrayed? Why insist on the utopia of the Gospel if such were the results? Perhaps Christ had been a great illusion to him, one that the world did not share and insisted on disproving, demonstrating its falsity with its opposite way of life. Down here, there was no sense in the senseless love for Christ, the foolish faith in God, the spirit of sacrifice with the intention of reaching, who knows when, a distant and, for now, unattainable heaven. The world was giving him a lesson in practical and utilitarian sense.

Why seek results so distant when there were closer ones to be found on earth? Undoubtedly, at least for now, the experience of goodness had failed him. This led him to immerse himself in the experience of will and force, in the hope that these would not betray him as the ideal had done. It is likely that these were equally deceptive, but he had not yet experienced them, and perhaps for this reason alone, he had not yet been betrayed. He had already undergone the experience of intelligence and of the heart. What remained was the purely human and virile experience of will and force. And thus, he entered a new phase of life. Having overcome the trial of pain as an instrument of redemption (the altruistic, feminine concession of life), he now threw himself into the trial of struggle as an instrument of conquest (the selfish, masculine concession of life). The old experience changed its nature and was completed by the other, which was opposite and complementary. Passive acceptance was transformed into virile action. For a moment, he disregarded the negative and passive aspect of the ideal, made of sacrifice, of piety, of goodness, of strength, of struggle, of conquest. It was a descent from heaven to earth, perhaps useful to secure his position.

He now had to make his own, not the laws of heaven, but those of the earth, and wait for the results. He had to undertake a new experience, knowing full well that it could not be done through others, but only with his own means, dangers, and also his own outcomes. He needed to change. It was no longer about order, divine harmony, love for others, goodness, and justice; he had to leave this paradisiacal concert and enter a chaotic world of struggle and dissonances, of aggression and arrogance, where what is necessary is not to coordinate, but to react and conquer by imposing oneself on everything and everyone. Was this truly diabolical and hellish, or was there a certain nobility in ferocity, a certain justice in force, a certain respectability in baseness?

At times, the new point of view seemed almost wonderful to him. There was, without a doubt, admirable courage in the insignificant man daring, alone, to challenge chaos and impose himself on it, without the comfort of divine harmonies, of superior aid. There was terrible courage in the frank acknowledgment of being a beast and wanting to adapt to the law of the beasts, with all the risks and dangers. In the inferiority of the evolutionary stage, in the primitive insensitivity, in the elemental roughness, there was the potency of the uncarved block of marble and always, though in germ and less evident, the same spark of God's life. From the perspective of raw virility, pity and goodness seemed to him to be weakness and incapacity. Seen by the man of the earth, the athlete of force, that other man of the ideal seemed abandoned and unconscious, even though he was an athlete of thought.

However, that type of common man whom he had so often condemned was perfectly balanced in his earthly environment, whereas he was not. He saw that nature rewarded arrogance and cunning with success, guaranteeing life to those who know how to use force to conquer. He saw that, in practice, triumph belongs to those who destroy the enemy; those who do not know how to defend themselves and turn the other cheek meet a brutal end. Now he saw the world as it is, not as it will be or should be. The law that the facts showed him did not command him to be good and altruistic, but strong and selfish. He saw a merciless nature that does not aid the weak, but rather condemns them and hunts them down to eliminate them. The type that the world exalted, the model presented as an ideal to be imitated, was completely different from the evangelical model he had adopted to imitate Christ.

When he had his experience in this sense, he was not understood; on the contrary, he was condemned. The world treated him like a fool because it was convinced that he was one. He saw in the world complete indifference toward anything that did not represent immediate advantages for one's own selfishness; complete indifference toward sacrifice and altruism, which only mattered when they could bring personal benefits. What did it matter to others if he could indeed be a genius, a saint, or a martyr? His fellow men could only be interested in his practical output, and his value was measured by the extent to which he could be used for others' gain. The superman is weak in the human realm; the supernormal, as a compensation of equilibrium, is condemned to the misery of the abnormal. The path of the ideal is a path of sacrifice and martyrdom. The genius is inept in the practice of life. He understands where others understand nothing; but, in turn, he understands nothing where others understand everything. He is insignificant where others are so exuberant. None of this matters to the common man, who is only interested in finding the weak point of the exceptional type, so as to wound him there, to exploit or destroy him.

He saw that the altruistic law of the Gospel was only felt as truth in this world by the weak, who, seeking protection in altruism, expect everything from it. It was only felt as a lie by the strong, for whom altruism brings losses. In short, the earth was not a place of peace, of paradisiacal security, as the Gospel preached, but one of great misery, where defence is urgent, and the merciless law of the struggle of all against all reigns

without respite. It is an environment where strength is sought, exalted, and worshipped. Goodness and justice are refinements of the great lords, luxuries created for the angels in heaven, not for the demons living on earth. Those who have strength use it for themselves; only the weak, in search of help, take refuge in the Gospel. And the Gospel, made for human ascension towards the spirit, results in a refuge for ineptitudes. The army that follows it is nothing more than a crowd seeking parasitic accommodations and an escape from the inexorable and merciless justice of biological laws. If this justice is salutary for dragging out from refuge all the laggards in evolution, all those resistant to the work that progress demands, all the lazy and inept who resist the law of survival of the fittest, he wondered what anti-biological results, what reverse selection the evangelical law would end up producing, so altered in its application and so transplanted into the earthly environment. Was this adaptation not a terrible revenge of the earth against heaven, was it not the demonstration of the absurdity of practicing the ideal, a continuous betrayal of Christ's martyrdom? And, if on earth the Gospel could only exist in such an altered form, what was the use of proclaiming it? If these were the practical results, was it not an aberration to insist on this path? Yet, it could not be denied that there was also a logic on earth, though a terrible one. But the two logics-of heaven and earth—could only meet by inevitably inverting, betraying, and destroying each other.

He, who had lived the experience of the victory of the logic of heaven over that of earth, would now have to live the inverse experience. At least, now, in the world, this second one was a reality. Two exclusive, irreconcilably opposing positions. Each of the two affirmations, in its absolutism, implied the complete negation of the other. And both deeply impacted the man, who, to live one, had to necessarily renounce the other. And he was so irreducibly honest and loyal that he could no longer adapt to the debasement of a compromise. Here was, then, the third position, carefully developed over the centuries, now nestled at the centre of faith and well-armed with defences—a position in which one triumphed by playing with words, through prudent silences on the most profound principles, sophisticating the conscience, taking refuge in forms, until bringing earth and heaven into agreement, at least in appearance.

There was the sweet illusion of being able to conquer heaven without troubling the body. This was formed by tacit consensus, so deeply instinctive that everyone agreed without knowing it: a convention so stable that it became a custom. The instinct of animal life, the impulse of biological laws, adapted to the celestial subversion by partially accepting it, partially rejecting it, and partially reacting against it. From this resulted the formation of a hybrid type, neither animal nor angel, in intimate contradiction with itself. He understood how the mediocre nature of the common man could adapt to this amphibious life. Perhaps it was his natural phase of transition in evolution. He revolted against this. He wanted to continue being himself, even in the fall, and preferred to fall completely, remaining coherent. He detested the sluggish, the prudent, the complacent, the halfmeasures. He wanted a stable balance on earth, not an uncertain fluttering over the swamp; he wanted to face the earthly hell with courage, rather than place himself unworthily at the gates of paradise. In the terrible adventure, he wanted to be coherent and honest. He followed his instinct and his nature. The fundamental righteousness of his character, his inadaptability to arrangements and lies, his revolt against the vileness of thinking only of self-interest, were the thread that never broke and still keeps him, even in this hour of darkness, connected to heaven. The only thread that, though he did not foresee it, would allow him to rise again.

20

REVOLT

It was around this time that Nietzsche spoke to him in his "Also Sprach Zarathustra¹¹".

"Observe, oh my friend, solitude!

Where solitude ends, the market begins.

Far from the market and glory, everything great withdraws.

Flee from solitude! Innumerable are the small and miserable. Save yourself from their invisible revenge. Against you, they all seek vengeance.

Yes. The vile are prudent.

They think a lot about you in their little soul — you have given them cause for suspicion!

They punish you for your virtue. And deep down, they forgive only your errors.

Your taciturn pride irritates them. Their misery burns against you with a desire for invisible revenge.

What is great in you only makes them more eager to do evil."

After these counsels, Nietzsche laid bare all his revolt:

¹¹ "Thus Spoke Zarathustra." (Translator's Note)

"The world now seems to me the work of a suffering and crucified God.

That God I had created was the mad work of a man, as are all gods.

That other world is very well closed off to men. That human and inhuman world is a celestial nothingness; and the womb of being does not speak at all to man.

Indeed, it is very difficult to prove that Being is; more difficult still to make it speak.

Do not hide your head any longer in the sand of celestial things, but raise it freely: a terrestrial head that creates the meaning of the earth.

War and courage accomplish greater things than love of neighbour."

In his involutive descent, our character was becoming accustomed to this other orientation, which offered him a different vision and gave new flavour to things.

Thus he saw men and life—not placing himself anymore in the heights of the heavens, but on the earth itself, and naturally, everything appeared different to him. In the depths of his new misery, he understood that he would need terrible courage to live like this without God, without the sweet spiritual music of the Gospel, without hope, without being able to ask for help, in the midst of a merciless reality. Certainly, the figure of Lucifer had its greatness and beauty, a rebellious Lucifer who dares, alone, to challenge the universe. It was no longer the time for sweet dreams. It was necessary to muster that bitter and terrible courage, to know how to live by oneself, among the blind lost in the universe. He was not a man to pity himself and ask for help. He preferred to go to the depths, facing the problem without concessions. He urgently needed to create for himself a solid, objective philosophy that would guide him in reality. He needed to establish other objective foundations for a new truth that would explain this world, a truth more resilient and concrete than the one that had been destroyed, a truth that could, finally, no longer collapse. He had been disillusioned; now he wanted something secure, solid-a reality of iron, materialized in facts, indisputable, universal, and always present, always valid and accepted by the followers of all truths. And where could he find it if not in the world of facts, in the reality of life? Only biological truth represented, at least on earth, the universal language, understood by all, allowing for mutual understanding, even with animals; a truth finally accepted by everyone, true, always applied to beings, lived by all, even by those who ignore it, do not believe in it, or deny it. This was, ultimately, the truth of unanimous consensus imposed by the laws of life. It was the indisputable one. It was necessary to make it count through the voice of the phenomena that express it in the earthly environment. Only this truth could have the solidity that only experimental adherence to reality can provide. Only with this more universal method could he measure everything and explain the conduct of men, whether religious or atheists, of all men, regardless of their theoretical assertions. He wished to understand by what biologically true reasons the man he now observed had acted in such a way. The delicate spiritual constructions of the heavens did not withstand. And from this collapse, he wanted to compensate himself with the conquest of solidity on earth. Since he had to limit his field, he wanted, at least, secure results. And the earth had materialist science, already oriented in this direction-objective, experimental, concrete, utilitarian. No more immersions in the imponderable, now denied to his blindness, as to that of his fellow men, his truth could no longer go beyond the results offered by the perception of the senses. He had to limit himself to listening to the voice of phenomena, so that they would reveal their own meaning to him and with it the earthly truth they contained, because it had to be always present within them. He had to cling to the manifestations of phenomena and life, because certainly they expressed their laws. There may exist other laws as well, but this is, without a doubt, the law of the earthly environment, its truth. And he found the biological reality, merciless, bestial, the law of the struggle for life, of the selection of the strongest; he found himself

facing the primordial instincts of animality, the elementary motors of existence: hunger, love, evolution for individual preservation, as well as for the preservation of the species. It was a meagre truth, schematically animalistic, but indisputable. Certainly, it was sad, this mutilation of one who reduces his entire being to his own animal structure. But was this not the reality of life? Was it not futile to attempt the superstructure of the ideal? Was this not the hour of involutive degradation?

He could have withdrawn and remained in the dead centre of his spirit, letting himself be extinguished there without reacting, in sad depression and renunciation of life. And in truth, this was the first tendency of his spirit, immediately after the events described. He lived, after the blows he had received, a period of annulment that would have led him to death if an irresistible instinct for life had not intervened. He had to live again, if not in heaven, then at least on earth, no matter if it was different. And follow a period of renewal, even if in the opposite direction. To the dejection of death, there followed, then, the reaction of life; to the resignation of the defeated, the revolt of Lucifer. Everything was permissible, except renouncing life. It was not a time for the passive virtues of patience, but for the active virtues of strength. "I want to live!" he cried. And his life became a cry of revolt. After all, he had no choice. If he wished to survive, no other path remained for him. Was this not the hour of darkness? Therefore, courage! He had to endure to the end the trial of animalization. Who had initiated this spiritual suicide? Who had provoked it? Had he sought it, or desired it? Everything was scattered, condemned, repelled-everything that was the best of his soul and that he had given for the good.

His intentions had been altered; his books were accused; the highest and truest voice of his life was denied and suffocated. He had sown on poisoned ground; he had thrown his works, his pains, his blood, into the mud. He could do no more. It was impossible for him to stop the consequences, to prevent the reactions. A terrible drama was unfolding within him, beyond his strength, a drama that no one noticed, no one saw, and in which he was dying. A gigantic whirlwind was dragging him, stronger than his will and his resistance.

That the world was an enemy, he knew; but for God to abandon him like this, when he was in such exhaustion and alone! Not having the strength to turn to Him, not being able to save himself—this was beyond his understanding and his strength. The supreme irony of victorious evil laughed around him, while the ruins of the spiritual edifice he had built with so much effort and so many years of sacrifice crumbled. The last thread of life shouted: "I want to live! I cannot die!" This was the crime of his revolt. Surely God, always present, observes, vigilant, the depths of these despairs. But he did not know it. If hell existed without the sensation of God, what a hell that would be!

Never is God sought so much as when one is lost; never is He so affirmed as when He is denied; never is He so present as when He seems absent.

He slowly delved deeper, through successive demolitions, while Christ remained distant from his sensations, in the glory of His heavens. In contact with the harsh human reality, the past visions had been pulverized. In his new state, he wondered if they had truly existed, or if they had been merely creations of his faith. He was astonished by the sudden abandonment from above, the unexpected blindness, and the realization that when he no longer had the strength to reach God through the very tension of faith, God had disappeared from his sensations. He asked himself: "If the paths of faith can close like this, if such realities depend on my nervous state, on my capacity for perception, do they exist objectively, or are the conditions what create them? And when my perception falters, they immediately disappear—what probative value can an experimental reality have that is subject to disappear at any moment? Naturally, it is not our senses that create the objects we perceive, but it is certain that without these senses, the objects, at least for us, do not exist, and in such moments, doubt is justified. When dealing with things less guaranteed than usual, less valued by the experience of all, doubt is more plausible." And he concluded: "Faith is an optical illusion by which we see as real the projections of the creations of our thoughts. The truths are within us and not outside of us. Therefore, what we believe in exists, but only because we believe in it. The concepts themselves do not exist; they are vibrations of thought in the human brain. Ideals do not exist: there are people who believe in them. Man futilely attempts to create, through faith, a reality different from the horrible reality of the earth, because the construction plan that he anticipates with his imagination, the model around which he works, is so high and inaccessible, so surrounded by the obstacles of the resistance of the rebellious earth, that it is never realized. In practice, it creates nothing, moves nothing."

A doubt tormented him above all, a natural consequence of his new point of view: is the sublime utopia of the Gospel applicable on earth, or had he been mistaken, sacrificing his life in vain and perhaps needing to start over from the beginning? The problem did not concern him alone, but had a much broader scope. Why the irreducible contrast between the Gospel and the animal instincts of man, expressed in biological laws? Is the Gospel anti-biological? How can one claim that the law of heaven is applicable on earth, where human matter exists and not angelic spirit, where instincts, the body, the demands of the environment, and the laws of lifeall are so different? The world was guided by another set of values, above which stands force, before which all bow, and which has its own commandments, in which resignation and the misery of the weak are condemned, and revolt, the virtue of the strong, is exalted. Weakness is condemned as a cardinal sin, and the Gospel, the refuge of the defeated, is condemned... Patience and forgiveness are supreme foolishness... The two worlds each had their own complete system, which contradict one another. He wondered if spiritual ideals might be anti-biological, anti-vital, a true suicide on the animal plane; if the aspiration to realize them in the earthly environment was absurd and impossible, and if the attempt to transplant the order of values constructed for heaven to an environment created for earth was not the ultimate utopia. Did not the congenital irreconcilability, the revolt of matter against spirit, speak clearly? Did not practical reality show him that, instead of understanding and merging, the two principles fought to exclude each other? Everything told him that the Gospel is a beautiful but unachievable utopia.

He had descended so far into the world that he assumed and made all that psychology his own. Only in this way could he understand it, by placing himself, first of all, in its position, in its point of view, which justified its actions and considerations. He needed to live in the world, with the world, to become the world. His current position had an unyielding logic that, as a consequence of recent events, could not be otherwise. Moreover, this logic would be the same that, inexorably extended, would later save him. He could be anything but a lazy, inert, and hypocritical person. He was the indomitable type in spirit. This type cannot be immobilized. It may yield, but it will not renounce its own activity. He was not a man of compromises, as we have said, nor one to resign himself to vegetate. We have already seen that heaven had been closed to him by many opposing forces converging to that result. To survive, he had no other choice but to follow the experience of the world—that is, the path of strength and will.

Given the unforeseen collapse of his spiritual superstructures, his reaction had to be, by necessity, inferior. It was important that he carried within himself the principle of reaction, which is the principle of life, the one that makes man triumph on the plane of matter as on the plane of spirit. Those who possess this principle of life always save themselves, and this is a wealth of resources, a congenital power that overcomes the waves of the storm and guides to success. One ready and active soul is worth more than a hundred inert souls. The first may fall in every crisis, from which the latter will feel obliged to be scandalized, but it will save itself. The others, with their methodical practices, will remain in the swamp where the spirit dies. Fiery souls, made of storm, if they have great vices and great weaknesses, they also have great resources. And if they are capable of great sin, they are also capable of great love and great ascent.

The first reaction, directed to the lower plane, greatly scandalized the methodical right-thinking individuals, but for him, it was the means to achieve the second reaction, of which they would never be capable. And this saved him, leading him back to the good, much higher than before.

Fate prepared this trial for him, which was of a new kind, and he accepted it, as he had accepted all the others. And not only did he accept it, but he also made use of it. He found an opportunity to observe this world, to understand its structure well, by being within it, after always having observed it from a distance. And he, who had always been seen as a failure, instinctively sought its weak points to overcome it, now with greater competence. Thus, that evil would be transformed into good. If adversities prostrated him, they nevertheless did not change who he was. The nature of a man cannot be deeply changed by external circumstances. The nature cannot be destroyed. And since, for now, he could not live according to the law of heaven, he aligned himself with the law of the world, to see if it would be possible to live this way. If the previous system had yielded such sad results, there was nothing left but to modify it. And he concluded that life, although horrific due to adversities and burdensome due to labours, overcoming, and trials, is always a very interesting experience. Although brutal, it was still worthy of being lived. And since it was necessary to enter a world where there was no mercy for the weak, even martyrs, and where revolt is a condition of life, his cry was: "Rebellion."

Placed in the world, he now looked at all things with a different sense and once again asked, from a practical point of view: Could the Gospel be anti-biological? The action of religions, judged through the lens of biological reality, seemed disastrous to him. Biological reality desires the selection of the most intelligent, active, and strong in all fields. Now, the religious principle of goodness, which originally had a healthy biological function, creating social cohesion, had been transformed, by dint of deviations, compromises, and, let us say, human betrayals, into a protective system that enabled the peaceful growth of the inept, the weak, the parasites. He looked sadly at the languid army, the tepid court of followers, whom the original flame of the martyrs, also sacrificed for them, could no longer stir or ignite. Practiced on earth as a melancholic dream, that kingdom of heaven had been falsified to accommodate the weak and complacent. He was repulsed by virtue mutilated from action and reduced to the negative; by goodness debased; by indolence; by religion transformed into a hereditary sinecure. Under the protective shadow of that goodness, the work of struggle, which is the foundation of life's progress, had been suppressed, and an inverse selection had been allowed to operate. Thus modified, religions inverted their functions and results. And he wondered what strange biological type would be created after some time if this path continued. He was distressed to see such powerful spiritual forces, so distorted, failing and deforming to the point of becoming the opposite of what they should be. Only the healthy reaction of biological laws, inferior and condemned, could halt this slumber, dislodge the parasites, and stir the mire to prevent putrefaction.

He had tried to speak, but his voice, disturbing the slumber of the complacent, was stifled. The word now belonged to the laws of life. For it is absurd to try to kill them with laziness. Life knows how to defend itself and rise up; it lets out its war cry, which removes the anti-vital encrustations that stifle progress. All who live on earth are subject to this law. When the spirit betrays its mission and degrades itself in idleness, then the lower laws of the earth are summoned to give it a salutary lesson. The earth is then mobilized to awaken, through pain, the appetite for heavenly things. When the spirit drowns in form and religion becomes an invitation to vegetate; when obedience is exalted to make it easier for man to command the flock—all storms that shake the dead angles of life and bring everything into the light of struggle, into the light of the sun, are undoubtedly salutary. Then, the spirit that renounced its true supremacy, failing to free itself from the laws of the earth, binds itself to it, placing itself on its level, defenceless before the law of the world, which grinds it down to its primitive purity.

In these verifications, he found the explanation for the practical irreconcilability between the law of heaven and the laws of the earth. If the Gospel was too elevated to be applied to the world, the world was too low to be raised up to the Gospel. He understood man and pitied him. How could one expect him to surpass the biological laws? In the world, healthy and enlightening struggle sickens in laziness; courage has its shadow in cunning; each virtue has an irresistible tendency to weaken.

Alongside the triumph of the victor lies the misery of the defeated. It is natural, therefore, for parasitism and the pursuit of protective positions. The presence of the weak is natural, and it is natural that in the relentless struggle of all against all on earth, misery seeks refuge wherever it can, including in religions. How can one expect to apply the law of the saints, of heroic superhumans, to such beings? What can result from such an application other than adaptations, hybrid beings, contorted natures, lies? How can the masses provide certain heroic overcoming, how can certain supreme sacrifices be asked of those who are not strong and mature? How can one expect that in a world where everything is attack and defence, mercy will not be used as a means of defence?

Yet amid so many contrasts, counterfeits, and betrayals, he could not help but admire the sublime naivety and courage of the spirit that, descending from heaven, attempted, defenceless and disdainful of human means, to impose itself on this infernal world of force and misery; he could not help but admire that spirit all the more because, often with such

strange means, it had managed to triumph. Was there, then, in the spirit, a weapon, a secret force, a method of struggle that, despite everything, allowed it to win? And how had the world, master of struggles, failed to perceive this new way of fighting? He asked such questions now that he was in the world, assuming its viewpoints, its doubts, and its uncertainties. Now that he was in the world, he liked to turn over the face of the truth he already knew to contemplate the opposite side. With this, he exercised control over himself, achieved a more secure and conscious balance, so that his new truth would forever be tempered and strengthened by the victory over all storms. In this revision and these contrasts, he found neither contradictions nor renunciations but the fulfilment of a duty-the duty to continue life at any cost, to consolidate, if possible, his position, by rediscovering the deepest Self within himself. The duty to correct any excesses and to compensate for any unilateral concessions with others, taken from the opposite point of view. His nature was too rich in spiritual values for any contact with the world to erase or replace them. A momentary admirer of Nietzsche, he would not fall into the tragic epilogue: the mad exaltation of the superman from whom all truths had fled. There was nothing of this one-sidedness in his nature, rich in contrasts, ready to perceive all aspects of things.

He was now learning something, opening his eyes to the human reality of the world. He learned that, where everything is a struggle, it is natural for force to seize all things, and for the Gospel to be considered as truth by the weak who lean on it and as a lie by the strong who reject it. He learned that the much-condemned selfishness is necessary and that altruism, so exalted, is individually a utopia and a detriment. He understood that virtues are things to be recommended and demanded of others, as they constitute an excellent means to subdue and exploit them, but they are not things to be practiced, as they only bring suffering and limitation. He understood the usefulness of cunning, attachment to possessions, elasticity of conscience, attack, and defence. He learned that what is exalted in

public is merely an attitude, which, like praise, is sought to be compensated for and even incited, as long as it is useful. He now understood many deceptions, the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring, and much of the secret mechanism of social life, so pleasant from the outside, with its distinguished appearance. He also persuaded himself that it is foolishness to deceive oneself with this infernal reality. That, in truth, down here, God is far away, so far that He cannot be seen. His action takes so long to manifest in the depths of this darkness that, practically, it is as if God did not exist, which explains how so many can live as if God were nothing. At every step, in this world, matter denies the spirit, earth triumphs over heaven, experience is against faith, and reality crushes the ideal. What did the world ask of him? Beyond the lies of words, what did everyone really demand of him? To gain wealth and accumulate it, because only the rich are respectable. To be a beast of burden, greedy and ruthless; to be a money-making machine. People only understand and accept triumph on earth. The triumphs of heaven are unseen, incomprehensible, and unacceptable. They are the dreams of the exalted. While he consumed himself in such affirmations, he was an idler; as long as he did not prove his ability to win in the world, achieving success by any means, he was an imbecile. In the end, they told him to discard the superfluous, to demolish the spirit, to become normal, to get in line, to become a man of the series type, like the others who live on earth and not in heaven. As long as he had not acquired all the defects, faults, weaknesses, and human baseness, he would be seen as suspect. The attempt to escape could not be admitted and generated distrust. This was not fraternity in misery, but a declaration of superiority and challenge. It was a claim to be subject to another law, to exempt himself from the law of all, it was unforgivable and offensive pride. To be understood, accepted, and tolerated in the world, he had to make the laws of the earth his own, where revolt is a virtue; he had to undergo a process inverse to that already realized in mystical ascension: the process of bestialization.

THE BETRAYAL OF JUDAS

For one year he lived this drama, making the world's drama his. He had ventured into the risky adventure due to an excess of logic, yet with full awareness. He recalled the past and felt that it could not be completely destroyed. He did not yet understand how it could resurge. He felt that now, with regard to heaven, he was blind, and that his spirit was turning towards other points. He understood and forgave many things about the world. He had changed positions; however, he intended to plough deeper into the furrow of life. He suffered and worked with his spirit. His suffering was deeper and more mature. The descent into the lower strata of evolution, from where life always emerges as it ascends, while it brutalized him, also strengthened him, nourished his ideal, made him robust in the school of struggle, reinforced him in contact with force, and many of his naiveties and simplicities fell away. He believed that man was not always evil, and never for the pleasure of doing evil for evil's sake. The world gave him harsh, merciless, but reasonable and honest responses. Since there is a need and a duty to live, what can individual survival cling to other than selfishness, when altruism is no more than rhetoric? Therefore, selfishness is necessary to fulfil the duty to live, hence, it is not guilt—it is duty. To begin the individual and complete application of the Gospel in the world is

to walk toward certain death. How can one live in opposition to the environment and in continuous revolt against the dominant law? The ferocity of others imposes one's own ferocity. The kingdom of the Gospel can only be a collective conquest. Isolated pioneers can do no more than be torn apart. With this, he justified himself for his fall, but he also sought to justify the world for the crime of having, after twenty centuries, applied almost nothing of Christ's program. Thus, he understood how the beautiful dream of heaven had remained sterile for the masses, precisely because, given the state of human affairs, that dream would be entirely unrealizable. The normal man is certainly not the hero possessing superhuman strength, especially when taken alone, to lift the heavy law of matter to the rarefied planes of the spirit; the law of biological justice, which is that of the strongest, to transform it into the law of Gospel justice, which is the common good. And these laws, naturally strong in action, do not allow themselves to be nullified. Where individual preservation is tied to selfishness, altruism is absurd and impractical. It is indeed difficult to try to reconcile the anti-biological Gospel with the anti-Gospel earthly life. If the Gospel is the law of the future, that does not prevent the irreconcilable conditions of the present. For this reason, Renan, in his Life of Christ, was able to say that "the ideal, deep down, is always a utopia." And Plato said: "Without madness, there would be nothing beautiful and great in the world".

Christ well understood that the agreement would not be easy, so much so that His Gospel takes a clear stance: it is a permanent challenge to the world, an irreconcilable enemy... Never was a more terrible and profound war declared, with no possibility of peace, than the one waged by Christ under the loving guise of His good news. In this encounter between heaven and earth, between spirit and matter, between good and evil, between the Gospel and the world; from this titanic clash, Christ and Judas are two protagonists, representatives of the two laws and two lives that demonstrate the assault of opposing forces in the form of a lived drama. These were two enemy laws, and the struggle was inevitable, the fatal encounter. And the relationship is the same in the current case. Who will win? Who is in the right?

Each of the antagonists has their own resources, their own weapons, their own logic, their own justification. Judas, in his own plane, is a force; he represents a psychology, a law, and, in a certain sense, a right. And from there comes his capacity to act. The drama is entirely based on the inverse position of the starting point. Judas viewed things from the point of view of the earth, and Christ from the point of view of heaven. Starting from this basis, it is logical that Judas would consider himself betrayed by Christ, just as much as Christ could consider himself betrayed by Judas. If the goals were opposite, the clash of forces and the tragedy of betraval was inevitable. Judas aspired to earthly greatness, and that is why he followed Christ. When he realized that the Master brought only spiritual goods, when he discovered that the greatness to be expected from Christ was not earthly, but only heavenly, then Judas became disillusioned and, in his logic, felt he had the right to consider himself betrayed and, therefore, to seek revenge by returning the betrayal he believed he had received. This is the psychology of the world, which seeks to achieve its own ends and does not acknowledge any others. The root of the betrayal lies in this opposition of one aim against another and this different valuation of things. If the world understood the greater value of heaven, it would be absurd for it to continue looking toward the earth. But it does not understand, because it is still undeveloped, still on the animal plane, the brute awaiting its redemption.

There is the drama of the earth, fulfilling its law. Christ was, in truth, crucified. But once the goal was reached, things were transformed. Even Judas, the blind beast, understands that beneath the remains of the man he believed had died, there is another being, one who is not dead, but who lives under a very different law, one that grants him triumph. Judas realizes that the earth, which for him was everything, was for Christ nothing

but a foreign place, as if Christ had another homeland and belonged to another race. Faced with this discovery, Judas was stunned. He saw the Crucified, in ignominy, triumph in glory. And this mysterious transformation terrifies him. He sees that Christ, through death, fully realized His dream, and that he, Judas, was left abandoned at the bottom, because the truly betrayed and defeated one was himself, having been transformed into a blind instrument in the hands of the one he sought to betray. He, Judas, without understanding it, had played the worst part in that passion and had been one of the fundamental and necessary factors for the triumph now completed. First, he had betrayed, but in doing so, he won in his own way. Then, he was defeated. He harmed no one but himself, and hence his suicidal despair. His logic is relentless to the end, and this shows that, just as he was, given his type as a premise, the conclusion was inevitable, all the more so because his free will, giving an additional impulse to the fundamental will of his temperament, reaffirmed and reinforced it in such a way that it dragged him to the end. To repent would have meant changing course, changing nature, understanding the value of heaven-something he had never grasped and could not possibly understand. On the contrary, as greedy as he was, he would try to save something, and he knew the ways to do so, because Christ had always given him the example of forgiveness. This is the result of such a play of forces. In the end, however, the dominator was Christ, who understood Judas, whereas Judas did not understand Christ. This shows that God dominates evil by encompassing it and pressing it within the boundaries of good. Free, Judas was delivered to the impulses of his type, to his own destiny, which contained the germs that would develop, and he was used as he was. But there was a moment of free will, of hesitation, in which Judas wavered. For a fleeting moment, Christ's passion depended on him. A fleeting moment of freedom, enough to establish responsibility, but not capable of suspending the passion, for in that ferment of a people of traitors, soon there would be a line of them.

Ultimately, this is the position of the earth in relation to heaven. Judas is the voice of the earth that accuses and kills; Christ is the voice of heaven that triumphs, but only after death, that is, after the inner forces have been freed to reach their goal. A strange victory, for the earth that does not understand it. The law of the earth is the law of short reach, of near and small accomplishments. The law of heaven, on the contrary, is one of distant and vast accomplishments, so much so that there is even time for the abandonment of God. The world plays the part of the ignorant, of the hasty yet deceived. It achieves quickly, but in an unstable manner, when it is not pure illusion. Heaven moves without haste, secure through momentary failures, slow because it is profound. The world believes it has won, but it has lost; the target it thinks it has reached slips from its hands, and the victory crumbles. This is a characteristic of satanic methods: the instability of equilibrium and the precariousness of results. It is a method of building that does not sustain itself, based on force; as soon as this abandons it, it collapses. It is a disharmonious method, that is, isolated from the organic functioning of the universe; a method of selfishness, isolated from universal love; a dissonance that centres on itself instead of having God, who is the universal harmony, as its centre.

The earth seems in ruins to the heavens; the heavens seem in ruins to the earth. Both deny each other mutually. Heaven, on earth, can only exist as a negation of earth; it will only be positive when in heaven itself. Here, it must submit to the reaction, the vengeance of human forces. The earth is the battlefield where the two forces meet. First, the earth wins. Whoever descends to it must endure this trial. Here, heaven is in a foreign land; it must submit to local laws and accept the errors imposed upon it. Yet, it triumphs—not on the earth where it faltered; the compensation is realized in heaven, of which the earth perceives only a reflection. The great struggle of humanity lies in this apocalyptic invasion that heaven seeks to carry out upon the earth and against the earth—a struggle called redemption. The great champions of this battle are the saints. From these few words one can see how much more complex the problem of their affirmation is than it appears in the naive and simplistic narratives of their lives.

It seems like great presumption to want to practice the law of heaven on earth; to adapt to the common man a mantle made for very different shoulders. If there are superior beings who descend here, as if coming from another world and another race, they must be imprisoned, at least while they are alive, by this human reality. They do not ignore it; on the contrary, they must suffer it. They overcome it, but they must pass through it. Our character applied all of this to himself. His escape, after all, had only been an attempt at evasion. But fleeing is a luxury reserved for the great lords of the spirit, a right only of martyrs. He was not yet mature and could not flee. He was, and had to remain, inexorably a prisoner of human reality. Our will can do something within the given limits of the structure and position of that organism of forces in action and development, which is destiny. One cannot do everything purely by will; otherwise, farewell to the order of the universe. The saint is not improvised. And martyrdom cannot be fabricated by one's own will-it would be suicide. Certain quick and glorious epilogues presuppose a deep and organic preparation, the maturation of a destiny: they are the conclusion of a life and not of its teachings. That is why they can be swift.

He wondered for what reason and by what justice Christ's passion and His was not the only case—could be exhausted in a violent blaze lasting just a few hours, while his own suffering, and that of so many other simple mortals, lasted for more than half a century. The reason is that Christ was concluding, whereas he and the others were just beginning, and a fire cannot furrow like a slow, daily stillicide¹².

For this reason, the means to sacrifice himself for his idea had not yet reached him. In the enthusiasm of the first hour, if the means had

¹² Stillicide: the dripping of a liquid.

presented themselves, he would have accepted them. But it is rare that the imitation of Christ can be carried out on Earth so quickly. And so, as it was not possible to maintain certain heroic tensions for long, nor the effort of certain positions projecting outward from Earth, towards Heaven, and not having been given the possibility of departing through death – for certain risky attitudes could not be resolved in any other way – he had to rush. The development of the germs would have inevitably restarted, but for now, it was necessary to prevent it. Certain heroisms, already completely warmed by their initial flame, cannot endure on Earth, nor can they be prolonged indefinitely. The ideal cannot remain ablaze within an individual for more than half a century, because it burns the organism, and to sustain itself, it needs the fuel of success or reactions that excite life.

Modern cunning, having understood this, no longer makes the crude mistake of exalting a man and valuing his idea solely through the force of persecution. It no longer makes the mistake of creating a martyr, who, in the ranks of others, will always be a marvellous banner, a creative force that the opponent will tirelessly use to their own advantage and against others. Today, open persecution is avoided because this would create martyrs and give strength to the enemy. Instead, the preference is to destroy in silence. In this way, the ideal would be extinguished in his hands, as would happen to anyone who found themselves in his conditions and, like him, did not deserve a quick and conclusive solution.

Modern civilization, the voice of the earth, has a system all its own for suffocating the spirit. It does not confront it head-on; it does not deny it but observes it. It does not say, "You do not exist," because that would be an acknowledgment of the right to defence. It says, "I exist, only I," and thus suppresses it without killing it. It stuns it with external noise, with constant distractions, with mechanical and empty dynamism that gives the illusion of making it live, but in truth, leaves it to die. It steals every minute of the time it has to reflect, to find itself. It pulls it away from

solitude to throw it into the vortex of the metropolises. It gives no respite. And exterior life demands, in fact, all our attention. We cannot linger on the margins. In the rare moments of peace, we perceive within ourselves a strange discontent, a bitter dissatisfaction, an emptiness and hunger, a sadness that civilization does not admit because it has no means to cure it. The world has given up opposing these problems of the spirit, so important in times now called primitive, backward. It seems that man has completely lost the sense of spiritual matters, to the point that he does not even discuss them and is unconcerned with them. This is the most radical solution, that is, the suppression of the problem, the extirpation of the qualities necessary to face it. The world is concerned with other things. Its genius built the machine, and now it is certain that, with it, it has gained another slave to make life more comfortable. And the machine is the one that commands and is served. Man created the machine but has not yet created the wisdom to make use of it, which is much more difficult. And he runs, often just to run, to serve the machine that runs.

Man today is concerned with the situation of the masses. Individual and aristocratic problems no longer matter. Today, evolution occurs on the surface, and the natural consequence is the need to renounce evolving in depth. The ferment of progress does not attack only a few pioneers; it attacks the enormous mass of peoples. It is a vast and superficial movement. Civilization is greatly developing, and it would be a serious mistake to ignore its importance. It is a great social work aimed at large collective goals, and it deserves all respect. This can only be regarded as an oceanic background noise. In the face of the rising tide of human masses, the survival of individuals who have made themselves and think for themselves should be permissible, even if isolated and by exception. And this book is nothing but the story of a spiritual aristocrat, a solitary man who rebels against all the currents of his time, so as not to be crushed by the number, so as not to be submerged and annihilated by the crowd. Precisely today, when man is mass-produced and valued, this exceptional type may become an interesting rarity. It is clear that such aristocratic experiences, conducted in depth, are not meant for the masses, who by their nature are crude and coarse. Certain trials are observed by very few. The rights and duties of the herd are proportional to its capacity and are not the same as those of an isolated being. It is natural that the masses cannot be individualistic; to attempt this would be to create anarchy and chaos. For this reason, they do not even have the right to attempt it. But who is more individualistic than leaders, and who is more totalitarian than the individualist? And what man will be more hated and more imitated than the exceptional man? The biological law is always the same: the selection of the best and the abandonment of the amorphous masses to the unconscious. This story is the reaction, with balancing functions, of individualism against the crowd, of the minority against the majority-a reaction against the classification as an ideal type of the normal individual of doubtful value, a reaction against modern mechanical uniformity that invades even spiritual valuesa claim for inner freedom, which by the law of life is always inviolable, as it is solely the offspring of one's own destiny. This book is, therefore, the exaltation of the freedom of the spirit against the slavery of matter, and it is also a reaction against the times. It is a struggle and a challenge. It remains in an elevated and abstract form, precisely to keep these problems distant from the ignorant masses eager to meddle and destroy. It may not be of interest, but it contains elements that today's society has set aside or forgotten; concepts atrophied today, but which may be useful tomorrow, when the dominant conceptions prove, by the widening of horizons, insufficient to solve all the problems of life.

It may happen that the survival of these few beings, to whom the laws of life entrust the preservation of the subtle thread of spirituality, so that it is not destroyed or lost in this orgy of forces; it may happen that the silent work of these few isolated, misunderstood, and condemned beings is one day considered as providence and salvation in times of shipwreck among the precious treasures conquered by civilization.

225

It is useless to argue. Each force desires its development, which proceeds completely independently of human understanding. The thought of the laws of life expresses itself without argument, by bursts, not through demonstrations and reasoning, but through facts. The world is a concrete reality; each of its thoughts reveals itself in the form of action. It is not said — it is lived. One obeys without asking for explanations. The laws of life make themselves obeyed and do not concern themselves with being understood. And each one follows their path, with their risks and their goals instinctively, irresistibly, with their good reasons to follow it, even if they do not understand it. The world follows its path, attempting its great epic and bloody adventure.

Our character also went, solitary, along his road; he too was fulfilling his destiny.

LIES AND JUSTIFICATIONS

Thus, he entered the world, fallen, but free and conscious to know the whole truth, whatever it might be, in all its aspects. And so, he continued to advance in life, without fears or prejudices, and in full sincerity. The world may have laughed at this sincerity, as if it were a system for the naïve. But this was also a strength. This was his straightforward method, and he would not change it, and here his inflexible type was revealed and survived, fallen to earth, but not belonging to it and which could never definitively accept it. Here, he was always a foreigner, in exploration. He looked at the world frankly, head-on. If the world had a truth to tell him, it would be forced to say it. If it was a lie, he would unmask it. He accepted, made the world's law his own to seriously experience it, but also to throw the result of his experience back at the world's face, if it was not worthy of a man. He had to experience everything and know everything. Now he was ready to desperately grab the earthly laws by the collar and dissect them deeply. He demanded the same sincerity he offered. Thus, he could find the meaning of the world to justify it, or through its weak points and contradictions, accuse it and condemn it. Yet, he found satisfaction in the apocalyptic struggle for the ideal, but he wanted honest and courageous frankness. He would have considered respectable the beast in its

environment, provided it gave proof of coherence. But he would never forgive it for the vileness of defrauding sincerity under false appearances. He was ready to dismantle, consciously and honestly, all his constructions and conquests, ready to lose his mind in spiritual suicide, ready for anything. But he had involved himself with the Gospel. His life had been an experience of the Gospel. If he had to fall, the Gospel must also fall, and, if it fell, everything it contained would also fall: justice, goodness, faith, religion, ideal. Then, farewell to everything. Farewell to everything if there had to be lies. Either honesty, or nothing. The cross is a supreme and terrible symbol. It is looked at head-on and with seriousness. If it is a false symbol, let it fall. And let there be the courage to make it fall openly, but let it never be the result of baseness and lies. Lies, in the realm of directed force, even when towards violence, but directed, is incoherence, and incoherence is a violation, a betrayal of all laws, both earthly and divine. It would be baseness and unforgivable shame upon the earth. If the cross is a false symbol, have the coherence to make it fall honestly. But if it is a true symbol, woe to the world! Woe, above all, to the spiritual leaders of the world! It is not lawful to lie before the cross, it is not lawful to lie before the martyrs who followed it.

He searched, but what he found was not the courage of rebellion; rather, he found the truth, squeezed, exploited, falsified until it became unrecognizable; goodness so perverted that it turned into evil; the spiritual essence of life manipulated until it became poison. He observed, terrified, the moral dissolution of the world, its method of falsifying the ideal, of betraying heaven. The fact that he had wanted to observe life behind the scenes had demolished all his illusions. The world was nothing but a mere representation of noble and virtuous things, of conventional exaltations, of tacit agreements not revealed to the naïve. It was impossible to communicate between two such different languages: sincerity and deceit. The truths he spoke were received as lies, while he took the lies of others as truths. There was no possible understanding between someone who seriously sought the ideal, and the world, which used that ideal as a banner for its own designs, to achieve material advantages with it. He could not understand why, on this terrain of utility, he was always defeated while others emerged victorious; the same things, treated so differently, produced opposite effects.

He was taken as naïve. If he dared to say anything, his simplicity provoked scandal, his sincerity was an offense. People do not like to hear certain truths that must remain hidden. And he thought how useful it would be for him to learn a little of the beautiful game of respectable people. And he thought this not with a spirit of satire, but with deep bitterness. He did not intend to give these judgments absolute value. It was simply the impression things made on him, seen from his position. They were irreconcilable with his temperament, and he reacted, that was all. His reaction was slow, complex, profound. He had to demolish consciously and through conscience, keeping honesty and justice intact. But he already indistinctly felt that he could not resist that environment for long, adapting and forgetting his past; that over time, he could do nothing but react to this new reality so inferior to the one he had already known; that, given his temperament and precedents, a new revolt would be inevitable, followed by a resurrection. Would not the new experience he accumulated crossing the world of darkness return precisely to launch him, with greater impulse, with greater vigour, toward the light?

He felt an unacceptable content in the world, which, certainly, had already formed within him, though not yet clearly declared, the basis of his revolt. The first impulse toward his new transformation was not so much the attraction to the higher, but an invincible repugnance for the methods of the world, a repulsion for the inferior. Indeed, nothing seemed more unacceptable and unbearable to him than the lack of sincerity and righteousness. Moreover, he felt it was useless to accuse, to attempt to reform, or to ask, because the world wished to follow its own path and was wellequipped for it, and well-armed to defend its will. And if it was impossible to bend it, to come to an understanding, and if he also could not bend himself, what remained for him except to turn his back on it?

Continuing his exploration, he observed how society functioned according to schemes that each generation passes on to the next, and within which all men and their work are framed. Within the scope of these schemes, the social, political, religious, military, and economic categories, as well as the distinctions and groupings that, for the most disparate reasons, unite or divide men, within these artificial enclosures, must accommodate the most diverse biological types, each with its own capacity, which may also be in irreconcilable contrast with the socially occupied position. And then arises the struggle between the scheme and the man, between the true type and the false appearance, a struggle in which each tries to bend the other: the scheme, seeking to transform the man according to the pre-established model; the man, seeking to transform the scheme and adapt it to his own temperament.

Given the possibility that man on earth has of disguising his true personality, and also the impossibility of knowing his true nature, schemes are forced to consider only appearances, the forms under which any substance can always be concealed. Hence, the most glaring contrasts and contradictions. And he realized that he had fallen into the realm of form, where schemes dominate. Therefore, he dedicated himself to going directly to the individual, without taking schemes into account; seeking the man and nothing more, absolutely disregarding his position and external appearance; he decided to demolish the entire structure of social cataloguing, to liberate the type from the garments that envelop and disguise him, and without giving any importance to the transformations of form, to be able to reach the substance.

This was the method of the spirit, and he verified that on earth what reigned was the method of matter. The more the being is unevolved, the greater importance it gives to form, to external appearance; the poorer it is in real values, the more it seeks to protect itself with the cloak of fictitious values. Ascending brings to light the true inner self, making it, at the same time, more worthy of being able to appear. Thus, to escape deceptions and reach reality, he no longer considered form and scheme; he no longer paid attention to the outer garment of man.

He sought to tear away the mask from things, the fictitious forms under which everything hides on Earth. He understood that, where struggle is a fundamental motive of life and the universal means of achievement, selfishness is necessary, as is falsehood. Whoever lacks strength, if they do not resort to cunning, will be defenceless; and a defenceless being on Earth is doomed. Therefore, it is indisputably much more useful to present oneself as full of virtues. Words rarely say anything; they rarely say things worthy of being said and almost always serve to hide, rather than express thought. Illusionism is part of nature's protective armour. But he, who felt the elevation of ideals, was horrified by this profanation, by this unconsciousness that sought to put heaven at the service of Earth, considering the most precious and elevated things as common means to protect life. The sad necessity of reducing everything, even heaven, to the human level repulsed him; of using everything, without distinction, in the function of the struggle for life.

Great unconsciousness, but also great misery, this sad necessity. The universal and merciless struggle invades everything, demands, and imposes itself on everything. And here he understood the meaning and the logic of the unforgivable lie. But what a dreadful, insecure, and slippery ground, what a reality with two faces, what misery for a being constrained to such means to survive! What unconsciousness, to have the courage to commit such profanations. The lie seemed to him the most suffocating exhalation of the earth, the one that made its atmosphere more impure and stifling. The tortuous method, the unconscious reality that easily dissolved, the world made of illusions, agonized him. In this ground, in such an atmosphere of falsehood, man had to work, painfully, seeking to fulfil himself. He had to make distrust a habit and a virtue, and neutralize, at every step, the treacherous cunning of his neighbour. What a terrible and infernal weight, and what a paradisiacal liberation could emerge on a higher plane, of sincerity and faith! Fearfully, he looked at this world of appearances, at the making and unmaking of those mutable and fictitious shapes of things, unable to believe in anything more on earth.

What did the world respond to these accusations of his? First, this: "You accuse us of being liars, but you forget that on earth the regime is not one of justice and truth, but rather of struggle, where lies are a weapon of attack and defence. All of this will move towards justice and truth and will be a means to conquer them; but these are distant things and are absent today from the reality of our life. It is absurd to demand them. And if you require our sincerity in this world, it can only be to strip us of our defences and thus make it easier for us to be defeated."

And it answered further: "We are the unevolved, not yet redeemed. And who gives us the strength to transform life, taking it from the shrieks of struggle to evangelical harmonies? The invitation or the command from heaven is useless. Who can transport these dense enclosures of matter into that rarefied atmosphere? Who can refine our rustic sensitivity to the point where we can perceive the evanescent reality of that elevated world? Each one is made for their own environment. You, angels, are not made for the earth and will fare poorly here below, just as we are not made for heaven and would fare poorly up there. We are inferior. And here, we have our animality, to which we know how to adapt and which we have the strength to endure. You may have your eyes turned upward, but we are bound to the earth and our gaze must be directed downward. Those who judge us selfish, merciless, and aggressive show great naivety and ignorance of the reality of life. But the earthly environment is not a paradise of free joys: it is a world of hostile forces, where nothing is obtained without violence and imposition. The angel is right because he will leave. But if he had to stay here, he would have to transform, or he would be eliminated. These are the real conditions, and it is useless to search for their causes. It is true that all this is quite rough and has the taste of punishment. It is true that if our destiny is to reach God, this will always mean dreadful labour. Condemnation and labour do not prevent our fierce selfishness from being, given human life and its environment, a normal necessity. This punishment and abjection, if not determined by divine justice, who knows for what sins of ours, since we are born today and die tomorrow without knowing anything, are certainly part of the fatal determinism inherent to human destiny, and are a tremendous weight that must be carried because, after twenty centuries, it seems that not even Christ's sacrifice has managed to free us. Therefore, if one tries to transplant the things of the spirit to the earth, they, in the unsuitable atmosphere, quickly wither and are led to die. They are too delicate and subtle to be perceived, too light to have weight among people of iron sensitivity, in the midst of ferocious reality. Biological laws are not an abstract principle, but a concrete will that demands obedience."

Following the Gospel means rebelling against this will and exposing oneself to the vengeance of those laws, which dominate on earth and sacrifice those who violate them. Woe to those who do not respect them! They will be crushed. Everyone endures and applies them, even the theorists who claim to dominate and overcome them. It is not our fault that the Gospel and the world are irreconcilable. We cannot, in fulfilling the duty of fully applying the Gospel, eliminate the duty to live. We do not have the right to suicide. To accomplish anything on earth, first comes force, then cunning; goodness comes last. Goodness is the most inadequate means in an environment where the objective is to act, not to love and dream, and with it, nothing is achieved here on earth. We must first fulfil ourselves on earth and then in heaven. The opposite is absurd, and there is no room for

such experiments. We must stick to what is concrete: avoid pain, seek joy, and in this, quickly achieve the reward of the struggle. Goodness must be useful. Distant and hypothetical results are of no interest. Here, we must live, not fall. Those who fall are dragged down. The struggle is harsh, and there is no energy left to help that brother who has fallen, because he is always a rival, and pity for him robs us of victory. On earth, there is no place for the Gospel, no possibility for fraternity or altruism. Only one thing emerges: to fight and to win. Beneath all the masks and the fashions of time, this is the only stable substance that never changes. What do you come to tell us? No. Do not involve us in your altruistic ideals. Do you wish to destroy and deceive nature? It cannot admit pity where the struggle for selection develops. Justice, then, is obtained not by the pity of the superior, but by the selfish rebellion of the inferior-that is, not through the loving conduct of the Gospel, but by extortion, because the struggle is continuous, and only the strongest achieve victory. Biological reality has no interest in extending maternal pity beyond its protective function in motherhood. Protecting beyond these limits is anti-selective. Your law is weak and only produces inept beings. Our justice is ironclad, inexorable, and creates the strong. The biological law cannot accept the Gospel. In our world, pity and goodness do not work, no one pays for sacrifice, and there is no space for ideals. The supreme law is: act for yourself, knowing well that you should not ask for help, that you will find no pity, because our neighbour is more engaged than we are. All that remains for us is to deny all aid and show no pity. This is our justice. Our world is a vortex that pushes and drags everyone along. To isolate oneself, to rebel, is impossible. And we cling desperately to the vortex, with all our means and joys, repelling pain however we can. Why would we make efforts for distant results, when we must fight for immediate needs? Along the paths of the Gospel, fatigue is near and the result is hypothetical and distant, and for this reason, it is natural that nature avoids such paths. It is positive, utilitarian, economical, and prudent. It does not admit risks; if some fools waste energy pursuing ideals and uncertain results, it does not tolerate the exhaustion that will leave man worn out at the feet of a dream.

Nature, which resides in instinct, does its calculations and demands tangible, secure payment on earth, for itself, to live. It has no interest in payments after death, that abyss of darkness beyond which human life holds no value. Perhaps we are blind, but we are made of practical common sense, we are positive. Heaven cannot exist on earth. The beyond is a mystery; one does not make the heroic sacrifices demanded by the Gospel for a mystery.

Yes! Sometimes those strange beings called saints pass through here, with their eyes always fixed on the heavens. What things they see up there, we do not know. Perhaps it is another world, with other phenomena and other laws; we cannot deny it "a priori," but we do not know it. Their ideal achievements are too far removed to be considered. They completely escape our experience, and what lies outside of this is, for us, practically nonexistent and irrelevant to life. Seen from the biological plane, the ideal appears very different and can only be evaluated in terms of its utilitarian benefit, according to what it can yield on our level. It is natural, then, that everything gets overturned, falsified, exploited. And indeed, those superior beings of the ideal are persecuted by the laws of the earth, misunderstood, and mistreated, because they are out of place. The majority is right to repudiate these beings who stray from the normal course of life. Instead of living like the others, in the struggle and misery of the earth, they seek to be exceptions and, in doing so, exempt themselves from the labours that are everyone's share. Whoever has surpassed human divisions becomes cast out from a life built on divisions. The universal is not normal, not understood, not allowed. Here on earth, the relative reigns in its kingdom and condemns the absolute. What does it matter if the genius's intelligence, a sublime instrument of divine music, cannot be used as a staff for attack and defence?

The fault lies with the genius, for being abnormal. On earth, he is alone, or nearly so, and whoever is alone has no reason, and whoever has no reason is outside the law and can be destroyed with impunity. After all, superiority comes at a price. Let him normalize himself, descend into the common pit of misery and ignorance, and make the primitive instincts of everyone his own. And if he does not know how to do this, and dies, so much the worse for him. We will laugh at him. We are not interested in the spirit, but rather in the stomach. If God is with him, why does He not come down to earth to defend him? Those are luxuries, utopias. The earth is made for the unevolved, for us, who are many, and not for them, who are so few. Perhaps we are inferior, coarse, and deserve contempt, but we are in our own home, we have our law, and we are suited to our environment, whereas they are not. With this in mind, we are well made and do not wish to refine ourselves and weaken. We cannot fraternize with beings of other races. If they have exhausted their trials here and overcome our world, so much the better for them—let them go.

We have not overcome. Our trials are here on earth, and we must have the strength and courage to face them. Today, our God cannot yet be goodness, but is force. This is the kingdom of matter, and matter only obeys force. Here, those who dream of ideal things are truly imbeciles.

And the world answers me further: We are not merely unevolved, that is, beings whom you, from the heights of your spirit, treat as inferior: we are also wretched. You condemn us, but do you, super-beings, judges, you angels seated on your thrones of glory—do you know the infinite misery of our pain?

We are not merely unevolved. We are still crushed under the weight of a thousand labours, and our human nature is chained to matter, imprisoned in an iron cage. Here, there is no room for sweet dreams or contemplations. Reality is harsh—if one does not fight, one dies. Here, the facts prove at every moment that the ideal is a dream and reality is pain. Our human position of wretchedness, the great weight of expiation-all of this grants us the right to certain desperate reactions, to certain horrible descents that deny heaven because, at the limit of strength, everything is abandoned, even the ideal, in order to find a little rest. Above, there is much power, much justice, much goodness, much happiness. Here on earth, there is much misery, much injustice, much evil, much suffering. We have pain that, even when it torments us, weighs on us like a threat. Does heaven know the misery of the desperate? And liberation is not easy, because it tends to destroy those who work for the good and try to save themselves, in the hope of leaving the earth. If staying is exhausting, leaving is even harder. And so, few attempt it. This pain is a terrible right to raise a debased head, and it demands respect. It is the explation that ennobles the condemned and justifies their baseness. Over this part of us, which is said to be what we are made of, a rain of fire continuously falls. We know little else. Knowledge escapes us. We are blind. We gaze at the mystery in vain and see nothing. The only thing we truly know is that we are condemned to suffer through life. And that God, who is the reason and cause of everything, hides Himself in a dizzying, unreachable abstraction".

Faced with these responses, our character was filled with a profound sense of pity. And then, he understood how much vaster the meaning of the Gospel is; he stepped down from his chair, forgot about himself and his position of combat, and realized that only those who rise for others and with others truly ascend. And he turned toward his fellow beings with open arms. The world had given him its great lesson. The new experience had not been in vain.

THE GOSPEL AND THE WORLD

Christ said:

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Woe to you, rich, who in this world already find your consolation!

2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!

3. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied!

4. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!

5. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!

6. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God!

7. Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!"

And the world responds:

1. "The poor are the defeated. We, the rich, are the victors of life. Wealth is the happiness one hopes for, as it is the rightful reward for fighting and winning.

2. Wretched are those who weep. The defeated deserve contempt. There is no pity for the weak. Life desires the strong. The world would perish if, thanks to pity, it were reduced to an asylum for the inept.

239

3. Those who hunger and thirst for justice will achieve nothing by waiting idly; they must seek it by force. On earth, a harsh and fierce justice reigns, one that bows to the strongest, to those who earned their position through courage, risking and working; a justice that leaves no room for the weak, the dreamers, the reckless idealists.

4. Earth is no place for mercy. These compassions disrupt the healthy laws of life, leading to the selection of the inept, of idlers and hypocrites. The healthy biological laws must drive away these merciful parasitisms that hinder life and lead it to degeneration.

5. Life belongs to the strong, not to the pure. The victors are questioned about nothing because they are right; the losers are questioned about everything because they are wrong.

6. The law of selection does not want the peaceful, but the fighters and victors. Thus, nature truly speaks through the feminine instinct of sexual selection.

7. On earth, justice is the triumph of the strongest. The persecuted, as long as they do not revolt and win, are always wrong. On earth, there is no respect for heaven. We do not respect what lies beyond our experience and the realm of our action".

This is how the world responds. And it could still add: we are not the ones who made the law that rules over the earth. It is written in our instincts, which were born with us; it is written over all life on our planet. Therefore, at least on our level, does this law not express the will and thought of God?

Who is right? Why does heaven contradict the earth, and the earth continuously contradict heaven? The Gospel says: "Love your neighbour as yourself." But the world, in reality, applies this other principle: "Destroy your neighbour, if you don't want him to destroy you." How is it possible to reconcile such opposing systems? It is not just a problem of the Gospel

and the world, but the problem of the destiny of our character, who had committed his life to the full application of the Gospel. He sought a solution to the problem that had presented itself as soon as he confronted the psychology of the world. In this contrast lay the great battle of his life, as within him lay the tragic struggle between Christ and biological reality, the two great opposing truths. He deeply felt the titanic dimensions, the apocalyptic vastness of the battle. To dare to go against the supreme law of the earth, to challenge the laws of life on the planet—it appeared to him as the most gigantic adventure a man could undertake. And so he lived the greatest drama ever conceived by the human mind—the drama of Christ in His passion, of Dante in the Divine Comedy, of Goethe in Faust; a drama whose epilogue was in heaven, its development on earth as a challenge, and its substance was the human self-destruction to raise one's own resurrection to a higher level.

He had dared everything and staked it all on the word of Christ. If he were defeated, that word would be disproved, at least in his case.

And now he was fully reliving that central motive of his destiny, in the tragic and intense moment when he was torn between two lives, each one eager to reach its own conclusion.

When Christ and Pilate met, the two truths stared at each other in silence, challenging one another. Pilate asked Christ what His Truth¹³ was, for he already knew his own. It was the biological, practical, and concrete truth, which told him: "Your leader is the emperor, the one who wins by force, the one who commands, the only one who is always right. Obey him and keep your position. Besides that, there is a social order, and you, who represent it, cannot subvert it. The truth of someone who lives outside the world makes no sense."

¹³ John 18: 37-38 (Translator's Note)

Pilate was simply a practical man, and he would have understood Christ if He had spoken to him in the language of the world. Naturally, Pilate didn't even wait for an answer, which Christ did not give. Neither spoke, and the truth went no further than that question. But both answered with different actions and conclusions. Actions, not discussions, are the most serious responses; once they are taken, we must bear the responsibility and face the consequences. Each followed his own path, reaching his different goal. It was pointless to explain, especially because it would not have been possible to understand. Thus placed at opposite extremes, the two truths accused each other of extreme ignorance. Pilate did not truly intend to put an end to the martyr, something of little importance, though it carried the worst possible meaning for him and his environment. Pilate is the true symbol of the world that is based on utilitarian calculation, does not admit the ideal, considering it madness. And the ideal has no other answer but silence and martyrdom.

Faced with these silent and terrifying statements, the earth continues to reproach the Gospel for its ignorance of actual conditions, so adverse to man that, if he wishes to survive, he must learn to bend them to his own control. In such an environment, any goodness that goes beyond the maternal function of protecting one's offspring is anti-vital. The direction of life is entrusted to man-the conqueror without scruples or pity. Martyrdom, the logical conclusion of the evangelical pioneer, is an absurdity, anti-biological, and anti-human. The truth is to win. If I am generous, my neighbour will ruin me; my kindness will be seen as weakness, and my defeat will be his triumph. On earth, no other truths are admitted except those that are useful for living and winning. And the Gospel, from the outset, disarms man and sends him to fight on earth without weapons. And this, in the face of violent fighters, unscrupulous and who trample on their own duties, means death. The evangelical ideal could be realized if, for a few years, it were maintained under special conditions, at the cost of a continuous spiritual tension, nourished by great sacrifice. But, unable to

continually govern itself by opposing laws, it would soon collapse, dragging along its first author or interpreter. This is the truth of the failed, and the earth does not accept it.

This is the most harsh point of the drama of Gethsemane. Perhaps, at that moment, Christ felt the entire biological absurdity of His sublime law, His immense distance from the true human nature, its inapplicability to the earth as it is. Would the supreme martyrdom not be, across centuries, a supreme defeat? Would the reality of life not have neutralized many sacrifices; would the effort to raise man upwards through impossible overcomings not have been in vain? There were ample reasons for doubt, the most atrocious human doubt, which can assail the genius, the hero, the saint precisely at the gates of the supreme holocaust. For such, in truth, is the reality of life that they account to overcome. And after so much pain, instead of reward, they will receive indifference and condemnation. But whose fault is it that the logic of the earth is so different from the logic of heaven? The time had come to face the problem and solve it.

The logic of the earth is exercised through "three laws" that everyone lives by, including those who ignore and deny them, and which are always present everywhere as the universal language of life. These laws are not only a norm; they are a concrete imposition that speaks and demands obedience through the three fundamental instincts: "hunger, love, evolution."

"Hunger" is the fundamental law that governs individual preservation, which implies, imposes, and justifies the selfishness to which the basic function of life is entrusted: to protect oneself against everything and to survive at any cost. Life operates through egocentric units that never abdicate. As hunger increases, it becomes the centre of all other desires, and selfishness the centre of all aspirations. This is the first, irrevocable, and fundamental position of life, which is egocentric and affirms: "I am."

"Love" is the second law, continuation and complement of the first. Selfishness splits and extends into another instinct, which governs the preservation of the species. Here, the individual does not fight to protect themselves, but to protect their children. It is the second position of life, no longer individual but social, with the family being born as the first nucleus, and advancing from the lesser to the greater—family, homeland, region, nation, race, humanity. And the human collective, a broader egocentric position, affirms: "we are."

"Evolution" is the third law. Just as the second does not appear before the first is satisfied, evolution cannot act unless the first two have been satisfied. This law, the last to appear, continues, completes, and crowns the preceding two. According to it, the individual does not fight for his own preservation, nor for that of the species. Surpassing the problem of protection, the battle for the selection of the best begins, so that the species may reach ever higher forms of life. It is the third position of life, a collective and dynamic position, which says: "we advance." It is, therefore, the law of evolution, selection, and expansion, and through it, humanity keeps moving forward along the paths of progress.

These three laws correspond to the three dimensions of space—line, surface, and volume. They are like the three floors of a building: the upper levels cannot be built without first constructing the lower ones. The three corresponding instincts arise and act successively, always after the satisfaction of the previous ones, which form the foundation. The first is more important than the second, and the second more important than the third. With this, nature demonstrates the solidity of its construction system. Thus, the higher instinct emerges after the satisfaction of the previous one. Once the lower imperative is met, it moves on to the higher. Once hunger is satisfied, once all selfish needs for the individual's preservation are met, once well-being is achieved, the focus shifts to procreation. Then, demographic exuberance creates pressure, the need for material expansion arises, and wars and revolutions occur. Soon, man, who is so ruthless and greedy in the conquest of wealth that costs him so much labour, wastes it all during war, making it essential to pay tribute for the sake of selection. Thus, he progresses, and the ascension is completed in the spiritual expansion represented by new forms of coexistence, thought, and civilization. Once the needs for individual and species preservation are satisfied, the instinct to progress rises, demanding satisfaction, to serve a higher need situated at the apex of the edifice, where the law of evolution reigns.

The instinct for progress, being the last to appear, that is, biologically of more recent formation, is naturally the least deeply rooted and, being less solid, it is the one that falls most quickly at the first difficulties. It is when life hastens to reestablish equilibrium at a lower level, in the more elementary and stable position of the lower laws, as nature prioritizes the security of preservation over the risk of selection.

To these three laws correspond three forms of struggle: for personal defence, for the defence of the family, and for material and spiritual expansion. These laws also correspond to three main organs of the human body: the stomach, the sex, and the brain, with their functions—digestion, feeling, and thought. To each function corresponds an instinct and a specific pleasure that can lead to excess and create a vice.

The brain, along with the nervous system, is truly the organ of evolution, the guiding organ that, like a sensitized antenna, scans its surroundings and pushes forward, attempting new experiences. To the spirit belongs power, conquest, and the future, but equally the risk and the fatigue of overcoming the resistance of the conservative past.

The operation of these laws depends on an impulse that manifests as an instinctive desire for satisfaction and a counter-impulse, which is the suffering caused by dissatisfaction. Joy on one side, pain on the other. And through this system, nature ensures obedience from all. It rewards with joy the obedience to the impulse that leads to life and punishes with pain the disobedience, the abuses, the excesses, and everything that endangers life. Joy and pain, as they refine, distance themselves from animality. And

245

for each being, the functions of the plane where the centre of their life is balanced, according to their phase of evolution, are fundamental and instinctive.

The three laws also correspond to three forms of selfishness of varying scope, equally sacred, imperious, and important in their own plane, because they govern the defence of a specific type of work and the fulfilment of a different biological function. The man bound to the first law perceives nothing beyond the defence of himself; he is enclosed in a shell of small personal selfishness. And this is necessary for him to live. It is a right that is respected.

When man rises to the second law, his selfishness expands to include his family, to such an extent that, compared to the narrower selfishness of the first law, it seems like altruism, but it is an expansion capable of covering a wider field. When, finally, man begins to live on the plane of the third law, his selfishness expands further to include his group, then the nation, the race, and finally all of humanity. Each type of selfishness is, in comparison with the previous one, an expansion, and is seen as altruism by those on lower planes.

This is why altruism is considered a virtue. Because it is overcoming, the expansion of individual consciousness, an evolutionary ascension. It is a process of expansion and liberation from that shell of restricted selfishness where the superior man still sees the inferior man confined. The passage from one type of selfishness to a broader one, that is, its expansion into its relative altruism, is tiring. In this fatigue lies the value of virtue, of which the concept, the constructive value, the slow gradation, are demands of the law along the central axis of life, which is evolution. The fatigue of the return to God through the paths of progress must be ours. It is the sacrifice of the self when it breaks the shell of individual selfishness, which painfully opens and expands into altruism. The return to God is a conquest of happiness that can only be achieved through renunciation and sacrifice, that is, the demolition of selfish separatism for evangelical communion. The men of the first law already try to identify themselves in family selfishness, which surpasses individual selfishness. They love selfishly, without altruistic elevations. On the contrary, the man of the third law sees himself in all humanity, feels his self in his fellow men, in whose defence and well-being he finds his own defence and well-being. He commits to this defence with the same spontaneity and energy with which the man of the first law does in the defence of himself, for his fellow man is himself and, for this reason, deserves protection at all costs.

Here we see what a compact organism of interdependence life is. When a creature rises, separating itself from its brothers who remained behind, the law compels it, by instinct, to turn back to them, to help them rise with it. The three laws are like three phases, three contiguous stages of evolution, which man must traverse in the laborious ascension. And how much closer to God and to the realization within oneself of God's thought is the man of the third law! And therein lies the profound meaning of the evangelical concept: "Love your neighbour as yourself." It is an order given to man so that he may reach and live in the third law, difficult and tiring, but closer to order and love, which is God. And this is enough to form the morality in which the power of evolution is a virtue and the tendency to regress, moving away from God in an *involutive* direction, is a vice.

From the gradation of phases and laws, it is deduced and concluded that the ideal and the Gospel can only find place at the apex of evolution, that is, in the most recent biological conquests, less consolidated in human assimilation, especially in the zones of greatest risk and greatest uncertainty, those where misoneism provides security. It is truly a noble and exalted plan. But on Earth, men of the first and second law dominate by number. The dominion of the majority, which seeks to assert itself, does not tolerate the man of the third law—a rival who disputes the field of life. It is natural that he is misunderstood and persecuted, because his mission is superb and supreme. But his destiny is martyrdom, and he will have to face all the risks. If he fails in his ideal, no one will lament him.

If this is truly useful to progress, then the martyr's blood will spread across the world like fertilizing rain, and the light of the spirit will illuminate the Earth, and at its own time the sowing will sprout. This is the position of the Gospel on Earth. What a fragile thread sustains this life! It is still but a weak seed fallen from the heavens onto the bare earth, exposed to all the elements.

However, this seed is a future reality, and no dynamic centre fights with greater energy for its realization. Every action must be followed by a struggle that serves to eliminate the incapable, demanding the resistance that is the guarantee of inner value. And while heaven and earth fight as enemies, the thread of evolution connects them, and a law of complementarity draws them together, and in the end, even while battling, one will fall into the arms of the other.

This was the fatal knot of Gethsemane: love and pain. Those who surpass the Earth can only expect death on the cross, but their supreme biological function is the exploration of the future, and their obligation is to dictate to the world the new norm of life. Their mission is irrevocable. Superiority implies, by the law of equilibrium, tremendous duties. Among the struggles of the Earth, the one that surpasses all others is that between the divine and the human, by which heaven wants and must interfere and fuse with the rebellious Earth. The Earth revolts. But it is a sublime and irresistible violation. In the violent descent of the spirit upon matter there is something of the mechanism of fertilization. The genius and the saint descend from the inaccessible heights to throw themselves into the mud, into the sea of pain and misery; the divine lowers itself to the human; the absolute comes to weep in the relative. It is this fatality that crushes and oppresses the chosen one, even to the cross.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE IDEAL

Strange being the superman, wrapped in a terrible tragedy of misunderstanding and martyrdom, destined to be hated by normal, inferior, selfish, envious, and rival man; hated because we detest those who destroy what seems superior to us. What can be enjoyed is accepted. The genius is, above all, sensitivity, and this is synonymous with suffering. The whole world seems to reflect in the superior spirit; everything finds an echo in their nerves and brain-as if they were the nervous and cerebral organs of the collective being. Or the antenna with which the superman explores the future, the centre of humanity's conscious synthesis, the extreme limit of the pains and efforts of all terrestrial life. It is as if the superman made their own the entire fatigue of the world's ascension, as well as all its dangers and sufferings. The superior being, the genius, whether a thinker, hero, leader, or saint, has behind them only a brutal herd that distrusts, destroys, and steals from them the tormenting conquest, for which they are reproached. They face the vertigo of mystery and the duty to explore it. No one helps them. Everyone considers them abnormal and condemns them because they do not share the tastes and opinions of others. They struggle with a terrible inability to live like others, who view them with suspicion. But they are hypersensitive and can only live on a higher plane

and see farther. When one is of such a type, one irrevocably has a mission and is fatally destined for martyrdom. This is certain, by the laws of life, for all who have risen to that level. There remains, then, no other path but the heroic triumph of the martyr. It is useless to want to retreat.

Humanity, which nourishes its life and owes its progress to the achievements of genius, has already historically demonstrated that it neither protects nor encourages them, nor even lets them work in peace. What it usually does is condemn and persecute them. It is, therefore, a thief of those tormented products to which, in a regime of justice and not of violence and usurpation, it would have no right. The system by which the great mass of mediocrities treats superior men, to whom they owe so much, is always the same: indifference or persecution. Then, too late, come understanding, exaltation, and enjoyment. But no help in the moments when it is needed. This is how it must be, however, because the ignorant inferior must be dragged upward even against their will, so that the genius owes nothing to their imbecility, and ultimately because the mission that the genius fulfils is nourished above all by struggle and martyrdom.

Are such beings happy? In comparison with the easy and joyful unconsciousness of a vegetatively satisfied existence, their life is often a terrifying sensation of living, full of anguish and sadness. A greater intelligence cannot remain deceived by common mirages and brings with it new needs, a great insatiability, and a fatigue arising from broader inquiries. Intelligence is a gift that creates for others and is not just a source of pleasure for its possessor. Only fools will believe otherwise. Intelligence is merely a vanguard position for a vanguard work, more difficult, stronger, more dangerous, and of heavier duty, because it is more conscious than others. If genius has any happiness, it is different from the common one, exhausting and heroic, produced mainly by the power of creation. In this power lies the revenge of that soul which, on the human plane, is beaten down, alone, and suffering. In this power lies its resurrection, its triumph, its justification. But the dissatisfaction with human things does not stagnate in sterile pessimism, does not appear as negative bitterness, but becomes an agent of reaction, impelling upwards and leading to discovery. Only the dissatisfied are led to create. And this anguish, which normal people call madness, leads to a work that always ends up finding something that will serve everyone, including the idle and ignorant who judge and condemn. The genius works, therefore, above all for others. This is their mission, their happiness. For themselves, they are unfortunate; no comfort is given to them, despite needing and deserving it so much. Before them lies immense work; they know that their life is a martyrdom, and they also know that the progress of the world is entrusted to them. They would like to have a thousand arms to work, a thousand mouths to speak, not being able to linger in self-pity, a trivial thing, which for others deserves so much care and protection. Their joy is to create; in creating, they forget their own torment. They know they do good and, if the present does not understand them, they cast their voice to future generations, because they know their words will be received. Their communion with their fellow men is a communion of sacrifice and gifts.

Sometimes, the genius offers the tragic spectacle of a being who seems from another world, descended to a land that is not his own, fallen here below, where he struggles desperately with his mutilated wings, wounding and bleeding where, for others, joy is so easy. He then retreats into an isolation laden with sadness, and there he sings, full of melancholy, a strange melody of rapture that never ceases, of hunger that is never satisfied, of sorrow that has no consolation. This song of pain is the deepest song of life, it is the most intense and subtle music, which piously lulls us or tragically strikes us down. The common man stands on the other side, listening, feeling that in that song a ray descends from heaven, and the veil covering the mystery has been torn away by the bloody exhaustion of the genius.

251

But there is also the opposite tragedy, the tactic of the human to reach the ideal. Alongside the fate that wishes the high to become humble in order to become accessible, there is another fate, which pursues the human with all its impotence toward the inaccessible divine. It is strange: the world detests and fights all of this, yet it feels dominated by an instinctive attraction, by a presentiment of the future that leaves it fascinated. Matter hates the spirit, but depends on it. The inferior detests the superior and rebels against it, but feels its strength and ends up obeying it. This is what the invincible law of evolution commands.

For if the world rebels; if biological reality hinders the steps toward the ideal; if the earth is an environment absolutely inadequate for the affirmations of heaven, even so, they perceive, through an instinct in formation, still confused, the superiority of the spirit. But what a weariness for the spirit to dominate matter! And what impotence for matter to follow the spirit! The greatest struggle in the world is waged against itself to overcome the attraction that irresistibly drives it toward the spirit. The evangelical ideal is an enigma for man, because it repels him, it is difficult, exhausting, and at the same time an invitation, a silent rebuke, a command: and this ideal presents itself to him as both attraction and repulsion, a contradiction of forces that, by opposite paths, stirs and interests him. In those gentle, unarmed words, there is for man an irresistible command, like a threat.

The great human tragedy is approaching this dualism: to recognize deep within the superiority of the ideal and not know how to realize it; to feel its greatness and beauty and be convinced of one's own impotence, which generates aversion and revolt; to understand that there are higher forms of life that can be lived, and that are inaccessible; to see heaven from afar and not be able to reach it; to conceive the dream in the mind, but see only one's own misery. At the core of the utopia of the ideal, there is this great human passion of not being able to realize it. Everyone knows that human life is what man desires, but no one knows how to desire beyond animality, because rising up, alone, to the highest is martyrdom, and martyrdom is something people flee from. Each of us waits for the neighbour to do it, just as the neighbour waits for us to do it. And if an exceptional man tries it alone, everyone becomes intent on destroying this unbearable shame for all. The war waged against those who achieve the ideal shows that men feel it, all too well. Nothing offends more than the visit of a being who strives to teach and has already conquered those virtues that one fears never being able to attain. From this offense arises a war that, if it is revenge of impotence, it is filled with tears. Thus, with a sigh born from the heart, man turns his back on the risky impulse of the ideal that intends to revolutionize life for the better and, lazily but surely, contenting himself with old customs, falls back into the solidity of the conservative, economic, and prudent biological laws.

Man and superman are nothing but actors moved by deep forces in this battle. The true war is waged between the two contiguous phases of evolution; every seed faces the struggle to germinate, and every life to come into the light. Without a doubt, the past has always created much and represents the most experienced and secure path, with results sifted through practical application, whose advantages the present enjoys. But if these norms built by the past are a guide, they are also a lie and a prison. The principles have been covered by so many encrustations, diverted by so many human adaptations, that they are no longer recognizable. The human soul has continued to develop in the same way, conceiving new needs to the point of no longer being able to confine itself to the old moulds. If the past represents security and the new, on the contrary, represents risk, progress has matured so many things that the pressure of these will eventually impose the dismantling of that comfortable security, the task of destroying the old, and the courage and risk of building the new. And one day, the need to break through the old protective shell will arise, because life overflows its limits.

Thus, each generation has the advantage of utilizing the constructions of its ancestors and feels the urge to surpass itself, destroying and rebuilding. The substance of the phenomenon is always in the inevitable evolutionary maturation and the inner pressure of progress that desires to break through and realize itself. And then, finally, the hand that the genius had vainly extended is grasped, and the progress born from his torment, which man, in his unconscious, mad aggressiveness, could not destroy, is eagerly sought as vital elements; and with these sparks, the path of human ascensions is illuminated. Only then is the mission of the genius fulfilled.

It is, therefore, understandable the position of the evangelical problem before the world and the reason for the contrast between earth and heaven, placing the question not in a rational and abstract form, but in a biological and practical one.

In this way our protagonist clearly orients himself, in full awareness before his final experience in the world, and from this understanding, he had derived all possible benefit from the new trial. He now had before his eyes two realities: that of heaven, which he had known first, and that of earth, which he now understood. Real life presented itself to him as a double game; two opposing visions that, expressed in different languages, did not understand each other. On one side, the short game of materialism, hedonistic and Epicurean, which relies on the past, chooses the paths of animality and immediate results, such as pleasure, well-being, and expansion on the material plane. On the other side, the long game of altruistic idealism, which relies on the future, chooses the path of the spirit and distant fulfilment, sacrificing the present for it, not expanding on earth, but rather in heaven. In our world, life oscillates between these two extremes. The nearsighted or farsighted stumble upon difficulties; every advantage is paid for and compensated.

The short game leads to immediate and tangible advantages. The result is close at hand and is reached suddenly. It is a positive, concrete, human method, preferred by practical people. One only conquers what is seen and already truly exists on earth. But this game has a serious flaw: it ends with death, when everything crumbles, leaving only the ashes of illusion. And even before that, how many betrayals, how many tears, what an intimate sense of emptiness in the results achieved with so much effort! In the end, nothing remains in the soul but a sad bitterness of dissatisfaction, a terrifying sensation of emptiness, the certainty of the futility of the efforts made. The secret instinct of evolution allows itself to be trapped by the final despair, which is the inheritance of all who lived uselessly, that is, without progress, without evolving.

The long game is one of distant results and delayed achievements. It conquers imperishable goods, but ones placed outside the earth, in a world that escapes our senses. It is understood how it must be built with wisdom and suffering, while those who enjoy and live in idleness waste their lives and destroy themselves, which is a disadvantage, because that conquest requires great sacrifices and struggles in the present life. The secret instinct of evolution is satisfied with the achievements made – but how many risks and sacrifices, what exhaustion and tension throughout life!

Whichever path is chosen, there is no free exit that frees us from the laborious duty of evolving. It is useless to try to animalize oneself. There is an instinctive need for improvement in the human soul, an irresistible sense of insatiability that inevitably stimulates and impels. And the earthly paths are tiring and uncertain. And so is it worth sacrificing consciousness and so much effort for such an uncertain result? Yes! The biological morality of the strongest, always victorious, is virile and grandiose; but how much sadness, how many betrayals, how much misery behind the scenes; what vile exploitations, what instability the system of force implies! It all reduces to a relentless struggle.

From these considerations must have arisen, in the Middle Ages, ideals of absolute poverty, of renunciation of everything, which, from the human point of view, are the ideals of despair. How much peace the Gospel gives to the soul with its trust in God, in the face of this atrocious biological law that unleashes all appetites without guaranteeing their satisfaction! At what price is victory won! How exhausting life is! And what disillusionments are gathered! Then difficulty stirs the instinct for progress, which stimulates attempts to escape from the pestilential earthly swamp. Then the effort is made to rise at any cost. This is how, in our times, crazy with wisdom, mad with pain, desperate in well-being, tortured in pleasures, this poor humanity, dissatisfied with everything, armed to the teeth to defend its insecure position, stirs restlessly in search of higher, more civilized, and more dignified paths.

RESURRECTION

"Durch Sturm empor"¹⁴ – Beethoven

Now, our character had before his eyes, very clearly, the vision of biological truth, as well as of the evangelical truth, and could direct the continuation of his path with perfect knowledge. He understood that, placed in this biological way, the problem became understandable and that it was not erudition, abstraction, or rational processes, but only practical common sense and experimental contact with life that could offer the solution.

He had thus found, in reality, a logic that is not the logic of syllogisms and had understood that the wise answer from the speculative oracle is of no use in practical life, where any ordinary man knows more than a great philosopher. And it is this minimal and solid common sense of the ordinary man that is the touchstone for the great philosophers, the filter that controls their practical value, the measure of their action. If the man of the third law does not want his thought to become dead letter, he must always be in contact with the men of the first and second law, to whom that thought is directed for its application. Our character had proposed many problems to these men and had obtained the answer.

¹⁴ "Dragged upwards by the gale". (Translator's Note)

He had understood that any knowledge that did not take into account biological reality was incomplete, as everyone must descend to it in order to act, and where so many phenomena speak, revealing their guiding and animating thought. There were the pioneers at the vanguard of evolution, the specialists in the creative work of shaping new models of life, the social cells of nervous and cerebral function, like delegates of the race, to fulfil the specific work of evolutionary anticipation of the future forms to be realized by the masses. He had understood the reason for his imbalance and his fatal destiny of solitude and martyrdom. But he had also understood his irrevocable biological function, as important as the individual preservation of the species; he had understood that, despite all the obstacles, his position was true and remained inviolable, above all condemnations. He had comprehended the entire logic of the complex phenomenon of human redemption and the inevitability of its laws; he had also understood to what human exploitations ideals must submit in the earthly environment, where everything must serve, if it wishes to survive, to produce useful yield: an indispensable condition for survival on earth. He had understood what degradation ideals must endure for their assimilation to be possible on earth, and how the normal man imposes his limits and conditions, inexorably reducing everything to the measure of his own understanding; what debasement, what distortions are necessary to bring heaven down to the common uses of the earth, so that the ordinary man can seize it and use it in his own evolution! What immense resistance the inertia of the great human masses offers and what difficulties must be overcome to conquer it.

But only in this way does the ideal germinate and bear fruit. The vision of the inevitability of the master's betrayal by his companions, of human exploitations and compromises, of distortions of conscience, of deforming yet necessary adaptations for the application to a different reality—these are the greatest torments of the man who fights for the ideal. Are not the disciples, generally, the greatest distorters? Yet, they are necessary. He suffered from this inevitability that assails the dearest creation of the man of the third law, striking him precisely at the heart of his work.

Having reached this point, our character imposed upon himself some serious questions:

Does the evolved being really have, and to what extent, the duty to sacrifice himself for the unevolved? Does the inferior being, for its elevation, have the right to lower everything to its own level, and does the normal being have the right to bring the supernormal down to its level to ascend at its expense? What are the relations between the superior and the inferior, and conversely, in the hierarchy of true life values that man represents? Does the genius have the right to sacrifice himself, to descend and debase his superiority in homage to evangelical love in service of his neighbour? Why is it not an injustice for a man who suffers that another man, though a genius, tries to exempt himself by fleeing from the weight of inferiority, isolating himself in the exclusive cult of individual elevation? Or does the superman have the duty to first save himself, fleeing, if necessary, from normality, and, in order to serve his own elevation, will he have the duty to isolate himself and turn his back mercilessly on the inferior, leaving them to their sad fate? Would this abandonment be a duty or a crime? If pearls should not be given to swine, should they be left in the pigsty? Or is every aristocratic refinement of the spirit, whether in science, art, or holiness, not a theft from the underground life of the primitive and abandoned who ask for fraternal help? Why, if a brother suffers, does one have the right to exemption from his pain and to an attempt to escape in the joy of spiritual triumph and one's own egoistic self-overcoming? In the presence of an unevolved being, is it permissible to think first and solely of one's own evolution? Should one then be merciless and leave behind those who are worth less, so that those who are worth more can be ahead?

In the struggle between man and superman, who has more right to life? To what extent can pity take precedence over justice, and what is the limit of love's rights when confronted with the rights of progress? Which will biologically hold more value, evolution or evangelical altruism? And which should be preferred?

Let us orient ourselves. All men can be individualized, grouped, and distinguished according to the three biological laws that, as we have seen, preside over the functioning of life. These three laws are the three planes or levels of height in the edifice of evolution. From these three planes, the men who are situated within them and represent them, remain in diverse positions, for which they struggle even without realizing it. But it is a struggle of beings who seek each other because they have the need to unite, as they cannot exist except by living in the same edifice. Each man fights to defend and affirm the values of his own law, because within these lies his vital function. Life is always a struggle that shapes qualities, strengthens positions and defences, and guarantees real values. Thus, men from each of the laws are rivals among themselves, because each one sees only his own field, believes himself to be at the centre of life, and, driven by the impulse to fulfil his own vital destiny, is led to invade the field of others, clashing with them. Everyone needs each other reciprocally, and each one has value only in his place: the normal man of the 1st law thinks of individual preservation with his selfishness, the man of the 2nd law thinks of collective preservation and reproduction; however, neither is concerned with social progress, which is the goal of the man of the 3rd law.

But if the superman did not encounter the normal man, who represents human beings kept alive by the necessary and healthy protection of their selfishness, the normal man who, with his instinct for reproduction, frustrates the work of death by providing the continuity of the race — with what material could he work? He would have nothing to shape, nothing to make progress, nothing on which to imprint his own vision of a higher model of life. Without the less evolved, he would be a solitary preacher in the desert and could not fulfil his own mission. But, on the other hand, if the normal men did not encounter the supernormal, who knows, anticipates, guides, and, reserving for himself the cerebral and spiritual function of life, makes it progress — all their work would also be sterile and meaningless. Such is the edifice of the functions of life. Let us place each thing in its place in this edifice and we will have answers to the preceding questions.

First of all, for each man, according to his nature, law, and position in the edifice, it is a duty to fulfil his own vital function. It is a duty for each one to achieve the maximum performance of his own capacity, and for each one, the selfishness of his level leads to the defence of fulfilling this duty. If others, out of unconsciousness, try to invade his field and harm his function, he has the duty of defence, because, in full respect for all representatives of the other forces of life, he has the right to respect himself for the force he represents, and, like the others, he must preserve and make it fruitful.

Thus, if the superman is not understood, he has the duty to expel the unconscious profaners of his mission, because it would be a crime not to impose it for their own good, to yield to obstacles, or to renounce the collective utility that the resources of his personality could produce. The superman, who represents the good of all, would be a traitor to his function if he allowed those who do not understand to become obstacles to his mission. His duty is to defend the good of all that he represents. If this implies for him the right to self-defence and to his own work, it also implies the duty to give himself to the extreme, to make his qualities fruitful for the general good. It is implied that there is a right to the necessary protection and recognition so that the fruit may mature, for his interest is the interest of all.

Therefore, the superman must also fight for what he is, in defence of the superior things that he represents. The spirit of sacrifice, piety, and evangelical altruism find a limit in this duty. Those who possess qualities do not have the right to sacrifice their performance for the pleasure of those who do not deserve such a sacrifice, because by doing so, they would be depriving those who deserve it of the results. Love for one's neighbour becomes a flaw when it develops in a destructive sense rather than a constructive one. It is true that pain is the great teacher of life, but it is not enough to suffer-one must suffer usefully. Stupidly passive resignation, the waste of one's energies in patiently enduring setbacks, is useless because it is morally unproductive. It is not a virtue, but a fault. One does not have the right to wear oneself out just to withstand a shock, nor to sacrifice noble work by renouncing what is necessary. Life seeks productivity, not the suffocation of qualities. Pain must be a school and an instrument of ascension, not suicide. It should only be renunciation when that renunciation is a constructive dynamism aimed upwards. It is a struggle without pity for oneself because only the ideal triumphs. But when spiritual yield is on the other side, then martyrdom that harms the body is permissible. If not justified in this way, martyrdom becomes suicide. Conversely, renunciation of this yield for a mistaken sense of sacrifice, aimed at the comfort of others, would be the true suicide. It is precisely the purpose of good, the productivity of action, that distinguishes the suicide who flees life in vain due to baseness, from the martyr who, for the triumph of an ideal capable of advancing the world, offers himself as a holocaust.

Concluding, biological morality does not tolerate wastefulness, dispersion, or weakness; it demands each one courageously positioned at their post of combat, as a victor; it demands that each one makes the qualities that were entrusted to them and that they represent and personify, fruitfully useful for themselves and for others. Those who possess qualities are obligated to sacrifice everything for their productivity and to defend that sacrifice, so that they may reach their purpose.

Finally, only the evolutionary sacrifice that leads upward is accepted, only the fall that leads to ascension. The laws of life do not allow selfishness, acting in the defence of the being, to give way to altruism, which is its negation, unless, in compensation, it achieves a return that surpasses or at least equals what is lost. A senseless sacrifice, an altruism that is merely destructive, a loss of usefulness that does not manage to resurrect in some form of reconstruction, is a biological mistake, a condemnable anti-vital act.

Faced with such conclusions, our character wants to orient himself in a new position. He was inexorably a man of the 3rd law. He felt it clearly and could not deny it to himself. He then had the duty to accept and protect his mission, to give full yield in accordance with his nature and ability. He aligned himself from afar, behind the great idealists. He considered the situation, first recognizing his own limitations. He knew he was limited and that it was not his role to reform the world, but simply to contribute, making that little he possessed bloom and bear fruit. He could not understand the wrongdoing of wasting what he had and what he had to offer, and he would give until the limit of his capacity and strength. He had no more, nor could he. Between the limit of what he was and the beyond that he did not know how to be, he wanted to act with full awareness and in depth, until the exhaustion of all his inner possibilities. He had the duty of this maximum yield within the relative. Beyond this, his right to self-realization did not extend, nor his duty to explain his mission. And here he stopped, conscious of his relativity and smallness, entrusting the rest to God. The following years would be for him a slow realization of good for others, which would give his life its maximum yield, and a sacrifice of himself that was not suicide, but an elaborative maceration of the spirit; not annihilation, because his slow death gave life to others. He would, therefore, die,

exhausted from fatigue, but satisfied in his passion for goodness and love for his neighbour, having fulfilled the duty of not wasting a single thing of himself—not a minute of time, nor a gram of strength, giving everything he had, doing everything he knew and could, all used for the good of others. Given the limits of his life, this was the very measure of his complete realization in offering and sacrifice.

Therefore, his position was now clear. Being a man of the third law, he had to, first of all, accept all works and duties. Offering and sacrifice were rules for him. He felt, moreover, that all the paths of evasion he had attempted thus far did not exhaust nor resolve the problem of his spiritual life. It was impossible to escape the earth through mystical ascension, impossible to annihilate himself in an attempt to descend to the level of animality in the plane of human reality. No option remained but the path of the cross. The final obstacles, offenses, and condemnations had ultimately only strengthened his sense of mission. His fall had been deep, and the reaction had been vigorous but brief, and it exhausted itself in twelve months. This was necessary so that he could withstand all assaults. But the reaction contained an impulse of resurrection, though it started from below, and this impulse could not be stopped. The experience had been useful, and now he carried with him a new wisdom and new solidity. And the forces of the spirit, moving within his destiny, grabbed him by the hair to drag him upward again, so that everything could be fulfilled. Man is indestructible in his fundamental notes, and the attack of opposing forces never has the power to divert a destiny from its course. In this period of trial, he had managed to master the wave. Now, it was necessary to rise again, by the same law of his life that had first brought him down. The assaults were exhausted. He had paid, in the currency of pain, the price to the lower world for the progress he had achieved. Now, he could resume his work. And, astonished, he observed how the spirit, instead of being exhausted, was tempered by the overcoming of trials. And what new knowledge, what new experimental synthesis he brought with him as he

emerged from the depths of the world into which he had been cast! His faith had overcome the test and had been consolidated. For a year, he had been blind in the earthly inferno, but now, the vortex of holy passion for Christ had seized him again. He resumed the path in His footsteps, to conquer the world, not with hatred, but with love. He resumed his mission, corrected, tempered, and purified. No one could destroy it because that would imply the possibility of the annihilation of a spirit and a destiny. A single spark was enough to rekindle the old fire, too great to end like that. What mysterious wisdom of the laws of life manifested itself in these trials of the soul! The regression was nothing more than a way to gain momentum toward new surpassings on the path of evolution, for his own fulfilment and for the good of all. So, Christ had not betrayed him, the Gospel was true—it was he who had not yet understood its deeper meaning, and now, instead of being disproved, everything was reaffirmed. Now that he had travelled so turbulently through the world, he could fully resume, in the world, before the world, with complete awareness, the evangelical experience. All of this showed him that spiritual ascension is not always straightforward and that, many times, it is achieved only through action and reaction, like the oscillations of a pendulum between good and evil. We must not fear falls when we have the passion for ascesis and a burning soul capable of rising again. What is truly terrible, on the contrary, is to possess an inert, restricted, formal soul, incapable of any oscillation, of great falls, and especially of great impulses of reaction. The flock, in general, is asleep; no one falls because of it, but no one rises either. And with the great virtue in doing nothing, they judge, are scandalized, and, wishing to reduce everything to their negative life, they weigh the man of God.

The last word he had written was "Silence," and he kept it. He had decided to break the pen, to renounce writing, to renounce understanding, and, in the end, to renounce thinking. His life was in thought, and that would mean for him spiritual suicide, an acceptance of the death of the soul out of a sense of respect and duty. He had offered God the ultimate

265

sacrifice. He had imposed upon himself, without questioning, the final limits. But he did not understand that his will was not enough and that it is not possible, even if one wishes, to suffocate the spirit. He had let himself to plunge, but he could not destroy himself. His mind could not be closed, and with time, without even realizing it, by the simple fact of continuing to exist, it continued to function, inevitably overcoming the imposed limits, instinctively surpassing the decision not to think and not to understand, inadvertently elaborating a new way of thinking and understanding. Although he was armed with rectitude and determination, the suspension of the soul's functions ended in something beyond his own power. Certainly, the laws of life do not permit the consummation of these attacks, even when dictated by noble and heroic intentions. He could not supress thought, which assaulted the imposed limits, overcoming the dejection and crisis, and resurrecting stronger. Is it not divine, the impossibility of selfdestruction, despite all pain, all adversity, all assaults, weakness, and dejection, even when our will is too tired of suffering? Is it not divine, this impossibility of annulment? Is life, therefore, not an irresistible continuous surpassing, stronger than ourselves? It is impossible to reverse the essence of things.

Thus, he experienced the functioning of the law of equilibrium, which is justice for those who are exhausted, indirectly destroyed, all the more so the less they had reacted. He then understood the mechanism of the falsification of the gospel by the laws of the world, which transforms defeat into triumph. He comprehended that beyond the brutal simplicity of the biological law, there were other forces that, even though they fully act in a higher world, also burst onto the earth, imposing themselves, invisible and imponderable. Thus, after having felt the bitter taste of the world's injustice, he could savour the justice of heaven and understand the superior power and greater stability of the equilibrium of the laws of heaven in the face of the laws of the world. For the cunning of the earth, these laws seem naive; for the strong, they appear as weaknesses. Something, in the higher planes of evolution, he had felt and recorded the fact of his fall. It could be said that, beyond appearances, the substance had been weighed, and beyond the condemnable form, a reality of sacrifice had been found, an organism of conscious forces—intervening in defence of the inviolable principle of the divine order of justice, and acting on earth, transforming defeat, fall, and mutilation into a resurrection.

All of this demonstrated to him how, in his life, in all things, beyond the superficial injustice, there was the inviolable justice of substance, that is, an order that understands, dominates, and absorbs the elements of disorder. And all of this gave him a new and evident demonstration of the practical truth of that Gospel which the earth considers absurd.

He observed in himself the phenomenon of resurrection and admired the inevitability of the law of the return to God. God is invisible and unreal on earth. The more one descends into the human, the more His image is reduced, faded, anthropomorphically diminished, yet becoming comprehensible, accessible, and comforting. As one draws nearer to the divine, the image more closely resembles the true God, becoming also higher, more abstract, distant, and unreachable, for the spirit finds itself before an abyss so deep that God vanishes and is lost in the void of the inconceivable. And the true God sets Himself so high that one no longer knows how to invoke Him or love Him as the anthropomorphic God, whom one feels is not truly God. And despite the immense distance that frightens those who wish to measure it; despite His height, His depth, and the abstraction in which God hides, to the point of suggesting atheism to the blind of the world—what an attraction to this invisible and unreachable centre, what supreme need to rise and draw near to Him, to return to Him, once we have known Him! And what exhaustion, suffering, and struggles do souls face to find Him again! The march of the world's progress is nothing but an arduous search for God, an unsatisfied attempt at return.

Our character could remain in the world into which he had fallen. Yet something prevented him. He was not inept; he would have known how to launch the attack to win by the system of the earth. Why did he not want it? Why could he not? The rebellion he had begun died in his hands. Why? And all for the terrible utopia of the Gospel, for the senseless love of Christ, for the mad faith in God. And still, he burdened himself with the weight of new duties, and, undaunted, after so many disappointments, he resumed, as if nothing had happened, the old and tiresome path.

Now that he had rediscovered the meaning of the Gospel—the biological reality in which he had believed, placed before the evangelical conscience, seemed to him a vile parody. Despite everything and everyone, the supreme contradiction of the cross, both rejected and loved, martyrdom and triumph, distant, unattainable, betrayed, cursed, yet always invincible, arose in his spirit. In its light, it stared at him, mute and calling him, a symbol of the work of human redemption, a synthesis of the biological overcoming that leads from the human evolutionary phase to the superhuman. And now he had to resume the task in which he well knew lay the only meaning of life. If he did not want to regress and destroy himself, following the path of the animal, there remained no other option but to follow the path of the cross.

What had happened to him? How do these strange maturations occur, appearing suddenly as a completed synthesis? He felt himself rising again as a different man, so different from who he had been in the past year that he did not even recognize himself. What a mysterious rediscovery life is, especially the life of the spirit, for those who have matured! It is a revival beyond all deaths, a rebirth from all crises, a triumph over all abysses. The old seeds, instead of dying beneath the snow, had ripened and were now sprouting. Rather than being defeated, the spirit had strengthened in the storm. Such experiences imprint themselves so deeply in the soul that they become unforgettable, and no assault, no vicissitude can ever destroy them. And then he understood the greatness of the divine law of justice by which, once a reality is conquered, it can never be lost, and the path travelled, the exhaustion, even if stationary, are no longer lost. He then understood the impossibility, for him, of becoming animalized, of descending, of regressing; the impossibility of matter overcoming spirit, of evil nullifying good. He understood the indestructibility of moral values, of the conquests made. The very laws of life opposed his degradation, which would be unjust.

Once elaborated, the self sooner or later awakens. And his awakening was not the groping of an inexperienced novice, not the laborious conquest of the unexplored—but the swift rediscovery of someone who recognizes the path, having already walked it. The old hunger of the spirit awoke in him, and he found and resumed the old experiences that he already possessed in synthesis, because he had early set out on the paths of the spirit.

He had not begun with physical life, which is the normal phase of youth, but had, from a young age, quickly reached the spiritual fullness that sometimes only the maturity of the elderly attains, too late, when they finally acquire the deep meaning of life.

Thus, the great silences, swollen with thought, returned to him; the abysses of heaven reopened; the vortex of his passion was rekindled; the storm of his destiny returned, so that he might rediscover, continue, and complete the path of ascessis.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

Our character turned toward the final stages of his life. The process of animalization had failed in the sense in which it had been attempted and had produced opposite results. From this ultimate trial, his spirit emerged more conscious and stronger. The flame of his spirit had flickered almost to extinction under the icy breath; but that very breath ended up rekindling it. He thus felt himself restored to the previously conquered phase. He understood, however, that this was not a simple restitution, nor a mere return.

A new and very different experience had passed over the previous achievements and elaborated something new, an unexplored facet of himself, creating a knowledge and with it a new duty. He scrutinized himself to understand what it would mean, in the development of his destiny, to have overcome that new trial, and what its outcome could be. And yet, he felt dissatisfied. The past, though reconquered, no longer satisfied him, it was not enough. He sought what might be missing to complete it. There was a gap there that he sought to fill, and all of this was the logical continuation of the development of his destiny. The human experience had given him new seed, the germ of a motive that he sought to decipher and develop. He began to distinguish, thanks to a more subtle moral sensitivity, something like a sense of selfish guilt in his mystical escape. And he wondered why his mystical ascension had been so abruptly cut short. Could it not then continue on its own, or would it constitute such a danger, or would it need to combine with some other element so that its evolutionary function would not be frustrated? It was a harvest, and it is not necessary to dwell long on laurels. To stop and fall asleep is to rot. What is necessary is to throw oneself into work, to begin a new sowing. But how?

He felt that he was being restored to the spiritual joys of the past, not to continue on his path of fleeing and trying to escape from the earth. This had been, after all, the weak point of his previous direction, that is, the goal, the sought-after surpassing to achieve, by itself alone, his own liberation from the sufferings of the earth. This was the path of Nirvana in Eastern philosophies. But he remembered that in the Gospel, there was something more complete and profound. What could it be? He had tried to flee from the earth to heaven. He had almost succeeded, and destiny had told him: No! Then he had tried to free himself from heaven to destroy himself on earth, renouncing escape. But this had also been denied to him. So where should he turn? Certainly, much had been given to him, but in exchange for what new labours? He felt that he could no longer be the man of escape. Would the field to be ploughed, then, be the earth? He searched more deeply, questioned the Gospel, and a more intimate music responded that more accepted and complete than the love which reaches God, solitary in its joy, is the love that reaches God through His creatures, through the sacrifice of the cross for the redemption of the world. He had thus realized the trial of the cross for the redemption of the world, having to immerse himself in it; if he now wanted to find God again, he would have to pass through the world. It was no longer a question of fleeing from the earth to heaven, as he had done, or from heaven to the earth, as he had tried, but rather of assuming a new position and, with his work and sacrifice, bringing heaven to the earth and taking the earth to heaven. It was certain that he had already begun this work, with the abandonment of wealth and the acceptance of labour as a duty for all. But in this, he had only seen the perfection of himself in the realization of an act of justice. It was necessary to go further, to know how to forget oneself and, in the annulment of all individual goals, to be reborn in the life of others. It was necessary to open one's arms to the labours and pains of the world, not to gain, by selfish calculation, a personal paradise, but to assist everyone: friends and enemies alike, in complete ignorance of oneself. It was necessary to set oneself aflame and burn with love for one's neighbour, sometimes ungrateful and repugnant; to have the heroic courage to cut off the yearning wings in flight, to plunge below and live there until the last breath.

Thus, a new phase began for him, even more mature, more fruitful, a more complete realization of the true spirit of the Gospel. But, to fulfil the new task, he had first to know both heaven and earth. The new phase was the synthesis of the two preceding ones, and in them, his mission was completed, strengthened, and expanded, which the assaults had not been able to destroy.

In this sense, the Gospel spoke to him, and a new order came to him from Christ: it was necessary to take up the cross again and carry it on earth, following His example, and not for himself, but for the good of others. This was the great and new purpose he had to develop: the good of others. To renounce his own escape to remain, now that he had learned to teach others. Not to flee alone, but to also save others; not to evolve alone, but with all his fellow creatures. The new and deeper meaning of the Gospel was in this retreat toward his fellow beings, no longer despised as inferior, undeveloped, primitive, but loved and helped as brothers. It is not, therefore, through escaping the earth, be it in the pursuit of perfection, but through love for one's neighbour that God is more completely found, and the Gospel fully realized. The path is longer, but what vastness of achievements! The antagonism between earth and heaven does not exist to be fought eternally, but it is a contrast in the mechanics of evolution that must be resolved through progress.

These are facts that must be understood: antagonism ends up being reabsorbed by progress—it is a means that will dissolve when the goal is reached.

He believed that God was on high, so far from human misery that to reach Him it would be necessary to separate from it, crushing it mercilessly; he had seen heaven so far from earth that he believed it was necessary to abandon the earth as something unworthy in order to touch it. Now he saw a God closer, no longer a negation of human life, a power that judges and condemns— but a present and active affirmation also on earth, a fatherly goodness that knows how to descend to the humble to love them, protect them, and help them, calling all to collaborate in this work of elevation.

He now saw heaven bending over the earth, and while offering the fruit of all his experiences and the resources accumulated amid so many trials, he rushed to collaborate. He threw himself with open arms toward his fellow beings and looked at the earth with trust; heaven and earth appeared to him at peace, united in a work of collaboration. Then Christ reappeared to him, the same Christ he had already seen, a Christ with a thousand faces, multiplying Himself, placing Himself beside each person, and remaining there with a different appearance, a much greater Christ under the weight of this humanization. But only now did he understand the meaning, once fleeting, of that vision, which had been like a warning.

He needed, then, to seek, find, and realize God not only in heaven but also in the earthly hell. He needed to imitate Christ, making with Him the same descent. The challenge to the world should no longer be one of contempt, but of love. He had to approach his fellow beings not armed as the earth wants, but rather as heaven wants. From the reaction that divides, he had to move to the understanding that unites. The struggle must produce a beneficial result—not war for war's sake, for the victory of the earth, but war for progress, for the victory of heaven. It was necessary, with heaven, to fertilize the earth, to channel chaotic forces into an ordered current. The will and strength, no longer directed towards destruction, but towards construction. In this gesture of extending a hand to his brothers without distinction of inferiority or superiority, there could lie the only conclusion worthy of our character's life, as it may also be the only conclusion worthy of this book.

It is worthless to know how to win for oneself if one does not know how to win for others. He had to seek his greatest value no longer in himself, but in his fellow beings. This new directive of his corresponded not only to the evangelical orientation, but also to the biological and social one. For all voices, all spasms of suffering humanity, and all offerings of prepared souls to converge there. It was the synthesis of the goodness of Christ's word, of the needs for social coordination, of the evolutionary longing of the human race toward a higher and more cohesive collective biological future. To annul oneself for oneself and be reborn in others. This was, for our character, the path to the greatest affirmation of himself in others, for the more intensely one lives in others, the more one gives and the more one possesses. Instead of exalting altruism in others, which would be the demolition of their selfishness for one's own benefit, one should begin to feel respect for the selfishness of others, which would be the demolition of one's own selfishness for the benefit of others.

Ultimately, to make virtue something that begins with one's own duty to give, and not with one's own right to demand; something that starts within oneself as an obligation and is not directed toward others as a pretext, demanding from them application for one's own benefit. To occupy oneself with the positive work of construction from which so many flee, and to abandon the negative work of denial and destruction with which so many are occupied. If the world is evil, he should not waste time condemning its wickedness, but should consume himself in the effort to make it better. He had to offer himself as a sacrifice to build a barrier against the current of the majority of selfish people who demand altruism in others to better affirm their own selfishness. He had to offer himself to raise again the lifeless standard of evangelical love, the disfigured principle of altruism; he had to begin applying the ideal first and foremost to himself, as an honest respect for the selfishness of others, as a duty in favour of others and not as a right against someone. Instead of preaching the ideal for his own gain, he had to commit himself to achieving benefits for his neighbour.

The Gospel asked of him deeds, not words. Reason itself told him that one cannot achieve altruism through an absurd and anti-vital suppression of the selfishness necessary for life, by demolishing the essential biological defences—but only through the expansion of these very same selfishnesses. In fact, man is spontaneously altruistic in those cases where he sees himself in his fellow beings. Seeing others in oneself, in an ever-progressive expansion, is the true biological and evangelical path to reach altruism.

The final motive of his life could only be this: "love your neighbour as yourself." We have already seen the profound evolutionary significance of this evangelical command. Only in this way could he now go forth, realizing the complete application of the Gospel. It was his final phase and the substance of his resurrection.

But the execution of all this was not easy. He, who had experienced the world, now understood all the difficulties of his new task. The gesture was beautiful and inspired him, but the execution was hard, exhausting, and draining. Now that he had passed through the earthly experience, he understood the kind of men he had to address and knew what terrible experiences biological reality contained. Altruistic dedication, when it is not falsehood or rhetoric, is a great sacrifice and a path of martyrdom. And,

surely, all of his exhausting efforts would be lost and submerged in the great tide of human deceit; his effort for good would be neutralized by the power of evil. For this reason, he had to set aside the divine escape of the mystic to plunge once more-after knowing all of its brutality-into the infernal human experience. He needed, with a different spirit, to re-enter the merciless realm of strength and have the courage to forgive, to love, to share, and to act. He needed to seek and learn to find God even in the mud. He had to renounce heaven for himself, so that he might enter it later, stronger and with others. He had to embrace his brothers, though they were dirty and repugnant, and in that embrace rediscover God present and alive as in His heaven, or even more alive. A heroic renunciation of the God of the heavens to find Him greater in the embrace with misery and pain. A supreme sacrifice of descent for a greater brotherhood. He needed to make the misery, the fatigue, and the pain of his brother man his own-not as he had done before, but with his brother on his shoulders, to resume the laborious path of ascension, already attempted and easily completed alone. He had to halt his own too-rapid emergence, to go back and make his the great tragedy of human impotence in the realization of the ideal dream, the presentiment of the future. He needed to make the anguish of animality, which does not know how to overcome itself, his own, and offer the fruit of his own life, now ripe, to help in this overcoming and liberation. He needed, free in spirit, to reduce himself to slavery in matter, to offer freedom. Only in this way could his previous experiences truly bear fruit. The forces of his destiny continued inexorably to drag him toward his fatal and logical development.

Thus, the escape from the world was replaced by sacrifice in the world and for the world. It was difficult and heroic. But if it was true that he was higher up, he had to descend. Superiority comes with its own terrible duties. Life can only have this meaning: to evolve and help others evolve. The fatal path could only be that of the cross, following the example of Christ's passion. He now clearly understood the inevitability of the biological law of the cross, without which the ideal cannot flourish. This, as we have already said, is the mathematical result of the meeting between the forces of heaven and earth, the horizontal polarization of the former combined with the vertical dynamism of ascension. He understood that there is only one point where heaven can touch the earth, and that point is called martyrdom. This was the law and there was no escape, if his destiny was logical, his mission real, his superiority true. Unless he renounced himself, the laws of life, the word and example of Christ - his path was that of the cross.

It was necessary to descend, to be misunderstood once again, to be repudiated. And he, who had already walked this Calvary, knew well what that represented. He needed to be human, to merge with the struggle of man. But in this way, he found a new reason to exist, contributing to social activity. It was necessary to annul himself, to lose himself in the world in order to rediscover himself and his mission. It was painful. But it is undeniable that at the end of the path of the cross there would be resurrection. Yet, until then, how many duties, how much work! And these efforts and duties of giving oneself would be neutralized by inertia, lost in the sea of indifference that is the world.

He found himself terrified before the dominant instinct to allow himself to be passively destroyed by the fault of others. Lowering himself to the level of the individual gave him the feeling of spiritual suffocation. The inferior ones desperately cling, unrestrainedly draining the best from the spirit, and they do this without remorse, without guilt, because they do not understand and bring everything down to their own level, destroying, demolishing, and killing with the innocence of unconsciousness. How can one maintain certain instinctive distances without mutilating oneself? How can one manage to become part of the flock, even for the good of the flock? How can one make oneself understood and not be rejected, when everything within oneself, the very way of understanding and acting, seen from the plane of normality, seems so distant and unacceptable? How can one persist with the divine rule, which is to always give and never ask, on Earth where the rule is to always steal and never give? How can one spread justice in a world where man remembers it only when it comes to satisfying his own selfishness and advantages? How can one resist when, while he exhausts himself in spiritual work, others seek to rob him of all material resources and ask for help, squeezing him to exhaustion and misery? And they were ready to take everything from him, laughing at his dreams and exploiting him for everything that could serve them! How can one resist with the method of altruism in a world of selfishness? How to affirm where everything is denied? How can one live like this on Earth, like a plant whose leaves are buried and roots outside the soil? How to survive as a man of duty in the world of rights? On Earth, people exalt the duty of others because it suits their own advantage and their own rights; they support virtues when practiced by others; they encourage obedience because it is the first condition of command; they invoke altruism in others, to better serve their own selfishness. This is what, in practice, is made of the saying, "love your neighbour."

It was necessary to walk through a world where the Gospel is so demolished, in order to reconstitute it through example and sacrifice. It was necessary to correct these hybrid compromises, these false positions, by which the biological reality of the Earth has altered and falsified, to adapt it to the law of Heaven. It was about confronting and overcoming the most deeply rooted and resistant instincts, as they are the oldest constructs in human evolution—the fundamental instincts of attack and defence placed by nature at the foundations of life.

How to abandon oneself to Divine Providence in a world that says: "Defend yourself, or you will be killed"? How to trust in its slow equilibriums, so far removed from the reality of the Earth, so ready to attack? How not to be crushed in such a battle of selfishness that knows only this: "We will tolerate you, your ideal, and your sacrifices only as long as they serve to extract advantages from you. And while you give and kill yourself for an ideal, remember that others praise you only to exploit you, with the intention of turning the benefactor into their own servant; remember that your admirers sought to make your service of altruistic concessions regular, normal, and stable."

How to live the Gospel amidst a morality that, through actions, constantly distorts and corrupts it? How to resist with the laws of goodness in a world where day and night are spent exploiting the simple and destroying the weak? And if you seek to free yourself to survive and cry out in martyrdom because you no longer have the strength to endure it, see that others, complacent, do not want to renounce anything and are scandalized by your weakness, by your lack of diligence in serving them. With holy zeal, they throw more wood on the fire where you burn and consume yourself; and they encourage you, so that your beautiful moral figure is not tarnished, and you remain admirable and edifying for their souls. What a magnificent ideal, the sacrifice of others! How to resist where everyone throws in your face the selfishness of the strong, as well as the false virtue of the weak, the prudent ones, where all gather around the one who, through so much effort, managed to rise a little, only to grab him and cast him down to the level of everyone else.

However, it was necessary to decide. If he did not want to become selfish and solitary, social contact with such a world could only take the form of sacrifice. When virtues come into contact with an inverted reality, they become trained in the art of cunning and deceit. It is no longer necessary to oppress and suffocate, but to understand and educate. What a disastrous result, to thus arrive at the opposite of the true goal! Reality was not bent, but forced to let itself be twisted. In truth, on Earth there appears only a sad deformation of Heaven. Truth then becomes a small, undiscovered light, and the ideal, instead of being a model, is merely a mockery. And thus, principles are used as instruments of struggle, of attack and defence, in the service of biological reality.

Then clever ways arise to save appearances! But what a different discourse takes place internally, in the conscience! How everything seems beautiful to outsiders—excellent, irreproachable, honest! And how much skill is required to escape the continuous threat of the malice of others, always alert to catch you off guard, happy when they can attack and demolish, especially when they can do so without laughing, hiding under the banner of virtue! And so the ideal, the highest principles, become not only a refuge for the inept, as we see, but also a precious protective cloak for parasites, the thieves of human victory—not won loyally by strength, but stolen through cunning.

And the respectable man leaves his castle well defended and fortified. He comes armed with every cunning, smiling, courteous, clean, impeccable, authoritative, making himself out to be an idealist and philanthropist. Who believes in him? No one, because the game is the same for everyone. Who does not know that deceit is the way of the world? Everyone pretends to believe because it is tacitly agreed upon. "For convenience," they say: what a delightful exchange of courteous words, respectful favours, grandiose titles, and protests of esteem and fraternal generosity! Everyone delights in making a good impression, while each calculates: "How much can I gain from this man?" Because, one way or another, everything must yield some benefit. And the more important the other person is (the rest hardly matters), the deeper the bows, the more passionate the sympathy, the more ardent the feigned sincerity of words. And while in public, altars are raised to politicians and religious leaders—in private, they worship the god-power-force-money. Whoever does not succeed on this basis will receive only a few words of compassion, owed by convenience, and will be judged a fool. It seems that everyone knows how honesty and principles are to be praised, contemplated, admired, invoked, and then abandoned.

Without a doubt, the honest man evokes pity, as if he were abnormal, and honesty is viewed as a disease of the conscience that paralyzes his actions. The judgment is this: "He does not know how to get things done; he is honest." And, after he is used and exploited, he has no more value. Social circles quickly close in around him, isolating him. "Great philosophers are those who endure and console others in misfortune."

And if they believe that the ideal could save them, so much the worse for it and for all the naïve ones who, too late, remember that God is far away, while struggle and necessity are near; that God is in Heaven, seated on His throne of glory, from which His divine Providence does not hasten to descend, for up there everything is eternal and there is never a lack of time, while down here one can comfortably die.

In such a world, it was necessary to descend, to give oneself and to sacrifice oneself for the good of such beings, because, despite everything, the inflexible Gospel repeated: "Love your neighbour." To what extent? "As yourself." A supreme measure, whose standard is taken from the most limited selfishness of the man of the first law—a selfishness that is entirely carried to the level of the third law, demanding the same potency and value. This command tells us that the most complete selfishness that man knows must expand and burst into supreme altruism without losing any of its force. This was Christ's last command after the Last Supper: "I give you a new commandment: love one another reciprocally. Love each other. Love as I love you; this is my commandment. In this way, all will know that you are my disciples." Therefore, there is no other path for those who wish to be truly Christian, for those who do not want to renounce and betray Christ's highest and deepest desire.

HUMAN ASCENSIONS

This was the world he was meant to descend into; those were the labours that awaited him. It was no longer about introducing, but rather about resolving the issue of the anti-biological Gospel, of practically reconciling it with life. Yet, there was also the reverse side of the coin, another side where one might find help. This entire system weighs like a condemnation; the world is weary of deceit, of bearing the weight of this distrust; it seeks to understand and struggles to free itself from it, facing hardships, risks, and revolutions. The game of cunning is beginning to feel overly burdensome, and if it were possible to play the cards of life openly, more fraternally, more in the spirit of the Gospel—what a great relief it would be for everyone!

Despite everything, the world possesses a vague and uncertain instinct for higher things; born in the depths of the soul, there exists a sense of goodness. This suggests an inner dissatisfaction, a spiritual maladjustment that prompts it to improve itself. The world can obtain nothing more from deceit, struggle, force, destruction, from such a tiresome system of living without rest, from a mechanism so lacking in agility that it demands enormous quantities of energy just to function. Deep down, the world detests the horrendous biological reality in which it lives, the reality of "Homo homini lupus¹⁵." It has a need and longing for goodness and justice amidst so much cruelty and injustice! It is as if nothing beautiful could be achieved except in the dream of the ideal, unrealizable, but at least not so suffocating. The wave of evil that engulfs us generates in us a desperate reaction toward good. There is in the world such misery born of abuse, betrayal, and injustice that the escape to the ideal becomes irresistible, even though it is known to be impossible here. Its absurdity and unconsciousness are proclaimed through actions, repeating: "Be strong to overcome." And there is no more rest. Something different from this human hell is invoked and sought, even if it is impossible—anything, at any price, for an hour of peace. There is a process of saturation in which even the earth tires of its own law and rebels, daring itself to venture into more evolved forms of life. And then, the earth despises its hatred, revolts against its rebellion, renounces itself, and decides to face the effort needed to change and obey the instinct to ascend. Then, the man of the third law is called to fulfil his mission his mission, for the law of life is not hatred but love, not deceit but truth, not evil but good.

Man must grow weary of his animality, find the weight of biological laws unbearable, and refuse to obey them, beginning, as a collective, the work of elevation started by the pioneers. The ascensional law of life is one, the same for all, and inevitably, one after another, all will face its impact. The spiritual experience described in this book, sooner or later, in various forms, will be felt by all. And this cannot be an anachronism except relatively.

Many, many others will have to endure these nausea and these reactions. The day will come when deceit, taken to its ultimate consequences and placed before an increasingly acute nervous and moral sensitivity, will make social coexistence unbearable and impossible.

¹⁵ "Man is man's own wolf." (Translator's Note)

The solution will not be found in a return to the past, for it is more difficult to regress than to evolve. It will be necessary to face new problems with new consciousness and new responsibility, and it will be necessary to desire that misunderstanding intensifies, so that man may have the courage to face the indispensable mental and physical effort required to progress. Man must reach the fullest disdain for his way of living, even though suffocated by the nausea of his own baseness. It is necessary that the friction between two opposing lives—the internal and the external, between what is and what should be—leads to such a weariness of living, to such a contempt for ourselves, that we are reduced to the utmost spiritual misery.

It is true that, faced with the emptiness of theories that offer no complete solution, man has responded with indifference. But we have already seen that spiritual suicide is not tolerated by the laws of life, which revolt against it more vigorously than against physical suicide. The world will react as our character has reacted. For the spirit exists even in those who deny it, and one cannot live on nothingness, in a void, in animality. One day they will understand that the world truly is what it has been called (even though it may seem strange today), the terrestrial hell.

Undoubtedly, the world is constantly maturing. The majority, if they have not yet achieved the full maturity of an adult, they have certainly lost the naivety of a child. But today, there is a need for substance, for sincere truth. The old tricks no longer have any effect. Man knows what lies behind the old facades. A clear, honest, lived truth is necessary. Man wants to understand thoroughly before committing; he knows his spirit is free, and no will can bend it. We are no longer in the days when people accepted with closed eyes the narcotic of ideals administered to soothe spirits, and when the poor, the defeated, the dispossessed were content with such consolations, meant to disguise the despair of poverty and renunciation with mystical dreams of distant and hypothetical fulfilment. Today's man has developed a critical and positive mindset; he does not accept the truths of heaven unless they are clearly situated and justified in the context of earthly truths. It is not about changing the truth, but about changing the mindset. It is not enough to change the trappings; life itself must change. This book is universal; it is not confined within any specific human circle. It is not directed at any particular human category but to all who feel in touch with these matters. We have already said that formal human categories hold no importance here. This book does not judge anyone in particular but leaves each to their own self-judgment.

It is a fact that human truths are divided and rival, but this is a matter of form. It is necessary to overcome it and go straight to the substance. There is always, deep in the human soul, an instinctive and sincere sense of truth in which God speaks and which no one will ever be able to silence. Even against our will, it is a spontaneous and divine judgment, irresistible and insuppressible, through which human conscience expresses the thought of God.

It is necessary to appeal to the sense by which souls see each other, understand each other, and judge each other; it is necessary to appeal to this simple and sound intuition, which is the most honest and convincing measure of things—a natural and divine wisdom that we all carry within us, without the complications of erudite study. Conscience understands and allows itself to be persuaded without difficult words, through the simplest expressions, when behind these lies the conviction of the one who preaches and when there is, alongside this, the real and concrete fact of example, for this indeed is what truly persuades all, even without knowing how to speak. The rhetorical devices of great orators are worldly vanity, they are an offense to the sense of good and truth; the pretence of convincing solely by the power of logic is a vain attempt, for the spirit is free. To impose oneself by force or through rationality is an attempt to violate conscience; it is an assault to which conscience has the duty to resist, as it truly does, by instinctive imposition, in order to listen to itself between the overbearing words of man and the spontaneous word of God.

If we want heaven to descend to earth, if we want the Gospel not to remain an anti-biological absurdity; if we desire progress to be fulfilled and evolution to ripen the peoples (no matter the terminology with which the phenomenon is expressed), it is necessary to follow the law under which our character was now living, whose story was not recounted here for the vain curiosity of readers or for the literary enjoyment of the writer.

As long as actions on earth continue to follow earthly laws—no matter what ideals are professed, with what luxury of erudition they are defended, and with what constraint of reasoning they are imposed—as long as we do not begin to live here according to the laws of heaven, heaven will never be able to descend to earth; and the kingdom of heaven, of which news and example have been given, but which must be built by man, will never come.

The pious alms that keeps a rich person at a great distance from the poor solves no problem, does not eliminate any distance. Those who know and are able do not wait for reforms, examples, judgments, or duties from others; they begin with themselves and set out, preaching through the silence of example.

Learned and ignorant alike—everyone understands the lived reality, the silent eloquence of example, the persuasive force of facts. True truth seems to shun erudite wisdom and prefers to reveal itself, without superfluous complications, to pure and simple souls. In the common man, there is often a profound instinctive sense that, somehow, seems to reach the eternal sources of life, a sense that knows by intuition and synthesis and knows how to judge, above all, when he encounters the habitual reality that consists of action.

The future lies in the people, in this vast reservoir of germs from which everything emerges. If the people are the receptacle of all miseries, they are also the reserve for all ascensions. If they are the depth to which everything descends, they are also the "humus" in which everything is elaborated, where everything germinates and revives. Evolution is a fatal law, in constant pressure—it is thought, it is will, it is action. It seeks to realize itself, and humanity today is on a great curve in its history, and all the men of the third law are mobilized, as they represent the active principle of the spirit, to provide the seed and fertilize the "humus" of the people. The nervous and cerebral cells of the human organism must function fully. It is not permissible to remain dormant in the old formulas, whatever the field. Violent clashes convulse the exterior without reaching the fervour of inner maturations. The world must reach the phase of the spirit. Society always moves from the primitive chaotic state to the organic state, and this imposes the necessity of fraternal fellowship, which signifies the beginning of the application of the Gospel. The struggle cannot cease, but society moves toward the organization and qualitative elevation of struggle, which will be conducted more organically and intelligently toward higher purposes.

This organization partly transforms the law of struggle into the law of solidarity. The cellular structure of organisms prepares itself long in advance and offers us the example that we find in an already completed form. This too is a beginning of fraternity, a fragment of heaven pressing upon the earth, descending here and establishing itself. The human spirit increasingly finds itself in discord with the ferocity of life forms lingering from the past, and this shell, under inner pressure, will have to burst. Of course, the old biological reality is resistant; that maladjustment gives rise to attempts aimed at developing and establishing themselves in the race. Deep down, man is always a beast, but he thirsts so much for progress!

The current world crisis is due to the contrast between a past that does not want to die and a future that does not yet have the strength to be born. Yet humanity is becoming increasingly accustomed to the march that leads from disorder to order and is concerned with the realization of social justice, as the Gospel already foretold. The law of progress inevitably imposes, despite all resistances, the path that leads from selfishness to altruism, from separatism to solidarity, from rivalry to fraternity, from falsehood to truth, from barbarism to civilization.

This is the divine law. Man is entrusted with the task of fulfilling it on earth to reach the kingdom of heaven. In the creation plan, God has almost assigned this particular task to man. Within certain limits, man is the worker, the executor of divine plans. Creation is continuous, in the future as in the past, creation that is evolution, that is, the progressive manifestation of divinity. Thus, man is the true child of the Father, a divine collaborator in the creation plan. The effort is great, but the result will also be great. It is as if God had said to man: "Go and work this field of the Universe. It already contains everything: strength, seeds, laws, thought, and energy. I entrust it to you. Transform chaos into order-this means rediscovering God. Provide for yourself; multiply, transform this disorder of unleashed elements into a civilized world where you are the leader. The world will be as you wish to make it, as you wish to be. You will be free. Whoever sows shall reap. Thus, with your work, you will fulfil the manifestation of God, you will conquer the path of redemption, and you will rediscover God. Rebuild. This will be your redemption. Redeem yourself through your work and your pain. Build your kingdom, and it will be yours, and you will be king."

The radiant vision of a distant and better future then appeared to the eyes of our character, after so much toil, at the end of the long path. It was the reward after the work, joy after sorrow, the kingdom of heaven after the cross. And he understood that the world was no longer a hell from which one must escape, but a place of creation, where each trace remains imprinted and every effort bears fruit leading to God. Our construction does not belong to the past, but to the future, and it is something we must realize without resting on memories, awaiting the sign and help from above. Only those who have climbed the ladder of evolution and helped others to ascend will not have lived in vain. No thought, no act of ours is lost. Blessed is he who sows goodness, and unfortunate is he who sows evil. And those who have not sown will not reap. The short game of earth soon ends, and what remains is the long game of heaven. Each seed, according to its nature, will yield its fruit, for good or for evil. It will be our fruit, the fruit of our brothers. Only the myopic, who sees within the narrow range of his small life, can mock the ideal models with which the world anticipates and idealizes its future realizations. But this solidarity among generations, this need for coordination and organization indispensable for the realization of the great collective work, the usefulness of cooperation among those specialized according to their abilities—in short, an anti-egoistic, anti-separatist, more fraternal conception of life, also imposes itself as a utilitarian issue to the man of good sense and as something more elevated, more fruitful, more dignified for all.

Within longer timeframes, an ideal becomes valued by a more organic humanity, capable of understanding and realizing it; it loses its utopian character and becomes useful, practical, necessary. It is inevitable that, as man evolves, he will attain an awareness-one he does not always have today-of this broader utility. Then he will work, struggle, and sacrifice for it, as he once did for a small personal selfishness. The man of ideals, today out of place in the world, insulted and condemned, will become increasingly normal, and a people composed of conscious individuals will be able to achieve works of giants. They will form an organic group that will impose itself on the world as a guiding force, with the right bestowed by maturity and the capacity to fulfil the mission of civilization. For others-individuals or nations—who continue reasoning within the limits of the short game of selfishness and deceit, who have hastily enjoyed the meagre, immediate harvest, despising and condemning the sowers of ideals as utopians, there will remain only the condition of servants, to whom will fall the reward or punishment with which the law of selection ends.

Our character had conceived the idyllic ideal of heaven, but had not placed it "afterward" before the iron reality of human life. His conception was now complete.

The reader, even if sceptical, who no doubt laughed at first, now finds himself before a solidity entirely biological, from which it will be difficult to escape, as it encompasses his own reality, as well as the reality of all, his path, as the path of all. He will have to admit that one does not live by bread alone, that collective life has grave concerns which are not exhausted in the material realm, and that no one is more dissatisfied than rich men and wealthy nations. He will have to admit that the progressive complexity of collective life requires, alongside the masses of mediocre level, superior individuals who cannot be debased into normality and confined to the herd without paralyzing the fundamental functions of life itself, to the detriment of all. This would be, for them, the equivalent of paralyzing, for the majority, the possibilities of nourishment and reproduction. To misunderstand, disturb, condemn, or exploit these beings is to violate and mutilate the laws of nature, which provide each individual or collective organism with its nerve and brain cells, without which there is no direction or evolution, in individuals as in nations. While the superior type is condemned, in time, all will reach them. A conscious society must, above all, be able to recognize these beings among the multitude and must assist them, especially as they desire only to be able to give the fruits that give value to their entire lives.

And if present society is incapable of doing this, because advantages go to the cleverest and most rapacious, who know how to seize them—then let it at least have the decency to remain silent when it remembers, too late, the error committed and wishes to make amends; let it have the coherence to leave in silence, even after death, those who were always despised in life.

LAST CHORDS

Life is a work in which the fruits of our labours are, in human terms, destroyed. Where, then, could one build with stability? In the spirit. Life is, like creation, an affirmation that, with ever-creative evolution, becomes ever clearer and stronger.

Our character was now reaching the autumn of life and did not face old age and death with the bitter disillusionment of having wasted his time on the world's unstable constructions. Several years had passed since his reaction and resurrection, during which he had applied the gospel precept "love your neighbour," dedicating himself by all means, overcoming all obstacles, consuming his existence for the good of others. In this way, he fully fulfilled his arduous mission and crowned the spiritual edifice of his life, passing on to others the fruit of his own experience.

The impulses of his destiny were, thus, satisfied and calm in their fulfilment. His destiny was being fulfilled. He had understood it and followed it. He had traversed his Calvary and made his small but obligatory contribution to the good of humanity. The spirit had triumphed, but his physical instrument no longer reacted; it was worn down, exhausted. But now he could depart. He had this right, after having carried his cross and fulfilled his mission. Before, he would not have been able to do so. It was not a matter of premature escape to avoid trials, but rather the peace of a soul that places itself in the hands of God after having completed its duty. His life had yielded its fruits. Adversities, instead of being avoided as obstacles, had been understood and directed in such a way as to help. He had spoken, worked, and now withdrew in silence to make way for the new generations, for this tide of humanity that thirsts and has a duty to live in its earthly kingdom. He, who had lived in the spirit, could now be resurrected in the other world, beyond death.

What an immense line of generations had preceded him, and how many would follow! How many struggles, what infinite pains before his, to prepare the spiritual and material conquests from which he had benefited! Organically, intellectually, morally, in both good and evil, he was the result of an endless path already traversed, of which he had followed only the last stretch. And now he was consigning to others the common heritage of misery and strength, just as he had received it from others, with the imperceptible addition of the small seed left by the weariness of his life—a drop in the ocean, an atom in infinity. Yet, a drop and an atom are worlds.

In the depths of his infinite smallness, he felt the infinite greatness of the indestructible, the beauty of the fellowship between generations, the wisdom of the organic plan of evolution. And he surrendered himself to the law of God, smiling—at the providential little selfishness placed in the defence of each one so that the whole may be fulfilled, smiling at the apparent dispersion of his small self, he who felt satisfied with his resurrection in the whole and with his indestructibility in such a vast collective life.

He withdrew now, in silence, to contemplate the work accomplished. Like others, who in their aging take pleasure in the sight of their children gathered around them, and in the lands, riches, power, and glory won through their labour—so he was satisfied, contemplating his literary work, born from his mind and his heart, his work built with so much love and effort. Like others, he had borne fruit, though of a different kind. As others left children and works, he left his thoughts and his example, cast upon the earth as seeds to multiply in the hearts of men. If, in the first part of his existence, he had confronted his own challenges and carried the cross of his own life, only in the second part did he contemplate his work, facing the issue of others' welfare, helping them to bear the cross of their lives. The labourer finds satisfaction in the contemplation of his work and recalls the weariness endured, the difficulties overcome, and only now, in contemplating the work, does he have full awareness of it. Only now, too, did he understand the logic of his destiny and the justice of human trials, realizing that only one who has fulfilled his duty can stand with head held high before God at the hour of death. What has been done will be credited.

On the other hand, forgetting himself and his past work and looking ahead, the radiant vision of the world's future appeared to him ever clearer, a future that would live in greater measure, by his same law, his same small experience. How many struggles, labours, and dangers undone! But the final victory was assured. He saw the forces at work in the world's destiny, observed the direction of its impulses, and the seeds, despite the difficulties, were bound to mature. And he saw shining above, the triumph of the spirit, saw the utopia realized, understanding that the Gospel had not deceived him and would not deceive the world, and that the kingdom of heaven proclaimed by Christ would truly descend to earth.

The biological future of peoples lies not only in economic, social, scientific, and cultural progress—but above all, in spiritual and moral ascension, which is the foundation of all other ascensions, without which these cannot be sustained. He now saw the blood of martyrs bearing fruit, the torment of the misunderstood, the weariness of the solitary, repudiated, and condemned. He saw ideals, after so much struggle and so many falls, realized in a better humanity for whom the earthly hell had transformed into an earthly paradise. Then, for mankind as well, the work would be finished, and man could take pleasure in contemplating his creation and, at the conclusion of his human destiny, place it in the hands of God, saying: "Here it is, Lord. I have obeyed Your commands, Your thought is fulfilled, the work You entrusted to me is complete. At the end of his journey in the world, Your labourer returns to You. Chaos has become order. I have borne Your cross so much that pain has transformed into joy. I have erred so much that ignorance has transformed into wisdom. I have fallen so many times that evil has transformed into good. I have walked so far that I have reached the end and found You. With my labour, I have retaken the path of redemption. Now, the antagonism between earth and heaven will no longer have meaning. It will fall, and both will merge in a single embrace, so that redemption may be complete. The great illusion of the world will end. The figure of Christ will shine in the glory of the heavens, triumphant and victorious."

In this distant triumph, our character saw his sacrifice come alive again, his small contribution given with such faith, such passion, such labour, and without reservation. In this vision, he could die satisfied, now that his path was coming to an end. He saw everything come alive again in the distance, across time, in future generations. His expanded selfishness had blossomed into altruism, and it was not the utopia the world had believed. Truly, he was reborn and revived in others. Altruism had not been in vain, not even for him. To have given himself was not a loss, but a gain. His greatest yield came precisely from the second part of his life, in which he had forgotten himself to focus solely on the good of others. In the triumph of future generations, he revalued his work and found himself once more.

He now understood that love, not hatred, good, not evil, is the true law of life, so profoundly powerful and irresistible that it overcomes all obstacles. He understood that this law is the backbone of the world's organism, the royal road upon which evolution walks and advances. He understood the ultimate vanity of the continual effort of darkness to overcome light. He understood that the assaults of evil and the fall of man were nothing but minor episodes before a greater order that proclaimed: "Progress and love." He understood that the final victory was expected of these, despite resistance and suffering.

His life had ended as an experimental process ends, of which he had a lucid awareness in its inner meaning. He had followed his path along the imponderable roads of the spirit, with the methods and objective directives of positive science. He had lived the phenomenon of his destiny while always controlling its development. Reaching the final stage, he stood before the ultimate result: for him, the meaning of his life, and for the reader, perhaps the conclusion of the book. This result proclaims that the forces that triumph in life are not the negative and destructive ones, but those that affirm and build. The struggle will be long and terrible, the fatigue immense, the assaults atrocious, the obstacles tenacious—but in the end, goodness and light will triumph, because man is made for goodness and light, not for evil and darkness, which he senses, with inflexible instinct, as his misery and his saddest condemnation.

The moral of his life, as well as of this book, is that evil is contained within the bounds of good, allowed only for the purposes of good; that before the true God of good, there is no opposing God of evil. Dualism is merely human, transient, and apparent—it is a necessary contrast to permit the ascensional movement. But at the centre, in substance, reigns a single principle, and it would be absurd for it to harbour the seed of its own destruction. A God who has to descend to fight face to face with an opposing God is no longer God; such a hierarchy of directing powers would be polytheism.

Goodness triumphs. Goodness is the standard. Undoubtedly, in the universe, there is a great law of duality according to which everything that exists is composed of two complementary parts, two opposing impulses that balance each other. Each unit is given by this pair of forces, which is

both contrast and accord and that is the basis of existence. However, while each thing and concept has its opposite, the two terms do not possess the same strength. The affirmative term is directed toward evolution and life, while the negative term is contrary. The former follows the current; the latter is resistant. Despite this fundamental antagonism, necessary for the work of progress, the one destined to triumph, given the organic construction of the universe — is not evil, but good; not darkness, but light; not pain, but joy; it is not the "no," negator and destroyer of Satan — but it is the 'yes,' the constructive and creative affirmation of God. This is the conclusion of life and of the book. Those who conclude otherwise belong to the negative, satanic forces of destruction. This book is constructive. It does not tear down by negating; it builds by affirming. It stands on the side of God. From so much pain arises the most radiant optimism for our man, for himself and for the world. These affirmations, made with such certainty and firmness, based on experience, serve as comfort to those who fight and suffer for good. If other lives and other books conclude otherwise, it means that humankind has the freedom to close its eyes to avoid seeing and to mutilate and suicide itself to avoid progressing. But whoever denies first destroys themselves, heading toward death and not life. And darkness is terrifying, and the descent is dreadful for the being who was made to ascend. Those who have eyes love the light, and those who have legs need to walk. Evolution moves toward joy and life; involution moves toward pain and death.

The human journey of our character was reaching its end. He had understood it and lived it with full awareness, as an individual on his own and then for the collective. He comprehended the historical moment in which he lived and sought to fully integrate himself within it. He harmonized not only with the forces of his destiny but also with those that shape the destiny of the world. He regarded this subtle sand of men who form nations as the beaches of the ocean upon which the great waves of history break. And this sand receives and records the mark of the powerful blows of geniuses, of revolutions, of social reforms. The mark is imprinted, and the response arises in the soul of the common man, yet so multiplied in number that it becomes as vast as the ocean. The soul is a conservator, an accumulator, and an elaborator of memories. It is the great biological reservoir from which all things are born and to which all things arrive and imprint themselves. All that is lived remains in this immense repository of records, of experience, of wisdom, and of biological values, like a constant synthesis of life that then resurfaces with each step in life and for life.

Whoever casts a seed within it will be revived along with it. The past is a force created by us, which always resurfaces, indestructible in both individual and collective destiny. Good and evil, victory and defeat, merit and guilt—all are written in the blood of peoples and form either the wealth of their own inheritance or the burden of their own debts. Everything returns to us, like a wave—either favourable or hostile—and we must endure it and exhaust it. Our past follows and haunts us, and there will be no peace until exhaustion comes. This is the inevitable solidarity that links one generation to the next, just as, within the individual, it binds the various moments of their life. Whoever conceived an ideal in the past-be it a person or a nation—has set a force in that direction, and sooner or later, they will see it resurface, active, to fulfil itself, helping them rise toward that model. The conception of an ideal is an impulse which, once stirred, has an irresistible tendency to realize itself. And so, from model to model, the ascent of evolution is made. Peoples without ideals also lack the capacity to shape the future, lacking the impulse of progress, the vital path of renewal and improvement. Peoples who do not have an ever-higher goal to pursue are peoples incapable of rising, without a future, destined for disappearance. Whoever closes themselves off dies. Where there is no ideal leading life forward, nations have no history and are inexorably overtaken and submerged.

In the case of his life, our character looked around. He saw that, despite everything, the world struggled to advance, trying to realize social justice, moving toward a new organic state that was harmonious, moral, and conscious. This was the constructive work being carried out in its historical time. The new reality was in preparation, imminent. With full awareness of the moment, he had made his small contribution despite all difficulties, fighting and suffering in his hard life of labour. And in that seed, he survived. His mission was therefore true; he had fulfilled it, and his destiny had logically unfolded to the end. Despite all temptations, he had never denied Christ, and Christ had not betrayed him. The arduous evangelical experience had borne fruit. Good had triumphed over all forces of evil. The ideal had not been a utopia; it persisted against all the world's negations. This brought a great light to his poor life, transfiguring the trials and pains, giving them a powerful significance and a supreme purpose.

These conclusions came to him from the facts, from the reality of a life that had been lived in the world, a life that knew it well, having faced it. He had followed the path of the spirit as a living and vital force. And now he carried with him the moral outcome of this gigantic experience. Individually and collectively, his life had not been lived in vain.

He had bravely travelled the path of the cross to the end, overcoming all obstacles and all resistances. He had understood and lived the inevitability of the biological law of the cross, without which the ideal does not descend to earth. But after so much struggle and suffering, he had finally understood the inevitable continuation and conclusion of that law; he had lived the inevitable conclusion of the cycle, which, for all who have the courage and strength to follow it to its irresistible and inexorable end, imposes this conclusion: Resurrection.

GOODBYE TO SISTER PAIN

"Without pain, there is no salvation."

Years passed, and our character faithfully continued the path he had charted. He carried on, courageously fighting to apply, despite the world's resistance, the law of love within the realm of force. But this endeavour constantly wore him, compelling him to seek rest, as he needed to recuperate both materially and spiritually. It became exhausting for him to descend into the suffocating atmosphere of a world that denied him, stunned him, and shattered him with its low impressions and violent shocks. In the brutal unleashing of its forces, that hypersensitive soul, increasingly refined by pain, where the slightest vibrations were like cyclones—felt as though it were being flayed alive. He was dying of fatigue, worn out from labour and suffering, in a slow and profound martyrdom lived in full consciousness, felt and absorbed each minute He had given in holocaust everything he could offer. But what a sacrifice of life, he offered to consume himself drop by drop so that his existence would not be an easy, painless escape with no results for others, but rather, for himself and for others, a tenacious work of spiritual reconstruction. Having overcome sensuality, love in him had become sacrifice and virile creative force. For the satisfaction of his conscience, he recognized that he had followed the highest path among all those that the determinism of his destiny, within the vast human destiny, could permit. But the excessive tension of work, with which he,

given his richness, had continued to give of himself, had ultimately shattered the organic resistance of his robust constitution. Thus, he was dying, perhaps a few years early, for having asked too much of his strength. He was dying of exhaustion and without wealth, but loved by all and immensely content. He was dying, saying to God: "More than this I cannot; more than this I did not know how to do, and I could not give."

He now understood that all his dedication could not change the course of things, hastening the world's evolutionary phenomenon, nor could it exempt the earth from the labour of ascension and the sanctions of earthly laws, nor prevent the consequences of so many violations from being inexorably paid. He had given the example and the aid, but he could not force human freedom, nor make redemption free of cost. For the world to redeem itself, it, too, would have to freely understand on its own, with effort, though with God's help. However, that detachment and exhaustion in labouring for the good of others; that constant spirit of sacrifice in his descent; that renunciation of heavenly blessings to take on the cross of the earth did not interrupt but hastened his inner maturation, which became deeper and more intense, and it opened for him, with ever clearer sensitivity, a new view of heaven. This last work had been for him like a continuous maceration that left him now not only in profound physical prostration but also in exultant spiritual luminosity. In some moments, amidst the long, green silences of his mystical Umbria, his inner maturation at times seemed unexpected and surprised him as a revelation. His body was exhausted, drawing away from life, but his spirit was lively, strengthened, drawing closer to life. His dynamic spirit became ever more luminous and vibrant. It now took on the task of sustaining that body, which grew weaker still. He was slowly consumed, yet with a vivid sense of resurrection. Such were, for him, the joys of the spirit, that he forgot the sufferings of the body. His organism, wisely guided by a healthy and sober regimen, peacefully passed through the cycle of physical exhaustion, continually reduced the pace of renewing exchanges, and pacified itself naturally, without upheavals or rebellions, moving toward final rest.

He did not fear Sister Death. He saw her slow and natural approach in peace. He accepted the repose that was about to arrive and in which he trusted, having deserved it. He had prepared early and worked during the best hours of the day, in the vigour of his strength. In the afternoon, reposed arrived-awaited and pleasant. He would not taste the bitterness of disillusionment nor rush now to make hurried repairs, like those who, attached to the vain illusions of the world, strive to rebuild and remedy. He did not believe in certain autumnal benevolences, in certain late conversions with which man thinks he can become better and earn salvation. Salvation must be the result of slow maturation, of a path that must be fully travelled. In the field of the severe but just laws of the spirit, the system of shortcuts and opportunistic gains that yields results in the world cannot be applied. Heaven cannot be seized by force, nor conquered through cunning, as happens with earthly matters. These brutalities cannot ascend to those heights; they remain in their own realm. One must have worked at the right time, and late pious invocations must be in vain, for the divine law is truly just. To convert and begin working at the end is a great deal, but it is only a beginning; it is urgent to labour and to complete.

He loved Sister Death after having loved Sister Pain so much, who had only separated from him at the end. For someone who had suffered so much, death was a welcome rest. For one who lived in the spirit and deepened and strengthened life, death is not merely the end of the body, but, above all, the resurrection of the soul. Nature itself, which abhors emptiness and death, delights in such supreme triumphs that only know how to reaffirm life where everything seems finished. Death is not an end but a beginning; it is the exhaustion of a cycle of forces enclosed within one's own destiny; it is a tightness that loosens, an escape from the earth and its afflictions toward the heavens and its peace. He loved Sister Death, and she showered him with gifts. While brother labour had taught him so much in the stern school of will and discipline, the wise aid of Sister Pain had gradually taught him to distinguish and detach himself from earthly bonds, to the point of no longer fearing or suffering from a sudden and violent separation.

He gave thanks to Sister Pain for having completed her work of maceration, and through this, for having prepared him for resurrection. He caressed her with a heart full of gratitude, for he now understood her logical and marvellous function. He kissed her bitter kiss and her lacerating bite. And now, in the end, the most severe friend was the truest and most faithful. Now that he was reaping the fruits, he could conclude through experience that his conception of pain, opposed to the world's view, proved entirely true, and he could sing victory over the world. However, how harsh and hostile that pain had seemed at the beginning! If her brutal impulse had not cast him, willing or not, onto the thorny path of human ascension, imprinting on his life that tragic tone of struggle and storm; if Sister Pain, wise and precious friend, had not torn him from all comfortable positions and forced him to react, throwing himself toward heaven; and if he had not, on his part, responded to this call of destiny with patience and great will; if he had, out of laziness, renounced his sacred right to fight and suffer in order to ascend-what would have become of him now, without this burden of martyrdom through an entire life, without this terrible fatigue to which he owed all his elevation?

What an empty and sad conclusion his earthly path would have reached if everything had gone well as desired, without the weight of trials and the salutary blows of Sister Pain? Now he truly understood it, he thanked and loved it. This had been nothing but a kind of forced savings that Divine Providence had imposed on him so that he could earn his redemption. It was a kind of extraordinary labour alongside the natural task of life, intended to pay off the mandatory insurance for his future happiness.

He had accepted everything without rebelling; knowing how to suffer had made him a great saver, and now he was rich in spiritual capital. He had accumulated so much that a shower of gold fell around him. On the outside, there was always the human clamour. But within, what a celebration in the face of death, what triumph over pain, what a stupendous song of life! Inside, there was the caress and smile of God, who transforms every suffering into joy. He found himself in the astonishing sensation of the transmutation of pain into divine joy. Sister Pain, having fulfilled her marvellous task of moulding his soul, and he, embracing her full of gratitude, bid her farewell.

Pain had helped him to slowly and deeply demolish his animality, which he could now abandon definitively, without suffering. He did not think of dying like so many others who look at a body that was everything to them and is now falling apart; instead, he thought of rising again, looking at a spirit that was his entire being and was now in full efficiency. His mind, with which he had worked so much, strengthened by continuous activity, remained clear and agile because, for some time now, the centre of his vitality had been transferred to it. And he contemplated the justice of divine laws that reward, his portion, the final release from pain into the most complete peace. He contemplated the logic of his destiny, the harmonious contrast of his impulses. He assimilated its profound meaning, now that he could see everything in retrospective view. From this vision, he returned to contemplating the organic functioning of the universe; he heard its sublime harmonies; he understood its equilibrium and justice and humbly thanked the good God for the great gift of having been able to collaborate, even as the least of servants, in the great work of human ascensions.

He had given everything of himself, and now, as he concluded his life, he reflected on the marvellous phenomenon of the transmutation of pain, in the final escape from his constraint.

This phenomenon, which ultimately is very simple and which our character experienced at the end of his journey—had its confirmation seems a mystery to the human mind because the world today has completely lost the understanding of what pain means. Pain is not, as is believed today, a secondary incident of life, due to some error, something to be avoided and thus, escapable. Pain is the key to life, its fundamental note, the most active agent of reactions, a shaper of qualities; it is life's highest and most fruitful school, the essential and irreplaceable driver of progress, that is, the ascent toward God, which is the goal of life.

This final escape from pain, in which life culminated and the logic of the destiny of our character was completed, aligns with the fundamental biological law of redemption that the world possesses, but around which it revolves, as if orbiting a mystery, without comprehending it.

This, too, is the core of religions, particularly of Christianity. It is also the pinnacle of art (such as Wagner's *Parsifal*, Michelangelo's *Pietà*, etc.) and of the loftiest human concepts. This law states that, with our current universe being in an evolutionary phase—that is, reconstructing from chaos to God, from a lost order (the fall of the angels, the previous *involutionary* period)¹⁶—pain, precisely as the agent of this construction and the foundation of redemption, is, through it and by it, the fundamental content of our lives. Even without understanding it and striving in vain to escape it, the world does nothing other than apply this universal biological law, followed by all, regardless of their religious, philosophical, or scientific beliefs.

¹⁶ The Great Synthesis, Chapter 22. (Note from the Author)

It truly seems that, according to well-known biblical legends, which must have a profound meaning, a marvellous primordial order was once tragically undone, allowing the universe to fall into chaos, leading it to the antipodes of being, from good to evil, from happiness to suffering, from light to darkness, from God to Satan. But the primordial forces were not destroyed, because nothing can be destroyed. They merely became entangled in a horrendous infernal disorder. The being had no other path left but to rebuild everything through infinite attempts, failures, and pains. This, by a logical, just, and exact law of equilibrium.

Thus, if the backbone of life is evolution, it can only be realized at the cost of an effort that belongs to the being, a laborious reconstructive tension of happiness in order, which is called work and pain, without which the lost path cannot be remade, or else life would be lived in vain. It is thus that the profound content of existence, its biological volume, is one of effort, painful but fruitful, and justly rewarded by corresponding conquest.

It is, therefore, absurd for the world, which does not know the laws of life, to believe that it can escape pain by the easy path of materialistic and selfish pleasure, which regress, descends, and leads to disorder, to matter, where, precisely, the seat of pain resides, whereas, liberation can only be found in the laborious reconstruction of progress, in the painful work of ascesis that evolves, leading toward that order, harmony, goodness, peace, and union in which only the current satanic suffering of the fallen being will be able to rediscover, redeeming itself, the supreme joy of God. Man, driven by his instinct for happiness, throws himself into base Epicurean pleasure, but his nature regress and leads him toward pain. Thus, the world, deceived, truly plunges into pain, remaining subject to it, instead of freeing itself from it.

Therein lies the error. The moment of happiness is short-lived and comes at a high cost. This does not mean that life is not meant for joy—a joy ever greater. It only means that this joy must be earned through

proportionate effort. And it is logical and fair that between man and the happiness awaiting him, there is this just need to earn it. Precisely for this reason, the easy and low pleasures that revert to biological past, descending from spirit to matter, and that seem like convenient usurpations, are, in reality, a betrayal. The just Law requires adequate effort to grant deserved compensation. One can only escape pain by working to evolve toward higher joys, and not by surrendering to pleasures that lead to lower joys.

This is the mechanism of the reconstructive law known as evolution. Its first characteristic is that this harsh yet honest law of redemption is a duty and inheritance for every being on every plane of life, from the mineral to the superhuman; it is the wearisome form of existence for the most distant brethren in universal life. This law is present in all times and places, such that at the root of each creative genesis, there is always an inner work of contraction and shattering of that selfish I which limits itself in sacrifice, dismantles itself in renunciation-the reduction by compensation (law of equilibrium) of the primordial guilt that familiar legends define as pride. Thus, there is no creation, meaning no reconstruction of order and ascension, except through the pain by which one must pay for what was lost and reconquer it. Do not the telluric revolutions resemble titanic, immobilized efforts, cyclopean movements, like the painful labour of the shapeless nebula transforming into sun and planets? And does not the very primitive cellular multiplication by fission seem to contain a first rudiment of altruistic sacrifice of the egocentric self, which shatters and offers itself for the sake of other egoisms? And beyond this, up to the painful physical birth of the woman, to the tormented spiritual birth of genius, even to the redemption that Christ could only accomplish upon the cross—does it not always concern the same law? A law so universal that not even the highest of beings can escape from it.

The very facts confirm that the constructive principle cannot overcome and escape the principle of destruction into which it has plunged, except through a work known as pain. Without it, no new life is generated against death, no new good against evil, no new happiness against suffering, no new light against darkness, no new order against disorder. Without pain, one does not evolve, does not rebuild, does not regain the lost paradise, nor escape the path of descent. This is the titanic, fundamental and biologically central idea that lies at the summit of human conceptions: the mystery of sacrifice for redemption. This is what the "bitter cup" and the "shedding of blood" signify. This is the biological function of holocaust; this is the message conveyed by the heroic cry of martyrs, the champions of the Law, who set the example before all others. It also tells us that it is not through the pain of others-which served as an example and not as a convenience to exempt the fearful-that one can achieve one's own redemption. Rather, only through one's own pain, fully lived, understood, and assimilated; that is, conscious pain as a wise instrument of spiritual construction. Here lies the profound meaning of the concepts of expiation, immolation, victim, sacrifice, etc.

Implicit in these greater causes of pain is the lesser cause of error, which demands continuous correction and compensation, an inevitable error because the work of reconstruction is also a reconquest of light and knowledge and occurs in darkness and ignorance. No one evolves except through uncertainties, through trial and error. The common man generally acts without any awareness of the consequences; they move blindly, ignorant of their relationship with the organic functioning of the universe. Sometimes, ill-will adds itself to ignorance as a cause of disorder, which brings about a halt, a regression, and everything is expiated with suffering—a burden that, to be released and to resurge, requires confronting new work and new pains. Thus, to the general causes of pain are added the errors and guilt of the man who wish to escape by rebelling, by violent actions, and by straying from the path. Then, it is necessary to pay for

309

everything, for one cannot nullify the logical and just law of responsibility and equilibrium, in which giving and receiving must precisely compensate in the form of one's own joy and pain— a law stamped in the instinct that knows each error or fault must be paid. One should be good and conscious; know how to align oneself with the direction of the laws of life. But it is precisely goodness, knowledge, and consciousness that man must conquer; it is exactly this that he must learn: not to cast himself outside the Law, but to cooperate fraternally within it. Thus, man is left with no choice but to struggle, sinning and atoning, erring and correcting himself, rebelling and suffering, until he knows how to find for himself, through the force of punishments and attempts, the only path of escape and solution for pain.

Given these principles, pain and love are the necessary ingredients in the phenomenon of reconstructive genesis and evolutionary creation. Only from sacrifice, which is contraction and death, can life, expansion, and progress be born. And it is essential that, at the roots of being, the principle that holds the key to creation and life be the feminine principle. Such is the principle of genesis that, in a vast embrace, encloses, shields, and protects the entire selective and evolutionary struggle of the masculine principle.

In the mechanism of this law's function, joy is merely a respite for the work of ascending, a rest and encouragement so that the being does not renounce ascension and fall back into self-annihilation. Pleasure exists in the stomach, in feeling, and in thought—aligned with the three laws to which man belongs. But it always moves forward, whether individually, collectively, or spiritually. That perfect joy of Saint Francis, which seems like the most absurd inversion of human values, is nothing but the joy of the highest reconstructor.

Through these laws, all that is ascension and progress is also an escape from pain, as it is an elevation toward God, who is joy, and a distancing from the lower, which is pain; it is the abandonment of chaos and the reconstruction of order, the repayment of debt, the restoration of equilibrium according to the divine law of justice. Happiness, then, appears as a good that is anticipated, already known but not possessed, and that is to be regained. The Gospel, especially in its supreme commandment: "love your neighbour," is a principle of social coordination that limits unbridled freedom, guiding it toward fruitful collaboration, fraternal peace, and the grand harmony of God.

Thus, the phenomenon of the transmutation of pain, which our character was now experiencing, is explained. Having comprehended the true meaning of life—a meaning unknown to the world—he had given his contribution to reconstruction, and now the great law of redemption, always true both individually and collectively, was active in his destiny. He had gone even further: having exhausted his own pain, he devoted himself to the pain of others, the only path to ascend further; after having rebuilt himself, he dedicated himself to the reconstruction of others, assuming their burdens. His entire life advanced along the great path of evolution, following the example of true and great reconstructors. It was now only natural that the same divine biological laws he had followed would be with him and, as active forces, elevate him to happiness through their just and ironclad equilibriums, the expression of God's thought. It was natural that pain should now vanish from his horizon, reabsorbed into itself through its automatic process of self-destruction, which is the most just, wise, and benevolent of all the harsh laws of life.

All this he understood and meditated upon as he approached death, seeing these mysteries revealed and operating within himself; and, according to the law, he felt the profound meaning of his life being fulfilled. He understood that happiness is so truly ours that, even if we did not wish to seek it, pain would be there, ready to act, compelling us to pursue it and would only relent once we have learned how to find it. He understood that happiness, truly awaited, is gained through reaction, and that pain is the stimulant of this beneficial reaction, or, in other words, pain is merely the instrument in the formation of happiness. This is the true definition of pain.

Only now, at the end of this story, can the reader fully understand the nature of the suffering and the main cause of our character's pain. Death will bring him universal harmonic pacification, which is attunement with the paradisiacal rhythms of the divine. We see, then, that the main torment of his human life was the lacerating contact, given his hypersensitivity, with the brutal, chaotic, infernal dissonance of the earth. It was mentioned, at the beginning, his inadaptability, his unusual constitution, his position as a misfit in contrast with the dominant type, which differs greatly from him in instincts and feelings. For the common man, initially mentioned, so that he does not feel his point of view unjustly condemned, it is necessary to explain this fact, which he finds unbelievable. Such exceptional human types live in another phase of evolutionary development, at a more advanced biological stage, implying a nervous, intellectual, and moral sensitivity that ordinary beings cannot imagine. Seen from such a diverse position, the conduct of these individuals represents an unleashing of forces so violent and brutal that social contact becomes a true torment for the hypersensitive being. This is a heightened sensitivity that cannot be explained to someone who does not possess it, but which becomes painfully offensive to the normal conduct of the majority.

The positions and judgments of the character are often a function of heightened sensitivity and can only be understood and explained through this. Given his position, he possessed a range of refined and complex individual and social needs, inadmissible to others because they were inconceivable. Hence the maladjustment, the cause of his painful isolation. For him, knowledge, goodness, sincerity, moral rectitude, altruism, and principles were of primordial necessity. For others, the foremost needs were pleasures of the stomach and sex, the thirst for wealth, honours, dominion, selfishness, self-interest. Understanding between them was impossible. The prepotency of the unleashing of primordial forces represented by them, with their undeveloped and coarse nature, devastated his hypersensitivity like a typhoon over a flower garden. Social contact was impossible without harm and suffering. He was compelled to seek refuge in an escape from life because he lacked the tough shell of insensitivity and ignorance of life's laws, a protection against pain, as well as the instinctive and blind exuberance of elemental force, so essential for beings destined for earthly life. And he suffered in such a world, which was far too savage for him. He had attempted the involutionary process, the regression, which, for him, was bestiality. But he could not demolish himself. His life was a subtle thread of energy, with strange vibrational capacities, reacting to everything, made to harmonize with the chords of more refined and elevated worlds. However, his moral sensitivity forbade him to flee into mystical contemplation of the heavens, making him descend and bleed in the human environment, which was a true hell for him. With the sensitivity of an angel, he endured the exhausting life of a brute, forced to lavish his refined energy in torrents, to the point of exhaustion.

Now the reader will be able to understand the martyrdom it was for our character to become united with his fellow beings, adhering to the evangelical law: "love thy neighbour"; what a heroic sacrifice and what a slow and profound agony that martyrdom represented, to the point of exhaustion; what final despair that devotion represented for such a hypersensitive being, and what right all of this now conferred upon him, the martyrdom accomplished, which led him toward death, to finally escape the earth and its infernal contrasts, toward the paradisiacal rhythm of the heavens, his true homeland. His entire life had been a spasmodic search for divine harmony, of which he had always retained an instinct and longing, harmony that he carried in his destiny amidst the infernal chaos of the earth, but which he could fully rediscover only in death, in final liberation, in the return to his heavens.

ARRIVAL OF SISTER DEATH

With the passing of the years, he became more and more detached from the earth. The great tumult of the world, the deafening failure of human life, the brutal explosion of primordial instincts, constantly diminished in distance. Slowly, he moved away from the immense and violent tide. The contrasts fell away. He was leaving, fleeing the laws of earth to enter the domain of the laws of a different and higher world. The struggle subsided; the dissonance harmonized, life pacified itself in a supreme sweetness. Hell remained below, powerless to rise above its level. He observed its assault, as with the disintegration of matter, it lost all power. The strength abandoned him slowly. He was compelled to leave his work in solitude and silence. The hour of well-deserved rest had come. Yet where death seemed to be, he anticipated the sensation of the new life awaiting him. Sister Death brought him the greatest joy: liberation, for which he had struggled so hard and which had taken so long to arrive. The trial had been long, relentless, inexorable, but the restless sailor, the pilgrim of love and passion, had finally reached port! All the knots of his destiny were unravelling; his pain was falling away. He felt the imminent collapse of the worldly values that had pursued him, where he had been defeated, and he saw the law of heaven appear and fulfil itself for him. To the day of others, which had been his night, now succeeded his day, which was the night of others. With the gradual weakening of the body, the day became brighter. As his

body sank into profound exhaustion, a light ever more intense was kindling in his spirit. All his sensations confirmed to him the reality of the highest continuation of himself, of resurrection beyond the earth and beyond death.

Instead of feeling himself plunging into darkness, the presentiment of intense hours became more pronounced within him. Nevertheless, he relived the most fervent moments of his mystical ascension, the unforgettable memory of his visions, and it seemed to him that those vertices should now merge to project themselves, in a single thrust, toward the final, deepest, and most synthetic realization. With death, he felt that a great spiritual event was drawing near, which would be the supreme stage, synthesis, and conclusion of his life; a spiritual event long promised by his consciousness, assured by instinct, guaranteed by reason, embedded in the logic of his destiny, and perhaps desired by the law of divine justice.

And he prepared himself inwardly with intense faith, with devotion and humility, with a tremulous expectation of superhuman joy, as if it were an intimate sacrament in which life and destiny resolved within him. And he already intuited that, in that supreme moment of reckoning, he would have fulfilled the ultimate dedication and consecration to God. A sign would come from above, the sign invoked and awaited as a unique reward. It would arrive as a secret of love and unification, culminating a life of fidelity and sacrifice. He intuited that in that supreme moment he would be alone with God.

He had withdrawn to a country house. All of his family were absent. One day he felt himself weaken, and death truly seemed very near. Later, he was advised to call a doctor and seek treatment. "What good would that do?" he thought. How could one impede the laws of life? Why bring the ultimate nuisance of material science close to him precisely at the moment of greatest importance for the spirit? Why call upon strangers to hear words of empty encouragement and the courteous lie that, out of misguided pity, attempts to uphold and assure the continuity of life, while he well knew the opposite to be true and welcomed it?

He had already become accustomed to speaking of himself with the forces of nature, as he had become accustomed to speaking sincerely with God about himself. He wished to have at his side only the sincere warmth of affection, and within himself, the warmth of prayer.

For a few days, his strength returned. Then he relapsed. One afternoon, after a short walk, he returned home, dragging himself along. It was a tranquil, sun-filled day in May. The air was warm, and the twilight was a shower of gold. He lay down, thinking that to die, one needs only to have God and peace in one's own conscience. And he, who for some time had lived on a vegetarian diet, felt himself fading, calm and lucid, without the torment of toxic phenomena.

He got up for a bit the next day. After that, no more. On the afternoon of the third day after his relapse, he was sitting up in bed, propped on several pillows, and through the windowpanes he watched the sun slowly descend over the hills, its splendour reflected in the river winding through the valley. How much peace in nature! How much peace in his soul! How he had longed for and dreamed of this final rest, and how grateful he was now to recall the long labour, the numerous falls and resurrections, and all the conflicts of a life filled with pain, struggle, and contrasts. How many times they had mistreated him without even understanding, incapable of acting otherwise! How much they had made him suffer unjustly, certainly out of misunderstanding, so assured, forceful, and armed with justice were his judges. He remembered those who had plundered him because he was selfless; insulted because he was humble; exploited because he was generous. They had even deprived him of the fruits of his labour; they had expelled him from his own home and laughed in his face because he had refused to revolt and defend himself.

Perhaps they were innocent, and he could not judge them. Superficial human justice was on their side. Perhaps they were simply the expression of undeveloped and unconscious forces that he, by his own fault, had deserved to encounter in his destiny. Perhaps they were not evil and only seemed so because they did not understand him, and in the end, the fault was his, for he was the one who was different from others. What could they give or express except what they were and what they held within themselves? Were they to blame for being unevolved? Would it not, instead, be a destiny of explain that had formed this path of painful misunderstanding? And then he repeated Christ's great words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And he added: "Lord, forgive me, for I did not understand them and took for malice what was merely immaturity."

Time had resolved the painful antagonisms, leaving in his soul, as a beneficial residue and a new wealth, the light of having understood his fellow beings and the sweetness of having forgiven them.

With his soul at peace with everyone, he rested and prayed. The descent into the world was complete. In his spirit, all was now profound harmony. He entrusted to God the work of his life, repeating his habitual phrase: "Lord, I am Your servant, and I ask for nothing else but this." He had spoken it throughout his life, at the end of each day. Now he repeated it at the end of his longest earthly journey. And he added the great prayer: "Lord, forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." His final thought was one of love; his last word, of forgiveness. The envy of human rivalries had never taken hold of his soul. Never had he bound himself to anyone with such feelings, and nothing held him here below. He had always sought to forgive those who had caused him suffering and repaid his good with evil, for he believed that forgiveness was the foremost quality of the true followers of Christ. This evangelical forgiveness is not, as some might believe, a weakness that hides impotence and cowardice. It is the awareness of God's order and law, from which no one escapes. And the less man reacts, usurping from God the right to judge and punish—and thereby moving to the side of the debtors—the more the laws act in his defence. And how much more powerful is God's action than ours! Every injustice suffered is a cry that reaches God, all the more eloquent when the victim remains silent.

The saying "the best revenge is forgiveness" can thus take on a terrible meaning for the one who has been forgiven by man. But who understands this? And yet, they are simple and logical biological laws with practical outcomes. They deceive because they are patient laws. "God does not pay on Saturdays," it is said. Patient to wait until it shatters at the hour of death. And he, who had forgiven so much, was dying in peace. The universal and complete pacification of his being, the profound harmony in Christ's fraternal love, attuned him to the paradisiacal rhythm of the heavens, which were already opening to absorb him in a cadence of supreme happiness.

His gaze was already turning away from the earth. Now that his human work was finished, his descent into the world had revived the bond, leaving him free to rise to the heavens that the supreme hour opened to him. In death is life. A truth of the biological world as much as of the spiritual. In every case, in the economy of the universe, death is a resurrection. And he was preparing for his resurrection. What was human in his life was now dead and destroyed, yet everything remained alive and present, indestructibly imprinted in the experience of his soul. The stifling atmosphere of the earth was now very far away. He had laboured in it with all his strength. Now that the bonds of destiny were loosening, he could rediscover his true world in the spirit. That earthly reality, crossed with so much sacrifice, now appeared distant and unreal, like a dream. And his long life was lived and complete. How many memories, how many paths, how much work, how many pains! Everything had been fulfilled. But nothing was in vain, for everything had left its mark on his soul, shaping it. He repeated, "Into Your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit."

And now a strange feeling of liberation and lightness was invading him, an intensified feeling of expansion, a new sensory capacity in which the reality of heaven appeared to him in an ever clearer and more stable form. As the old life died, the new one emerged. He had long since broken his ties with the world; the separation was easy, clear, natural, peaceful.

Thus, he was at peace, asleep, almost forgotten of himself, as if between wakefulness and sleep, as if between the reality of earth and the reality of heaven. His consciousness oscillated between the two sensitivities and the two worlds, on the threshold of the beyond.

In the room there was the solemn peace of the afternoon; in the house, a respectful silence from the family members. The sun continued to descend over the hills in front, reflecting on the river and sometimes hiding in the clouds. A joyful chirping of birds greeted the evening. The long shadows of twilight stretched peacefully across the fields; a thrill of spring passed through the meadows and woods. After the winter rest, the great mechanism of life set itself in motion once more in grand and solemn work, which he heard stirring with an irresistible fervour of renewal. Matter was taken up in a quicker rhythm of exchanges, obeying the commands of the Law. He heard the great progressive waves of the immense symphony of the ascent of all things, from atom to nebula. He, too, was following, though in a different way, his own spring. And everything—his sensation and the voice of the universe—spoke to him of the indestructibility of being in its eternal resurrection. In the face of this vision, his heart raised a hymn of gratitude to God for the marvellous harmony of creation.

Having reached the height of this contemplation, his thoughts returned to Christ; the vision of that sorrowful winter afternoon, when he had felt Him so close, reappeared before him. He once again saw the Christ of many faces, bent over the endless sufferings of humanity, beside each sorrow, His face offering a different kind of consolation. He heard not the vast clamour of earth and heaven, but the all-human voice saying to him: "Love your neighbour," Christ's supreme wish amid the struggle of passions. And the two visions sang the same divine music to his enraptured soul. A harmonious and powerful symphony rose from all things, sweeping him away in a superhuman ecstasy.

He remained in this state for some time, while the maturation of the phenomenon, independent of his will, stirred his instincts, making him feel the vivid expectation of something new, immense, decisive—something that presentiment and reason had already promised him for the moment of death. A new reality, still undefined and mysterious, was approaching. A light drew near, with a song of supreme beauty and strength. Everything was uncertain and veiled; it was as if he were in the middle of a cloud of darkness that confused him, preventing him from seeing. An incapacity and a weight he could not overcome and conquer.

He remained like that for a long time. The sun continued its descent in the peaceful twilight. Finally, it touched the summit of the hill; the wandering clouds dispersed; its last, clear radiance reached the dying man full on his face. Between the sun and his gaze, there was something like a glimmer of gold. He could look at the sun, now motionless, without discomfort. And he looked, thinking: how many times has it already set, and how many times will it still set in time?

Will it one day shine upon a more civilized and better humanity? And You, Christ, when will You triumph, establishing Your kingdom on earth?

As he thought in this way, from idea to idea, moving from the sun to Christ, it seemed to him that the splendour of the sun merged with the reflections on the river, setting it aflame. In his sensation, now entirely inward, the idea of the sun and the idea of Christ fused into a single splendour. He felt in his eyes and in his soul a blaze of lights kindling, advancing from the heavens, penetrating the room and illuminating it. The two realities, seen with the eyes of the body and with those of the spirit, overlapped. The light that had invaded the room began to take shape and define itself, and all of him—eyes and soul—focused on it, striving to decipher the form that, still in the shape of light, was gradually taking form. Astonished, uncertain, and yearning, he watched the gradual definition of the shape and the idea. Clearly, he was no longer alone. There before him was a marvellous reality of thought, affection, will, and form, which drew him in with kindness and strength, flooding him with supreme joy.

He stretched his arms in a supreme effort and then let himself collapse onto the mattress, exhausted by the violence of his sensations. That thought stared at him intensely; that affection penetrated him, that will seized him, and that form had assumed precise features. He then recognized it. But never had the divine vision appeared to him with such strength and clarity. And then, contemplating it with his eyes and his soul, he exclaimed:

— Christ, Lord!

And so he remained for a long time. His lips lacked the strength to move, but between the vision and him, anyone with sufficiently developed spiritual senses would have heard a brief dialogue unfold:

- Christ, Lord! - he repeated.

- Do you recognize me? replied the vision.
- I recognize you, Lord. Do you remember?
- I remember.
- Who am I?
- You are Christ, the son of God.
- Do you love me?

- Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you¹⁷.

 Peter, you are exhausted. Your journey is complete. Rest in me. Lay your head upon my chest and rest¹⁸.

Here, the vision expanded. The shores of the Lake of Tiberias appeared, the gentle hills of Galilee, the night of the Passion, the triumph of the Resurrection. And all of this he now beheld, outside of space and time, seeing it intensely, in detail—not with the sense of nostalgia for an unreachable, distant reality, as in life, but with a sense of peace and happiness. He saw it as those who, having completed a work and a new journey, arrive at their own fulfilment¹⁹.

From that splendid vision onward, he no longer remained on Earth. His vision continued in the heavens. Like a sunset, he had died in the vision of Christ.

His body lay inert upon the bed. The soul, carried away in that splendid vision, so often sensed, spasmodically and futilely sought in life and achieved only at the moment of death, his soul turned back for just an instant to cast a fleeting glance at the body that had been its prison, yet also its companion and instrument in his arduous task of redemption.

¹⁷ Compare this dialogue with Matthew 16:16 and John 21:17 (Translator's Note).

¹⁸ Those who live by form and by the letter, and not in the spirit, will not be able to grasp the meaning of these words. (Author's Note).

¹⁹ To be fully understood, this scene should be connected with the final scene of the volume *Mystical Ascesis*. That book, in its last chapter, "Passion," where the last war is clearly foretold, culminates with the holocaust of the sacrifice on the cross. However, A Man's History culminates with the resurrection from death and the triumph of the spirit. Beyond the cross, it reaches resurrection. And while *Mystical Ascesis* foreshadowed the pain and passion of the last world war, this book foretells and prepares the new man of the Third Millennium — the man of the new and triumphant civilization of the spirit. (Author's Note).

Now, however, since it was no longer useful, it no longer mattered. Like an echo came the memory of what he had written:

"Dead among dead things lies your pain below—a useless tool abandoned down below, on the deserted shore of a sorrowful life. But your future is here, and the soul observes it: your work, your creation, and your glory."

Freed from the body, the soul hurled itself into that blaze of light that had taken the form of Christ. He perceived everything now, more profoundly than before, as if with a new subtle sensitivity that magnified a hundredfold his resonance with the vibrations of the universe. He sensed them rushing toward him from all the vastness of infinity. And he then felt the blaze of Christ rise, like a pillar of fire, toward the heavens. For him, now outside of space, this signified a withdrawal, a qualitative distancing from the infernal vibrations of the earth. A supreme joy. The clamour of disorder remained below, in the dense atmosphere he had left behind as he penetrated into another, more subtle, clear, and rarefied. He perceived these vibrations less distinctly as they receded into the distance; soon, they were no more than an echo, a vague memory. The pillar of fire drew him in. Following it, he was carried out. He sensed dimly that new laws were manifesting around him—laws belonging to a new world into which he was now entering.

He sensed the formation of yet-unknown equilibriums, according to other principles that allowed him to move and rise—not through space, but in the quality of a vibration that refined, deepened, and, above all, harmonized itself, leading him from pain to joy, from the clash of contradictory dissonances to a paradisiacal symphony of harmonic vibrations. In this way, he reached the peak, liberated himself, transformed, and reappeared in dimensions of life beyond our human conception, following the light of Christ. His body was buried with simplicity and poverty. If few had cared for him during life, no one cared for him in death. The silence he had loved so much stretched over his grave. Nothing was visible from the outside: for the world, he had not existed. Nothing was inscribed on the marble under his name, but his body received the supreme honour of poverty; his funeral was not profaned by speeches, and his death did not serve as a pretext for anyone's vanity. This was the utmost that could be obtained from the world. Thus, even after he returned to the earth what the earth had lent him, his body was saved from the falsehood of human honours. A mantle of infinite peace stretched over the poor remains of a laborious life.

He was buried as he had wished, in his humble country cemetery, on the slope of a hill, under the face of the sun. Around him were the great friendly trees, as thoughtful as he was and so well known to him; there was the honest, sincere nature, and the sister creatures he had so deeply loved. Nearby was a chapel where he had often prayed, surrounded by the scent of pine trees, rich in poverty and simplicity, adorned with solitude and peace. He had fully enjoyed that spiritual splendour often lacking in rich, ornamented basilicas, perhaps pagan and profane in their spectacular grandeur, to the point of being offensive to the religious sentiment. Above, from on high, he continued to observe the vast movement of the heavens. The great voice of God spoke in silence.

Thus passed over the earth this ordinary man whose story we have narrated. He passed as all things pass, a form in the relative, a living application of the Absolute, that is, of the substance that exists within the laws of life. To him, who had truly suffered and laboured in fulfilling his mission, the justice of God granted the final release from pain into complete peace. Those who had sought to harm him had only done him good. Without executioners, there is no martyrdom; without destruction, there is no reaction; without pain, there is no creation. Evil is contained and guided within the bounds and purposes of good. He had respected, as was his duty, the experiences of others—their mistakes, their pains—in

325

their learning and evolution. He had not blamed others for being unevolved, for their insensitivity, or ignorance of the laws of life. He had always forgiven. And he had come to know, through experience, the great redemptive power of pain. He had fulfilled his duty to help others, according to the most severe and truest experience. He followed Christ. He built his life without money or honours, independent and free from these forces.

Here is the substance of his spiritual testament:

Learn in the school of work—the first right of life.

Forgive always.

Study in the great book of pain. Know how to suffer, if you wish to ascend.

May work, forgiveness, and pain make you brothers.

The world must suffer in order to correct itself and move forward.

The cup of redemption that Christ left us, and drank from first, is not a cup of pleasures or idleness, but of martyrdom.

The example of His sacrifice tells everyone that without pain there is no salvation.

No one can escape this fundamental law.

But after the passion and the cross will come the resurrection and the triumph of the spirit.

Accept, therefore—helping and loving one another—the school of work and the baptism of expiation that purifies, for it is the only path to redemption through pain.

I leave you with this message: in the necessary passion of the world lies the dawn of a new civilization of the spirit.

Thus he passed, as all things pass. The world continued to make mistakes and pay for them. It continued to follow its own system and suffer the consequences. It continued to act foolishly, to abuse, and, therefore, naturally, to suffer. Its freedom, granted by God, had to remain inviolable. Yet, another seed had been sown, a small impulse joining others in the direction of ascension, which is the liberation from pain. Another example had been given to preserve that freedom—a small example compared to Christ's immense example. It served as a reminder, once again, of the meaning of pain, of the forgotten purpose of His divine sacrifice, which is to trace the path without which there is no redemption, no ascension. The language is rough but honest. One who is sincere and knows the true laws of life and progress cannot speak otherwise. Humanity is free, but there is a law to which it is accountable. If it wishes to overcome pain, it must learn to align itself with the paths of this law, which is the thought and will of God.

The seed had fallen and lay forgotten beneath the earth. Yet within it was the tension of an entire life, concentrated into a force now pressing, seeking to expand. It was a germ ready for development; it was the invocation of a victim calling for a response; it was an offering placed in the heart of God for the good of the world.

This seed had fallen from the holocaust of a life offered with tenacity, passion, and sacrifice, carried to the point of death to aid in the birth of the new civilization of the spirit. The power of the sacrifice from which it was generated and nourished would make it immensely fertile.

* * *

The seed lay there, forgotten in the bosom of the earth, surrendered to the forces of the laws of life that would later reclaim it, urging it to grow, helping it, using it, because it is inevitable that, despite all the world's unconsciousness and resistance, that ascension be fulfilled. It is God's law that spirit conquer matter, light conquer darkness, joy conquer pain, good conquer evil, God triumph over Satan. It is inevitable that the coming of the kingdom of heaven to earth draws ever closer and will ultimately be fulfilled.

END