

My Love Of thee year 2000

A Novel of love and Philosophy

by Georges Réveillac

6-The Marriage.

What did she do to obtain two weeks holidays? I quite believe that she underwent surgery. It seems to me that it was some kind of fashion at that time, amongst the well informed young girls: to avoid all risks of appendicitis which could have thwarted a pregnancy, they used to have their appendix removed. The fact is that she arrived at my house, without warning, on a beautiful evening of the month of October.

A primary school teacher, I « was teaching » at a school in the countryside, in a big village with sweet hedged farmland to the West: Landory. I had rented a little house at the edge of the fields, near a little wood dominating a charming valley, rich in pastures, with extensive fertile lands, of cheerfulness, of scents and of fruits. Its branches have just started to blaze the reddish colours of autumn.

Buried in this flourishing countryside, concealed beneath the hotch potch of greenery; I often harboured the illusion that the evil ones would not come to look for me there. On this planet which sometimes seemed to me too vast, sometimes too little, Landory was my intimate refuge. But I also had the recollection that this shelter had been ripped open during the carnages of the last World War. Thus, if I was well here, at my house, I was thinking that I had to leave, for plenty of reasons, the most pressing was this: the destiny of this little world which I loved so much was a gamble elsewhere, and I wanted « to see ».

Supprimé : existence ?

What is the field of active existence?

*I call « the field of active existence »
that in which we can act. Oh well, you can notice*

that the field of our active existence has become worldwide. Doesn't our Mômmanh request that we try to come out in the best way from that big planetarian mess? She even asks us to go and look beyond.

Supprimé : m

Because, as the Ameridians before the conquest used to ignore the surprise which the unknown ocean could bring to them, we do not know what the intersidereal space is reserving for us.

And if it contains the same surprise as that of the Ameridians: whatever it takes to destroy us?

My teaching day being over, I used to go home. I had « done my teaching » three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon: during the breaks, I had strolled to and fro the courtyard, chatting with my colleagues; I had assured the supervision of the canteen at noon, in exchange for my meal, I had kept my grown-ups an hour longer, for the evening study, to perfect their preparation for the examinations, by making them swallow a supplementary problem and a dictation; I had finally prepared my chart for the following day as well as my lessons. Ah! I was going to forget to correct the copybooks. It was an ordinary day which ended well and I was beginning to enjoy the two or three hours of freedom which were ahead of me.

I had the senior class, and naturally, they were all boys. The co-educational system in our schools was still an exception: therefore the girls were in another school. That is why all my students were boys. The inhabitants of the village, who could be considered as important, all little « bourgeois », sent their children to study in the city, to the elementary, then to the secondary. AND that is why nearly all my students were peasants. They were between eleven to fifteen years of age. Some of them were preparing for their entrance examination to the sixth class, some others the famous « Certificate », the Certificate of the Primary Studies, the test that these sons of the working class had well acquired the « instruction » sufficient for that period of time. In fact, the initiation of the young peasants was marked by two tests: the

« Certificate », and the revision council, republican tests in which one had to be successful to be a real man.

The « Certificate » was the crowning of the primary level studies. One had to do it at the age of fourteen, the end of compulsory schooling, and whoever obtained a pass mark in it was very proud: « Oh! Good God! ». For the occasion, they had the right to some brandy, a « Man's » drink, and there was some in excess.

The Revision Council was an examination of good physical and mental health for which it was necessary to present oneself naked in front of the Mayor and plenty of « Messieurs ». The « Messieurs » were people who in all circumstances spoke correct French and who, everyday, wore shoes, a suit, a tie, and were « intelligent », that is to say cultured and consequently destined to managerial posts. The young peasant, the conscript who had passed successfully in front of the Revision Council was classified « Suitable for military service », that is to say that he would soon have the honour to serve in the French army. « Suitable for the army, In the Name of God »: with this declaration which they declaimed proudly for whoever wanted to hear it, the happy chosen ones finally felt fully fledged men; they were so expected to celebrate in the company of the « conscripts », and to wash down copiously, with plenty of rounds, the happy event.

But History was not trotting: she had already started galloping. She was relegating rapidly in the folklore and in the museums that way of living which my youth had kneaded. As a little ordinary peasant, I had known school in clogs, the trips in the cart, the common room of the little farm with its two big beds, its big chimney and its beaten earth floor, lit by an oil lamp, the water which we used to bring up from the shafts, the poultry which pecked and shook themselves in the yard and on the stony path... And now, you see where we are! The speed and the nature of the changes which have appeared on the menu of these last thirty years are such that I suffer from a permanent indigestion. Less fat, please! But, as the song goes:

« It's not you who are leading the train, It's the train which is leading you »...

However, as regards the changes, I formed part of those who wanted some of them in big numbers! When you will know the original meaning of the expression « All the time and at every opportunity », you will know what sort of world I wanted.

While the peasant complained « all the time and in every opportunity », the factory worker did the same thing « all along the chain »: this last expression which I have just imagined is the equivalent of the first. You know how the factory worker complained, he who all day long, of the week, of the year, and even of the very same life sometimes, in his noisy factory, he remained tied to a manufacturing chain or to the assembly line, the body and the mind totally absorbed in repeating indefinitely the two or three precise actions for which there were still no robots.

Oh yes! Man, that dear child of Mômmanh, so gifted, and who does not know yet the limit of his capabilities, compelled to be nothing else but a living part of the mechanical chain of the factory: it was the last dated of his broken hopes and all those promises of fertile lives once more thrown as food to the business sharks.

The factory worker evaded that slavery at the end of each week, during the two precious days of the weekend; he escaped from them once more in the occasion of numerous public holidays, sometimes stretched by the extended weekends; he finally got to know the total escape during the plentiful weeks of the paid holidays. The less known condition of the peasants, at the same time, was worse.

Most of the time, the peasant was busy working a field, strip by strip, his big clogs weighing down by the sticky land, progressing painfully from one end to the other of the land, coming back in the same way and doing this till all the surface had been entirely done, in the same way the labourer advanced heavily furrow after furrow. This boredom was increased by the physical effort, sometimes painful, which rendered the body heavier still. Having arrived at the end of the field, the peasant was highly tempted to stop to « have a sip », or simply to rest, or still go back home saying: « I shall continue tomorrow, considering that I'm not in good shape. » from which the expression: « All the time at every opportunity »: one could not « drink all

the time and at every opportunity », nor idle about, much less have a nap or go to see his beautiful one at the end of the field!

And it is because, although the cities are more and more distant from the countryside, one hears nevertheless reflections of this type: « Refrain from asking me the time all the time and at every opportunity! », « One must not sound one's horn all the time and at every opportunity! » and even, with a great depth, « One cannot make love all the time at every opportunity ».

Ah well, for me, this expression has kept all the strength of its origins. When I hear it, it always attracts in full light, towards the eye of my conscience, some enduring and painful recollections of my youth as a peasant. Yes, I still see that blasted field and its end often worked till the brink of despair. After having grunted for an hour to hoe and earth up a row of potatoes, I finally reached the end of the field; the only perspective was to grunt all along another row and so on and so forth till the end of the day, then till the end of the week, and start again for all the other heavy manual jobs such as the spreading of the manure, the hoeing, the reaping... till the end of the year, till the end of life.

And do you know that it was not the only sorrow of the peasant? It was not enough to deprive him of the slightest real chance to start a surprising voyage towards the infinities of space and of time, to start to weave his existence in a cloak of stars covered by millions of springs; it was not enough that he had been nailed to the soil, condemned for his whole life, not to have any horizon but the end of his field, it was also necessary for him to suffer and that his body in pain had been disfigured, dirty, worn out prematurely by that work which was too hard. When compared to his great-grandchildren, the youngsters of our time, the peasant of that time was short because his slavery did not allow him enough time to grow up, and he was doomed to a premature death, worn out by an exhausting job. If you do not truly understand what I have wanted to say, take a good spade like ours, solid, quite heavy, and dedicate a little time to turn over the soil of the garden: well ahead of the falling of the night, my message will be inscribed in your flesh.

The Church used to ban work on a Sunday, except when necessary otherwise it was necessary to ask the permission of the Parish Priest. It was the Day of the Lord and also the only day of rest of the week. Ah well, do you know how it was spent? It was necessary to wash oneself – Yes! - in a cauldron of hot water, to go to mass; it was necessary to milk the cows, clean the cowshed and the stable, feed quite frequently during the day all the animals: cows, calves, bulls, horses, pigs, chickens, rabbits..., which did not exempt him at all from preparing the meals for the human beings. Guess how much free time did he have left to widen his horizon?

It is because, on reaching the end of our potato or beetroot field, many a time I happened to have a fit of despair. It is because school had become so important to me, after that day of my infancy when I had gone there out of sheer curiosity: Madame Dorisse, the infants' teacher, had kindly invited me to look in her magic lantern. It was like a box into which one could look through a hole. One could see photos which for me were marvellous: mountains, rivers, black people, cities, and Chinese..., a glimpse of the vast world, inaccessible after the prison which my village stood for. After which, Madame Dorisse had crammed my pocket with biscuits and had sent me back home because I was too young.

Guess what I am thinking of.

From my school, I was expecting my freedom and, since I was not completely selfish, that of my young peasant friends. I hated the slavery of the fields; I refused that pseudo-existence of a mole or an ant. I wanted to see with my own eyes the vast world, and I did not want to be happy with the stories which they related to us. I wanted to taste with my own mouth the amazing flavours: the mere evocation did not give me satisfaction. I wanted to contribute to the development of the machines and expertise, a progress which was already well-committed and which would bring well-being and leisure to the peasants. And even if I had, with my own eyes, to discover that the universe was not turning as it should, I quite had the intention to contribute to rectify its function.

Finally I reckoned that school pulled me out of the slavery of the fields that it led me to a vast world to taste the new pleasures I caught a glimpse of in the books, and finally she rendered me master of my existence. Besides, the expression « to be master of » was part of my peasant language and when I used to tell my father:

« - I am quite free to do what I want, anyway!

- My little boy, you are master of your soup when it is eaten. » he answered me.

The immense call for freedom which, for me, made itself heard at school and encouraged me to study, and I was far from thinking that it would have led me so far away, on tracks which sometimes were difficult and dangerous. For all that, I have never given up: when I believe to have the permission to rest for a long time, it does not take me long before I am spared to get back on the saddle. But does knowledge truly render a person free? What do you think?

In which way is knowledge a liberator? In which way is ignorance a prison?

I asked the question to Mômmanh. Quite often, her answer was confused. I believe that she wanted to say this.

« - Knowledge, is the freedom which is no longer blindfolded. Let us see, I have created you so that you'd be my conscience, my clear perspective on the universe. Do you want to deprive me of this conscience? - Surely no. - Without this knowledge of the world which I beg you to bring to me, my wish for existence cannot find ways to realize itself. It is not free to do what it wants. The chains and the prisons are not the only shackles: ignorance too. »

It is because my return to my native land, as an instructor, was only temporary. I was preparing a new take-off to discover the world. I dedicated a good part of my spare time to inform myself about the possibilities of a career abroad. Was it that perhaps I had to leave alone, without my beloved one? « Ah well, so much the worst! » Since I had finally succeeded to seduce a beautiful girl, I should hope truly, to find another one whose behaviour was not totally disconcerting, where my road led me. Was I dreaming of the Polynesian girls? It seemed to me that it was so. Luckily, « My Love » had not renounced to her prey: I therefore did not have the opportunity to follow to a bitter disillusion this mirage of a beautiful exotic virgin kissing, my majestic feet of a great white sachem, after having washed them.

While waiting, not having the slightest suspicion of the new turn which destiny was going to play on me, I returned peacefully to my house, on a sumptuous autumn evening, dreaming that the mushrooms would become rare but that the time of the chestnuts was nearly there. The air was lively: there would be the dew the following morning, and perhaps even some fog. Behind the little wood with red foliage, the sun was on the verge of setting. It was embracing the sky with an immense firework, with an orgy of colours which moved me. Who was the generous leader of the orchestra? And where? Whoever he was, a thousand thanks!

Was it for that reason that there was an apparition on the threshold of my house? Yes, I know: you are not at all surprised, since you knew it before my arrival. But for me, it was more than a surprise and I was quite close, that evening, to believe again in the supernatural.

She was sitting on the granite doorstep of my house, indifferent to the freshness of the air, although she was sensitive to the cold. In fact, I realised soon that she was shivering, and I know now why she exposed herself to the freshness of the evening: it was « to be better warmed up, my child! »

God! How beautiful she was!

How the theory of the struggle for existence is still nothing
but a hypothesis.

Don't worry, if notwithstanding the fact that I had become a materialistic atheist, I address God just the same. Be assured, there is no sign of madness. When beauty is soon given to me suddenly, fulfilling with one stroke my desires beyond all the hope, that I exclaim: « Yes! I will follow you everywhere. I will never forget», when it is so strong that I will fall on my knees if the fear of being ridiculed will not hold me back, if it is not God, whom therefore do you want me to take as witness?.... Mômmanh? Surely no! I would be showing off, to invoke a hypothesis.

« What?... Well, I agree! I continue my « story. »

She embraced me lovingly as if the tearing apart of our couple had never taken place. With one stroke I was conquered again. No, I was not feeling like a net which fell on me and paralysed my movements: on the contrary, I was feeling a sensation of great freedom, even of release. I warmed her with my body, then I lit the fire in the fireplace and we celebrated our reunion as lovers.

Although we carefully respected the loving ritual which our young experience had taught us, we could not know that evening, ecstatic union of the bodies and the souls. A little disappointed, and vaguely worried, we tried to sleep just the same. Later, we discovered that such a partial failure followed nearly always an extended separation. It was necessary that our two beings would discover themselves, assess themselves again; re-adjust themselves one to the other so that our bodies could in their own way enter in harmony and so they would enjoy the inspiration of a beautiful concert of love.

What is the negative stress? What is the positive stress? What is anxiety?

Reconciliation follows the fight. It is then; a friend said to me, that one finds the pleasure of making love.

Is it necessary therefore to provoke some fights to get to know the best of love? That will be enough to drive you up the wall « because that does so much good when it stops ». But, in what concerns us you could have realised that it is not at all necessary to provoke artificial conflicts. Let's make the best therefore of this opportunity. And as for you, there is a less painful technique which you will know well how to discover.

Mômmanh has put in us two types of stress: the pain when we lose the existence and the happiness when we gain some of it. Two types of anxieties correspond to it: the fear of losing something acquired, which we call « fear », and the hope of gaining new existence, otherwise called the « desire ». Fear gives us the chances of avoiding the catastrophe and the desire helps us to construct happiness.

We enjoy a moment of happiness when stress is over.

Having said that is it better to have to celebrate the armistice of 1918?... of the discoveries of Pasteur?... It is because we classify as « negatives » the first type of stress, related to sorrow and as « positive » the second, linked to happiness.

That does not prevent the negative stress from serving existence: they reveal their weaknesses. But it is better that they produce themselves under the form of anxiety, before the catastrophe. In other words it is better to be afraid of the accident before taking the wheel than when arriving at the morgue.

The outcome of a lovers' fight when it solves itself happily, puts therefore an end to the weakness of their love. It was one more step ahead.

If the peace which was hard to achieve is true, if we make love at that very moment, if we know well how to do it and, finally, if we are rather generous for the right thing to do, therefore our confused flesh must sing a new air, an exquisite music that we have never known yet. We will feel like hearing it.

Do you want an example? Here it is.

My well-beloved Jeanne declared: « If I am going to say « yes »-, if one day our children will have better chances of succeeding in their studies at the catholic

school, I will send them without hesitation to the priests, between the woolly demagogy of the laymen and the success of my children, my choice is done. »

She did it, one more time. There followed a long period of discussions which, too often, led to violent disputes. They ended sometimes with break-ups which I did not know if they were definite and that hurt me.

Finally the day of reconciliation arrives.

This time, it's a true progress. Each one of us has shown himself capable of improving his point of view to do something more reasonable, that is to say a better perception of reality in order to build a better existence for us.

The secular's ideal is a priority, because, without it, our children as well as the future humanity will be in danger: such is the new conviction of my beloved one. The scholastic success is another priority and the bad management which reigns in certain schools does not allow them to reach it: here is the new opinion which I owe to that crisis. We have at least agreed.

A glowing kiss seals the new found peace. This peace seems solid, because it is good, good... We feel the pressing desire to go further in this way.

We chatted while we caressed each other all over.

« - If, in their school, the proportion of the dropouts becomes such that it is not possible to follow completely the course, what shall we do? – We shall look for another secular school for their own good, and that, will not be too far away from us. We will find a means to enrol our children. – Yes, but what if they refuse to enrol them under the pretext that we do not live in the area of that school? We shall find surely a means. Others will follow ...»

The conversation continued peacefully accompanied by caresses which were more and fierier. Soon I remained silent to enjoy attentively the pleasure, especially the one I was giving because it guided my caresses: this way, it does not matter; here and there it is hot; here and there, it's exquisitely burning. Oh my my!...

We found ourselves naked on the bed.

While our souls have given themselves again to each other, our bodies were talking. While feeling each other, they found the best ways to communicate to fulfil their fusion. These contacts are hot, sweet, sources of waves which go flowing like a stream, like a river, like the sea. Electric? I don't know anything about it. Exquisite these waves, in any case. Much better than my grandma's apple pie. I understand now the expression « I have it in my skin. »

Jeanne too is listening to my pleasure. She adjusts her caresses consequently and creates an excitement in certain parts of my body which I did not know to be so...so... much?

« - You call me Erogènes. – Perhaps, but it's a word which does not speak. Let us say that they are the doors to paradise. Yes, dear reader, what else do you wish to know? – Is it truly necessary that each of the two partners looks for the pleasure of the other? Can't it be that each one will have his turn, for example? »

Making love can be compared to a voyage in space. By means of caresses, the two lovers lead to the fusion of the two bodies which provokes a concentration of energy. When that concentration is sufficient, it is enough to stimulate the two detonators so that they explode at the same time, provoking the setting-off of the rocket and its take-off. These explosions are called orgasms. The vagina, the vulva, the clitoris and the penis, surely, can act as detonators.

I will now try to answer your question.

One can, in fact, love a selfish person. And if on condition that you return the favour sometime, it will be much less difficult. It will be necessary however for the selfish person, when he feels the surge of the explosion of pleasure, he must be capable to hoist altruist in his cockpit, otherwise, he will explode all alone and his rocket will remain on the ground. It will be necessary, for the altruist lover, to find the very sensitive spot from where the explosion will take place and that he will know how to caress as one should.

How can selfishness kill love?

Therefore, not a grand trip in the company of a totally selfish person: Mômmanh grants the last reward to the capable lovers, to enrich themselves, to go and draw elsewhere and not in their ego. By this means, she pushes us to enlarge our existential field.

Well done, Mômmanh.

And now, let us return to see love in action.

We stretched ourselves naked, entwined on our bed. Our flesh was caressing ardently. We lay in the bed on the side, me behind her. That position offers plenty of advantages. She puts in contact the greater part of our body: our burning flesh, electrified, exchanging delightful messages. Now I know why women's buttocks undulate and invite us to follow them: they have something to offer. In contact with them I feel again sweet warmth which is not that of the radiator and exquisite surges of electricity take place which I would not find elsewhere. I can also feel with my whole hands the breasts of my beloved one, kiss her mouth at the price of some wriggling, and caress her half open sex with mine.

The fusion of our bodies has started. I penetrate tenderly my dear Jeanne, the beautiful one in which I want to be lost and reborn, the good fairy who has at last

agreed with me. Her welcome is so sweet, so warm, so quivering that I feared I could not wait for the signal to start.

In a technical language, that is called precocious ejaculation. How do you avoid that miserable failure?

Now, I know how. I suppose that my impatience testifies a demand: that of experiencing orgasm. It is enough therefore that I have the strength to renounce to it. In order that it would not be too heroic, I said to myself that I could often, in case of necessity, evacuate my semen « with my hand », later on surely. Thus relieved, I can continue to accompany Jeanne in her pleasure, until the moment when she will be ready to take off. With my sex, with my hands, and with my whole body, I look for the caresses which spark off in her waves of pleasure and flood us too with exquisite warmth.

The longed for moment arrived. Thank God, I could wait for it.

We two explode for a long time, again and again. Our bodies are carried away in a whirlwind of mad embraces which lead us far away, far away...

Two have become one. This two in one is calm, serene, happy. Shall I dare say that it spreads out to the dimensions of the universe? This will be literally a pretension without boundaries. Ah well, I said all the same, because it is that which I feel again.

The time is abolished. Invulnerable, we sail two in One..., both of us in a moment of triumphant eternity.

This grand voyage succeeded after the reshaping of the souls until the fusion of the bodies, in all my life, I have never known anything better. But it could not be granted to us that evening. It was necessary first to clean ourselves well from the nasty quarrel which had separated us.

What are the differences between screwing up and making love?

Oh yes! Love is not a joke, because it is impossible to cheat. Admire, once more, the wisdom of nature. The old blind teacher wants to guide us well while feeling our way towards happiness and ecstasy, provided that our thought would be enough to accept the necessary minimum of humbleness, but it would be in vain to want to cheat in the pleasures of love... She will not grant that one except to those who have won it.

« What? What do you say? How? Thinking of stealing the pleasures of love, it's really a funny idea. But why do it? » My poor friend, it however quite simple: one will make use of the act of carnal love like a drug. One will connect the complementary sexual organs like one plugs in an electrical appliance, the male plugs fitted together in the female plugs, and then one will experience the supreme happiness. One can do it, for example, after having in an inebriated state, crushed some bicycles and their drivers; one can do it after having lost his job through idleness, or still after having sold his house to pay the gambling debts; one can do it to forget, and let life carry on with its open wounds. What the lovers do will not be in the best of cases, anything but a fine champagne of excellent quality and one can buy it not at the grocer's, but in a hotel in the red district zone.

No! What they sell in brothels is a totally different thing.

As I have said to you, - so much worse if ramble on! - Love bursts out when two beings of complementary sexes enrich mutually their existence to such a point that they yearn to copulate. Those there, only will receive the supreme reward because, throughout the dark times, Mômmanh has known that it was good for her majestic desire of *EXISTENCE* : whoever overtakes in order to gain love will be like a crook, having done at least one step in that direction. So, to whoever cheats, his Mômmanh who knows him well is not going to give the ecstasy. At best, he will feel a bitter pleasure made up of regrets of what he has lost while cheating.

Moreover, the waves which irradiate the bodies of the lovers at the moment of the orgasm, and which transport us without a spaceship or a parachute across the stars, the waves unlike anything else are cries of joy which our Mother of the Remotest Ages keeps for us: Mômmanh in person. To one of them she asks:

« So, have you finally found the mother of your children? »

And he answers her sincerely

« - Yes, my Mômmanh. »

To the other, she says:

« - And you, my pretty one, have you finally met the father of your children? »

So, like the burst of an echo a triumphant « yes! », Mômmanh opens her great heart of stars and of ferns.

« - Little does it matter to what type of children you are going to dedicate your life: some small children full of promises, a farm of horses, the struggle against sickness, the restoration of the hungry bodies and of the tired souls, the creations of beauties which carry us away towards happy tomorrows, the tapestry, the cheese shop, the embroidery, the tripe shop,... little does it matter to me! Granted that you have chosen them together and that, you love them, you have enough heart to love yourselves as well. Come, my children, so that I embrace you. »

So, a breathtaking kiss brings to an end the discussion.

How love requires a minimum of altruism

And if two lovers are interested strictly in themselves? Theoretically, such a case is impossible because we are tied to the six aspects of the existence; the three altruistic like the three selfish ones. Well. So, if two lovers practice only the minimum of altruism and a

maximum of selfishness, will they have the blessing of Mômmanh just the same?

We have seen that, this blessing does not come unless the two bodies have given themselves to each other. For that, the most selfish must look for the pleasure of the other lover.

First of all, before arriving there, he has had to seduce him, that is to say grant his « myself-here-now » to the other « myself-here-now », for example, « my house, my garden, my servants, a sumptuously laid table, my prestige... » and the very same wishes of the beloved one.

And before seducing him, he has to render himself attractive by decorating his wedding presents with good baits: goods, well paid and prestigious job, skills, relations, health and physical strength... He has to render himself a »good match ». He has had to tear away from the « now » and work hard for the future.

In brief, even for the selfish person, the search for love imposes a certain renouncement to the « myself-here-now », a minimum dose of altruism.

Why has the natural selection given to man selfishness and altruism?
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But the true question is not there. Why is it that Mômmanh will only bless altruistic love? Through us, it is necessary to say it again; she searches for the six forms of human existence and the three selfish ones form part of it.

Through man, on our little planet, Mômmanh reaches a field of the conscience infinitely vast compared to those which she had known until then, that it was through the things or through the human beings. And remember, my friend reader, the way in which she gets there: through the tunnel which constitutes each one amongst us, 6 billion human beings, 6 billion consciences distinct and necessarily different, obeying each one to that little bit of Mômmanh.

I chose myself as example, myself, among the 6 billion, because it is the only one which I have in my hand.

The tiny bit of Mômmanh who commands me uses my conscience to realise her wish for existence. I call her « my Mômmanh », remember it. She has brought me the memory of the tastes of all my ancestors as from the mineral age, the memory of all that pleased them. My existence consists in repeating those pleasures as much as possible and to invent others like them, even better, more close to the fulfilment, which is perhaps nothing but the control of the infinite in the space of time.

Locked up like this in the interior of my conscience, the biggest of all the prisons, my Mômmanh appreciates above all the existence which she can feel through my senses, concrete therefore, sure, and which at the same time satisfy her own tastes. In one word, my Mômmanh prefers the selfish existence, so close to her. And you, what pleasures do you feel best? Your own? Or those which perhaps your great-grand children will know?

So, do you think that Mômmanh is going to forbid the selfish from loving?

However, her old experience has taught her that selfishness is death. She will therefore grant the priority to altruism. The existence closest to her will be blessed as long as the existence will seem assured far away from her, in space and in time: preferably for the myself-here-now, priority to the other-elsewhere-always.

Therefore, that night, we had not been happy lovers. Frustration woke us up early the following day at the small hours. Our embraced bodies were rather cold when they should have warmed each other mutually. Since the air was very fresh, I lit the fire in the chimney. During that time, Jeanne made the coffee. I took out a round loaf of peasant bread, slices of smoked bacon and some Reinette apples, small and quite miserable but which stung strongly our mouth and forced it to appreciate them. There was also some quite creamy milk of the neighbouring farm and some salted butter. Jeanne had invited herself by surprise, and I could not buy her favourite food which eliminates the fat well before stifling the beauty. She therefore gave herself the exceptional pleasure to devour the same breakfast as myself. The good mood settled in.

You know the extraordinary glues of our time, magic potions which lead back to life the broken porcelains, and which render intact the broken objects, more solid at the glued places than they were before: could a love be patched up that way? I did not believe it. I asked Jeanne about our break up and she answered.

« - Which break up?

- You have already forgotten all those painful never ending scenes and without outcome, after our departure for Austria. And the decision we had to take to part?

- I do not know what you want to talk about. Is it truly important? Do you love me? Here is what matters. Say! Do you love me?

- If I love you? Oh my my!...

- So, why don't you say it?

- Because I prefer to prove it.

- One does not prevent the other. I said it to you well, I! Georges, I will love you all my life.

- I love you, Jeanne! And I will always love you! Whatever happens.

- Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!... It is not frequent but when it gets you, you become funnily strong! »

And naturally, our two bodies met again, each one finding besides the other the spot he had often looked for. His spot! Since our bodies are made of temporarily alive matter, a wise combination of atoms and of molecules, I started to ask the following question: when some hydrogen atoms and those of oxygen precipitate in the arms of one and the other forming water, with such a violence that one hears a great « bang! », do they feel a happiness as big as ours? » Oh yes! My madness, my mad need to understand everything was capable of spoiling the best moments. I was leaning to push her out of the way; at the same time, Jeanne carried me away resolutely on the way to happiness. She had come back; she had always been there, my well-beloved witch.

A thousand times more sure than the words which came out of her mouth, her delightful body of a fairy, in its whole entity, was saying: « I love you! Oh! I love you so much! » Lightning thoughts were crossing my mind: « - In order that she will never cease to love me like this, I will go as far as to walk on all fours and bark like a dog. – Hey there! Aren't you ashamed? If, as it has already happened, you must mutilate your dignity to nourish the hope of being loved, send your lovely one to the devil and without beating around the bush. There are thousands of others. – But finally, blasted kill-joy, I realise: since her arrival, she has not insulted you even once! It is perhaps the Jeanne of the strolls in the Alps who has come back for good. She has chased away the other, the virago of the holidays in Austria, like one drives away a nightmare after a painful awakening. » I had a violent yearning to believe that that last thought was expressing the truth: also without seeing that aspect of fairy tales which she had, I considered her as true.

Suddenly, the beginning of the worries which had aroused in me the curious forgetfulness of my exquisite promise was very easily forgotten. Her body had the taste of chestnuts and it evoked the opera which is played in the autumn sky.

So, we loved each other.

Is it quite reasonable?

The incident which followed our new nuptials should have made me suspicious, but it passed nearly unobserved.

I prepared myself to go to work. So, the virago, the one I had known in Austria, pointed again her wicked chin.

« - Where are you going my love?

- To work.

- Well there you are! You have not wasted any time to take up your old grimy habits! Now that you have screwed up well, you let me fall like an old sock! What a bastard!

- But, my dear, let's see! What happened to you? I have not « screwed up »: we have made love and it was marvellous. So why are you all so upset now? It is just as if we had constructed a beautiful house for us two, and that you destroyed it even before we have lived in it.

- Stop my dear. It is not worth tiring yourself. I don't know what has come over me suddenly. Perhaps the fear of being pregnant. Forget all that do you want to? »

And the great strangeness was erased by a tender kiss.

I left Jeanne at the house, all busy taking hold of the situation, and I went to visit my young friends, for a school day.

The children, lined up in front of the entrance of the class, showed me their hands stretched forth, a face then another: I could conclude that they were properly washed. I felt they were devoured by curiosity, but they kept silent and disciplined and none of them would have dared ask me the slightest of questions which were burning their lips.

At that time, the peasants saw the teacher as a superior person, a « Monsieur » who came down from his coach to come amongst them in the middle of the dung of the cows and tried to teach them, if not them for whom it was too late, at least their children. Although the French Revolution had happened ages ago, sowing across all the countryside the belief that all men are by nature, at all cost, equal, in spite of the praiseworthy effort followed for two centuries, the majority of the peasants, themselves, remained convinced of being by nature inferior men to whom the lottery of inheritance had unluckily given a limited intelligence.

That idea held on to the wrong interpretation of a fact: if they had not « learned well at school », according to them, it was inevitably because they were not « gifted ». In that logic, those who had shown themselves capable of studying in the colleges and in the secondary schools of the city, those about whom one said with

respect that they had gone to « The Big Schools », those were « intelligent ». And the peasants believed that the majority of their children had not received the gift of intelligence since, in spite of all their efforts combined with those of the teacher and the remonstrance of the parents, they did not learn much.

But they were keen on this practical knowledge, authenticated by the famous Certificate of Primary Studies because it contributed a great deal to the improvement of their life. Furthermore, the primary school was also a lottery from where a big hit came out from time to time: an exceptional child, gifted for studies. One came to an arrangement then « to push » him into the « big schools ». Such had been my case.

Therefore, the teacher was supposed to have a superior intelligence. He gave the precious primary instructions » which the peasants appreciated a great deal and, by doing so, he could from time to time, like a happy fisherman sometimes pull out of the water a legendary pike, arouse a beautiful thought of the great class, a Leonardo da Vinci who lay dormant, hidden behind the hedged bushes, at the end of the muddy road. I suppose that all these reasons had contributed to the setting up of the precious rule: one had to respect absolutely the « school teachers. Happy times for the teachers... But this is another story.

To my young brothers, the peasants, my students, I was yearning to give this pleasure which would not have cost me anything: announce that Jeanne was my fiancée who had come from Paris especially to see us, me and my Landoriens, before our imminent marriage. But, after a good moment, my guardian angel » pulled me by my sleeve into my blind conscience. I listened finally to him because he is often a good adviser.

What is the purpose of dreams? Do we have a guardian angel?

But I have not yet introduced my guardian angel. It is no use envying me, because, you have one as well. Mine is called Dionysus.

When I am awake, my Mômmanh is very busy controlling what am I going to do; at the same time, she must supervise the surroundings. She gets important information that she has no time to deal with: so, she stocks it up. At night, when I sleep, she « goes over » them and she integrates into my existence what she judges useful, the most frequent true dreams. The result is sent to my conscience which accepts only a part, the unacceptable is suppressed.

It is often when I awake that Dionysus talks to me, but he can do it even later. That was the case on that day. He called me with insistence like an irritating alarm clock.

« - So? You see well that one must not disturb me now! But what do you want from me, at the end? - You are going to do a great stupidity. Besides, you have already started it. It is not the moment to speak to them about the girl who slept at your house. Certainly no! ... - Ah! And why then? - Because you are not married, hare-brained fellow! - That is a good one, I like that! - Are you mucking about with me? - Oh sorry what an imbecile I am! - Oh! You see: vanity makes you lose your head. - Yes, you have the right to show off. Without you, I will be in a mess. It is even possible that I would have lost my Jeanne. But no: by putting all those problems on my back I could see well if she was keen on me. - In order to know it, you definitely don't need to set her to trial... Life will continue to take care of her freely. In any case, one must not provoke a

lynching by prolonging that impracticable situation. - Still once more, you are right. Thanks for having warned me. I will get even with you. - I ask myself well how! While waiting you would do better to start the lessons: your students are beginning to fidget. »

Dionysos, then, had just reminded me that, according to circumstances, Landory was sometimes an oasis of human warmth where one had better take up his strength, sometimes a hunting place for man.

By facing the brave Landoriens, Jeanne had placed us in a dangerous situation. And I, who should have known it, had committed us headlong in that trap which not going to take long to close. Does love render one stupid?

How an isolated village is a closed field of existence, an existential prison.

At that time, the country communes were still quite often bubbles where the existences of their inhabitants were shut up. The long epoch during which each village was an existential space completely closed, was not too far. The majority of the people, having nothing but their feet to move about, never went beyond the nearby villages. Apart from the dreams, the part of the existence linked to others could fulfil themselves only there, naked under the look of the villagers who knew each other and who saw everything. Therefore, it was dangerous to infringe the rules of the lives of the little existential local bubble.

The modern means of communication, the car especially, and the increase of free time makes it possible now to escape from that trap. But in those times, these two liberators produced very limited effects.

At the village of Landory, the unexpected arrival of Jeanne did not fail to set in motion the process of recognition of a foreign body, or the more so, since that body not only was young and beautiful, but seemed closely linked to that of a teacher, an important member of the tribe of the village.

Did I make believe that I was probably making love to my fiancée? At that time, the people of the countryside considered that that was not decent at all. On the contrary, it was allowed to go to a prostitute, on condition that one was discreet; in return for that reservation, it was also considered as a test of virility, therefore honourable. And this is how the villagers reconciled the puritan and the old religious convictions with the excessively pressing needs of sexual nature.

Furthermore, according to their definition, she who accepted to give herself before marriage was a whore. And if, unfortunately, a child was born then that poor child, would be a scum of the human community, a wretched « son of a bitch ». Besides, the people who grew up in the Islamic tradition still have, quite often, the same convictions, because their religious culture of the past has remained more enduring than ours: their moral rules entrenched have not yet undergone the powerful erosion which modern freedom provokes.

By passing the night at my house, Jeanne had put us in danger. Because what was not decent for a simple villager became intolerable when it was a « school teacher », who had to show a good example to the children. Brought up in a city where one can do pretty much all that he wants, putting aside walking naked in the road, Jeanne could not guess the dangers of the situation. I should have warned her the day before her arrival, and we should have looked together for another shelter for her for the night.

I believed that Jeanne was going to criticise me quite justifiably. Not only did she not do anything, but she did not believe that the danger was real. How was I to convince her, that « stubborn » one ‘?

Now, the gossipers were on the verge of beating their brand tom-tom of the village.

« Do you know the news, Mrs. Tabirou?

- How is that, Mrs. Jordane ?

- The young lady who arrived by bus, yesterday evening?

- The young lady, as you say, dressed up as they do in the cities, made up, with red lipstick on her lips, red on the nails and perhaps even elsewhere, which she shows to the chaps with whom she sleeps.

- Oh lady, I do not know if she has a lot of them. In any case, she has spent the night with Mr. Réveillac.

- Isn't it possible ?... Well that is so!...

- So true that I said it to you, my dear young mothers.

- And you, Reverend parish priest, what do you think of it? She is setting the example, what? What will they become, the young students in there, I ask you?

- My good ladies, how often have I said it? When there is no religion left, everything is allowed: there are no morals left. Didn't I say it to you as well, that that school is the » School of the Devil »? There they are fornicating now, and in public!... The Good God cannot allow that to happen: he will send us a terrible punishment, in other times he has destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because they were living in sin.

- Look here, Reverend, not everybody can live like a saint.

- Listen, Mr. Morvan, you must try just the same. Think of all the explanations that you must give on the Day of the Last Judgement!

- I think about it, Reverend, I think about it! But when you speak of the »School of the Devil », you exaggerate a lot, just the same. I would call it rather the »School of Progress ». Our good peasants are sharper and they live much better since there has been this school. You will not tell me that it is the work of the devil?

- Oh! It is rather crafty! It is for that that they call him « le Malin ».

- Myself, I find that that school teaches them well. And after that, they can go to the catechism and to church whenever they want: religion can find there its explanation... But, after all, the girl who has slept at Mr. Réveillac, could she be perhaps his sister? Or his fiancée? And who can tell you that they slept in the same bed?

- At that age, one is hot blooded. I can bet on whatever you want that they slept together, saying to themselves to warm each other.

- Oh! Madam Noël, how can you know those things? It has been such a long time... You have surely forgotten how it is done, and even what it tasted like.

- Say then, **Monsieur** Morvan, does it suit you to show off! I do not want to bother the Reverend, otherwise I will remind you of some recollections which will make you blush, old crook!...

-Ah well ?... Good heavens!... You must come to confess both of you. And then, Mr. Morvan, I believe that your ideas about school are not too catholic. One cannot be a Christian on Sunday, and an unbeliever the rest of the week. »

In what is the isolated village alienating itself? In what is the city a liberator? In what does the closed village favour the sclerosis and the city the progress?

The tom-tom of the village plays the same role as the national media: it dissects and spreads the news. Then, to incorporate that manna to the collective existence, one waits for the opinion of the wise men of the country known by the inhabitants. These teachers bring a judgement which conforms to that expected by the existential appetites born, brought up, and educated in that place, the « myself » of the village. It is over: no more people can shy away from the standard news unless they face some pressures which can go as far as the unbearable.

Because, in order to assure the collective part of the existence, the one which is linked to the others, requires some common rules. Those which are imperative under the penalty of serious sanctions regard the dominant ideology. The others, linked to the activities, to traditions, to the fashion,... constitute the local culture: here they love the fife and the bouillabaisse; elsewhere it is the accordion and the sausage pancake.

Therefore, in the village of the past where one found himself closed through the lack of transport, it was impossible to escape the eyes of the others, especially to those of the gossipers. In the cities, on the contrary, those of today like those of other times, one would have had to be mad to try to get to know each of the thousands and thousands of inhabitants. Outside his district, each one escapes the look of the others, and consequently, to their existential pressure. In return for some precautions, one can do what he likes.

So the city renders one free. This freedom has two faces: if it favours a crime, it allows also creativity to realise itself. It is a result of progress.

Like this, the process towards infamy had already started. If Jeanne spent one more night at my house, the whole village would have started to reject us. My beloved one did not take long to understand some allusions so much so that she believed to have misunderstood them: «Look here! The whore has not woken up early this morning. The lady! One cannot work by day and by night.» Soon, my

students would cease to look at me in the face; whispering behind my back, always louder, they would stop to greet me, in the village streets, before starting to hurl insults or apple cores across my way, both of them anonymous. Anonymous even the stones which would break our window panes and certain letters which the postman would put, mockingly.

The day would come when one had to leave, hunted by that big family which I loved. I surely wanted to go away, but not in that manner. I wanted the village to accompany us with its wishes that we could come back one day, loaded with the indispensable novelties which we were going to fetch.

It was Mr. Morvan who showed us how to make up for our false step.

Mr. Morvan, the old watchmaker of Landory treated me like the son whom he had lost. The latter, after succeeding brilliantly in his studies, did not want to extend the reprieve which would have allowed him to wait for the end of the War in Algiers. He had left risking his life, like his comrades: he had come back in a coffin.

I do not know where Mr. Morvan had learnt that wisdom not to take anything for granted, not even his life, neither that of his son or of his beloved one. It is what allowed him to continue to live in spite of everything, and to employ to the best the extra years which a robust health had given him. To make his sorrow flow back, instead of invoking death, he chose to fight her by giving strength to the living ones, by means of wise advice and the help he gave them. So if I was proud to receive the support that he would have given to his son, at the same time, I feared the responsibility that there was to carry the intentions of such a wonderful soul. And, do you know it? Not to deceive Mr. Morvan: that duty that nothing ever imposed on me, which I still feel always.

It was a Wednesday. Now, at that time, the students were on holidays on Thursday, from where the expression which made millions dream between themselves: « A four Thursday week ». Since I had a holiday on the following day, I would have had ample time to prepare my lessons: I could then go back to my house

early. As soon as, the class was over, my students were freed, scattered happily like loose horses in a meadow on a spring day, I went to join my beautiful one.

Hardly had I closed the door of my house that Mr. Morvan asked to come in. I knew that he had watched out for my return and I also guessed the aim of his visit. I was happy to have his help: we two, we would have to convince Jeanne.

The « stubborn one » willingly accepted, and even with gratitude, the advice of Mr. Morvan: she had perceived right away the painful wisdom of the old man.

To the leaders of the landorianne opinion, we would introduce her for what she was: my fiancée. « - She has spent a night at my house, without fear! – Let us see! It was a case which couldn't be helped. » Coming from Paris, she could not know that the country peasants still enforced some rather strict rules; as far as I am concerned I had learned them during my infancy, all the years spent in the city had nearly made me forget them; and then, our meeting had taken place quite late, on the threshold of my house, after a long working day for me and a tiring trip for Jeanne who, moreover, was convalescing. In those conditions, we decided to wait, till the following day to dispose of all the time which a good moving into a hotel required: this choice seemed reasonable to them, even more because they themselves were horrified of sudden actions.

« - It may be, but during that unfortunate night that we had spent the two of us under the same roof, and without fear!... Hasn't my fiancée's virtue suffered? – Oh! Come on! It is necessary that the Landoriens have confidence in their school teachers! Without which, where will they go? So, one should have accused the Reverend Parish Priest of sleeping with his maid?... Oh!... »

The cart being nearly out of the ditch where we had emptied it, the three of us went to book a room at the Hôtel des Voyageurs where we had dinner.

Madame Pigeon, the owner, was a superior woman with an opulent built, which did not prevent her from being lively and firmly planted on her solid legs. Her

look was benevolent. She acted equally as the village newspaper and this out of pure generosity: the news which she spread in abundance were entirely free and, above all, they were never inspired by malice.

Naturally, we made use of that good press to diffuse the image which the villagers had to have of those through whom the scandal could arrive: a quite pleasant and promising engaged couple very much attached to Landory. An expert, Madame Pigeon did her utmost to discover our secrets. Monsieur Morvan took the floor every time that we risked committing a blunder. Who was the manipulator? Who was the manipulated? Little does it matter, since the ones like the others, we had only good intentions.

So, like a skilful head of state diffuses on television the image that the people are going to have of him, we let the Landoriens know what they had to think. Madame Pigeon approved that we had not gone on the eve to settle Jeanne in her hotel: at such a late hour, she could not have received my fiancée properly, even more because she was busy with the preparations of a wedding.

Jeanne was not only a Parisian, she was a school psychologist.

« - Ah well? And what does a school psychologist do? Does she cure the mad ones?

- But no, Madame Pigeon. Besides, Mr. Réveillac does not need that type of care.

- I hope so!

- No, I don't take care of the mad. My work consists in searching how the brain of the children works to try and make good students out of them. And even so that they prosper, surely...

- Oh well! Here is a sacred job! You are not close to see the end of it. And where are you going to perform that beautiful job, Miss Jeanne? Not amongst us, I honestly hope, in your interest. Here, the people are still a bit backwards, you know: it would terrify them if one would go rummaging about in their kids' head.

- You are right! Since we do not know big things about the human mind, it is dangerous to want to rummage about it. But quite correctly, because they have a

scientific formation, the psychologists are well warned about that danger. It is because one can trust them. Whatever the case, I will not harm your children because I am here on holidays, for two weeks only. But to be quite at ease, one only has to say that I am a nurse.

- Oh no! Jeanne! One must not lie to them: I am a teacher, just the same! And they trust me!

- Mr. Réveillac is right, miss, one must not lie to them. Isn't it so, Mrs. Pigeon?

- Miss Jeanne was saying that for a just cause. Lies pay a high price, even when one pays only later for them: if you pass for a nurse, one would ask you to cure all the pains of Landory, real and imaginary, and that will only be the beginning of your troubles. No! Definitely not a nurse!

- So. What must one tell them?

- The truth, my dear. Is it so complicated to behave in a simple manner?

- Oh! My goodness!...

- But yes, surely. You are a school psychologist who does not risk bewitching their children, nobody else, except me, because you do not act ruthlessly in this village... »

And while continuing like this, we spread a story, in order to account, quite closely to the truth. After her operation, my fiancée had come to me for two weeks of convalescence. Without which the date was stopped, we had to marry in a very near future. Jeanne would spend her nights at the hotel. She would dedicate her days looking after my home, to do the shopping, to prepare our dinner: in brief, take care of me. The following day, a holiday, we would go together to the city where she would buy some books.

Afterwards, her activities would lead her naturally to meet again plenty of Landoriens: she would take up conversation with them all, even those whose head seemed turned away. Thanks to her talents of a psychologist, she would be so subtle as to shock nobody, whether it was by word or behaviour badly matched with the sweet countryside. Like this, everybody will say that the school teacher had a good chance of marrying such a good girl, « and a pretty one as well! ».

Dinner was excellent: a wedding banquet had taken place in the big hall and the guests of the hotel benefited from it. Alas! Jeanne had to follow her slimming diet, if she did not want to find a kilo of fat which she had tried so hard to eliminate. But, could she upset our generous hostess?

« - A diet? To make yourself ill? Oh! Believe me: if there had been many good things in my plate when I was young, I would have treated myself heartily.

- Surely! But...

- You don't find that good, I bet? Accustomed as you must be to eat confetti salads, haven't you surely lost your appetite?...

- Oh ! Mrs. Pigeon, but it is delicious! I would like to ask you even for the recipe, if it's not a secret.

- Oh! You are not completely broken down. I will give you my recipe tomorrow. You could teach your starving Parisians to eat, because one could consider them as cases of tuberculosis. »

Mrs. Pigeon had found herself a vocation of a foster mother: it was like this that she gave her contribution to the blooming of humanity. The plump flesh and the red dye which her rich and mouth-watering food gave were according to her, sign of good health.

At our times, such a mistress would affectionately be called Eugénie, or « La Génie ». But, as a humble servant doing all sorts of jobs, she had worked hard to become a lady. Calling her « Madame », was simply a question of rendering homage to her courage, her intelligence and her big hearth. It was therefore, with respect and affection: « Madame Pigeon ».

She took Jeanne under her wings and decided to mother her till her departure, so that she would go back to Paris in good shape. Unfortunately, she could not obtain the full success which her efforts deserved, because Jeanne dined, or rather fasted, nearly every evening at my house, in my company.

Those who offered the wedding party, the parents of the bride and the bridegroom invited us to have a « toast » with them and to dance.

It was the blacksmith who was giving in marriage his daughter Yvonne to the young boy Marcel, his chief-worker. He almost did not have any more horses to shoe since the new ones, vulgarly called tractors, were mounted on tyres. So, Marcel assured the re-conversion of the forge into a mechanical agricultural workshop. Marcel and Yvonne got married for life. But yes, it's true! Authorised by the law, forbidden by the Church, divorce was still in every way a taboo in the hearts. If one had chosen wrongly his partner, it could happen, in the worst of cases that love changed into hatred. All during the lifetime, the hearth was a place of suffering, even for the children and madness would prowl around in the blasted house.

It is because the wedding was a big feast shaded in red. The guests were the parents, the friends who, later on, would remind the married couple: « I was at your wedding. Oh! Good blood! It was a beautiful wedding! « And perhaps that would be enough to make them leave the sorrowful path of hatred in order to take up again their painful path of love.

Jeanne did not need me to explain that to her. In the middle of the general happiness, she knew how to encourage the young married couple to love each other well. We danced, we sang, we were wild till the late hours of the night, until the moment when my convalescing fiancée said:

« - Oh ! I am exhausted. I am going to sleep.

- It is all right, my dear. What a party, eh?

- Oh yes! It suits us well! In Paris, one cannot afford that. Oh well, my dear! But where are you going?

- You see well that we are going home! Funny question.

- Are you drunk? You will accompany me till the door of my room, and then you will wisely sleep in your cold bachelor's bed. Are you keen on causing an enormous scandal?

- Dear! Dear! Oh dear! It is true! Blast the devout Catholics! Blast the churchy old

man!

- Aren't you ashamed of insulting these good people, our friends? It is very honourable, besides, to sleep in separate rooms. Don't the nobles sleep like this?

Good night, my dear.

- So, good night!... my beautiful girl...I will find you here for breakfast. »

Jeanne was appreciated by the Landoriens. It is not surprising because she struggled hard to give them the image they made of an ideal fiancée for their young school teacher. She excels in that art.

She had to play then the role of a complex character, a sweet Parisian in love with an enlightened peasant ready for all the efforts to be worthy of him. According to me she pushed the traits a bit too far, by going as far as the uncertain limit where her interlocutor risked telling her: « Are you kidding?... Do you want to take the piss out of me, or what? Do I look so stupid? » she didn't play the following scene in the honour of the vainest of peasant teachers of Landory! That took place in the presence of a cow of which one will never know whether she was coughing or she was choking with laughter.

Jeanne dared ask how the precious animal managed to make out the commands which were given to her: milk, butter, cheese, fresh cream,... and that, while breastfeeding her calf. The cock (or rather the dupe) of the village was over joyous and he answered her.

« - A good well-trained cow does that easily. There where it hurts her most, is there to produce ice-cream in full summer.

- There you are, Mr. Hubert, you are making fun of me. I can very well be a Parisian, but I am not as stupid as that no matter what!

- You mustn't get me wrong, young lady. It is necessary to laugh a little as long as one is alive, because, when one dies, it will be too late. That's it! Tell me, isn't it true?... What, am I not right?

- Certainly, you are right, Mr. Hubert.»

So, Jeanne was adopted by the peasants of Landory. Many expressed their sincere regrets when she had to reach Paris. Shamelessly, she promised to come back in a matter of time and forever. She was soon, announcing, that we were getting married at Landory, would have a big wedding and we would settle there for good. Why did she do promises to them which we did not want to keep? She knew well, however, that I was toying with the idea of leaving to teach in Black Africa which, at that time, was an easy dream to realise. I was hoping to start my career abroad after the next return to school. That misunderstanding was the cause of a little cloud which came back from time to time to spur on our love.

You have seen her, to please our fellow friends; Jeanne does not hesitate to be funny and to invent pleasant stories. She excels in that game, but at the same time she contrasts strongly my obsessive desire of knowledge. You imagine how much that can irritate me. I am still happy that I am not quick tempered.

Therefore, I shared with her a part of my annoyance.

« - Let us see, my dear, don't you see that we do this for laughing?

- Well?... Not truly, no.

- Don't you have the sense of humour?

- Oh, I had it, a long time ago. But the demon which you know took it away from me. I would love to find it again, because it was strangely good. Moreover, I would know that I have found again a good mental health. But it will be long, you know.

- Ah well; to start with, try to appreciate my little explorations of mystifications.

- Well. Since it is just to laugh. »

A little too easily, I let myself be persuaded that it was an innocent game: to laugh, like humour.

What is humour? What is the purpose of humour?
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In fact, Mômmanh gave us the game and humour to relieve our existential anxiety, principally when she becomes uselessly unbearable.

When, through thought, through action, one does his best to reach an objective, if the result is in spite of everything all a flop while the existential consequences are not serious, one says to himself: « What was the point. », and we start laughing.

For example, the clown adjusts his costume, checks his knotted butterfly and introduces himself, all smiling, a magnificent bouquet in his hands; he says: « Happy birthday, my dear-dear, happy... birth...day! » And he receives a household bucket of water on his face. We have had the illusion, a moment, that it is useless to worry a lot in order to succeed his existence since, in every way the result risks escaping us. But it is not necessary that the consequences of the failure be tragic. In the example of the clown, the disappointment of the lovers are minor, even so because it is not I who has to put up with them.

Since it is not necessary that that means: « In all manners, there is nothing to do about it. » It will be desperate instead of being hilarious. Suppose that our clown, failing in an acrobatic number, instead of remaining hanging to

the trapezium by the bottom of the trousers, misses truly his chance and crushes on the ring. The comedy which failed has changed to tragedy.

Anxiety encourages us to look for the best ways to reach our objectives. But there is a moment when that search must stop because it will give nothing else. At that stage, we have to accept the risk of failure. It is to help us get over that step that Mômmanh has given us humour. The failure of a well prepared action without seriousness tells me: « It is better not to demand to master the situation, since there is often the risk of failure. »

Don't demand!

So, thanks to a little bit of humour, I do not demand to succeed, I do not demand anything else, which does not mean at all that I renounce: on the contrary, freed from the anxiety, my will is only stronger about it. I accept, laughingly, the risk of failure, and here I am relaxed, prepared for another efficient action.

And in what concerns me, the demon who lives in me had taken away the gift of Mômmanh that safeguard: I had lost the sense of humour. Faced with any stress, my reply was: « I demand! I demand! I demand to master the situation. » Well, I did not manage to « loosen up ».

I remembered how good it was to laugh, but that pleasure had been denied to me. The possibility of laughing existed still, but contrasted by the barrier which held it back. When a hilarious situation triggered off in spite of the entire reflex which should have been a relief, I certainly laughed... And I suffered: I had tears in my eyes, acute pains burst my sides, I was suffocating, and I was feeling on the verge of a blackout. The only laughter which I knew from now on, that laughter which forced my staunch resistance was a suffering.

Humour is in intimate contact with the struggle for existence. It has to show the failure of the attempts of existence, without necessarily discouraging the actors, by destroying the true or the good. He has to cut to the bone of the existence without hurting it, like a gardener prunes the rose bush. The comic does not have the right to show himself stupid: he must, on the contrary, be a particularly subtle guide. This is why humour is doubtlessly the most difficult of the arts. The clown-acrobat is a good representative of it. He must realise some acrobatic numbers which go from one fiasco to the other, but he must not hurt himself in the slightest way: it is necessary that he is the best of acrobats.

Therefore, it is good that he knows how to provoke laughter. Like this, to whoever seems so, the English humour will contribute to eliminate the panic and to prepare their victory, when the

Germans were drinking to the health of their human brothers of the bombs. Once more it is necessary that it is truly humour.

To testify that deceased apprentice.

The workers of a garage pretended to amuse themselves by sending compressed air, which served ordinarily, to inflate the tyres, in the arse hole of an apprentice. They expected to transform him in a Bibendum, that fat simple good natured bloke made up of tyres which is the emblem of the Michelin firm. Since the patient hardly had any sense of humour, he shouted cries of terror. The other apprentice had the sense of humour. « Look, fellows! I am Bibendum. » laughing like a mad person, he lent his own buttocks for the hilarious experience. « - Ah well? You would tell me. - He died of laughter. »

What does a game serve for?

The game, which is a blank exercise, had the following in common with humour: it is « to laugh ». Both of them, by eliminating the obligation of success, release us from the fear which inhibits us when the stress is too heavy. Besides its function as a relaxant, the game can be used to practice the existence by simulation. The children dedicate a lot of the time to it when they play firemen, Superman, mother and father...

Let us come back to Jeanne, the annoying one. In order not to lose the delights of the peace recently rediscovered, I wanted to admit that the lies which she related to the Landoriens were innocent jokes, « to laugh ». Afterwards, I was obliged to see that it was neither a question of games nor a question of humour. I appreciated the comedy which she played to please our fellow friends for such a long time that it could pass for an amusing game. But it happened quite often that she exceeded the limits and that her lies were loaded with unfortunate risks.

In order to please our fellow friends, a lot and quickly, she had taken the habit of misleading them. Since she had practiced that art for such a long time, she succeeded in it quite well. She was capable of passing for a musician, a chess player, a philosopher, a horticulture expert... She let the people believe that they interested her immensely which generally pleased them a great deal; besides, she would have the pleasure to receive them frequently. « Yes, yes, yes! You must visit us. » How many invitations did she distribute without any follow-up! She gave our fellow friends whatever could please them and led them to say: « Oh my my! What a wonderful girl! » That stratagem cost us, besides some invitations which Jeanne accepted willingly and which she forgot to return. But, besides the fact that it was dishonest, it compelled us to change often the relations, depriving ourselves also of true friends.

I wished that in the others' hearts, our existence was true. Those false purchases done in a fraudulent manner repelled me. Luckily, afterwards, Jeanne granted me a minimum of concessions in that domain.

Later on, I tried to understand that behaviour. I discovered that Jeanne had developed an excessive attachment to the « appearance » which overwhelmed the « being ». With those results, I was hardly more advanced. Why? Why was my beloved acting like this?

She did not know anything about it herself. It was a made-up vice hidden in the subconscious. We had to advance as far as the irreparable so that we could accede to the secret drawer of her soul and evacuate the stench.

During those happy days at Landory, except for the misunderstanding that I am going to evoke, there were no quarrels between Jeanne and myself. Those two weeks passed like an enchantment.

During the day, while I was in class, she looked after the house, she washed our linen, and she prepared the evening meal. We would go together to do the shopping. Sometimes, I found that she had done much more than her share of work, even so because she was convalescing, don't forget that. Like this, one evening, I observed that she had polished all my boots, cleaned my car from top to bottom, and even polished the car body, cleaned all the window panes of the house...She seemed quite tired, her hands were reddish, her hair in disorder and her make-up in a mess like the very old paint of certain kitchens. Therefore where had her beauty gone?

« - You must not work so hard, my dear, look in what state you are. It is enough that you do your part.

- I do not ask for anything better, my dear. So which is my part?

- Since you are not working at this moment...

- And what do I do at home, what does one call it?

- Work, surely, very much of it and too heavy. So I correct that error in our current language: since you remain at home, you must do more work there than in normal times, since you are convalescing...

- Since I am convalescing, my share of housework will be the same like in ordinary times, when I go to work.

- Is that quite true? You speak as if we are going « to get married again ». Isn't it only a fable to deceive the Landoriens?

- I will tell you soon what it is. For the time being, let us do like.... Do you mind?

- How do you know that I will accept to marry you?

- I know it: it is everything. Am I not right?

- Yes, you are right. You have trapped me once again in your net.

- Ah! Men. If you knew how easy it is to deceive you? I have only to snap my fingers and there are fifty of them who follow me.

- Aren't you being a bit pretentious?

- Not in this field. But it's you I love my little country bumpkin.

- Thank you for the country bumpkin.
- You are my little country land: deep, honest, calm and level-headed. I trust you. You come from a world where nature, the houses and the families proceed along the centuries, while my suburb, is also changing like the waves on the water. That continuity is worth at least a little bit of a problem...
- Is it true that you came to explore in my country, before the chances took charge of us?
- It is true: I came to spend a week in your grove and I quite liked the natives, especially the Normaliens.
- Say then, you have done some efforts to choose me.
- Perhaps, but above all don't consider yourself indispensable. Well! I will tell you soon if I want to marry you. While waiting, let us pretend « it is yes ». Do you want? Yes... if I were your wife and if I had to assure each day my eight hours of work, what would be my share of housework at my house?
- If we were married, in normal times, you will do the kitchen, the housework, the washing of the linen and the ironing...
- And you?
- We share the shopping and I will help you sometimes with the housework. It is I who will assure the maintenance of the appliances...as well as the odd jobs. I would look after the car, alone. I will manage our budget and I will take care of all the paperwork. I will do all the work in the garden when we shall have one.
- I would love to do some gardening too, sometimes.
- Ah well, you can give me a helping hand when you feel like it.
- And can I plant what I like?
- Probably: we will discuss it and we will come to an agreement.
- And when I will be too tired, will you help me do my part?
- As far as it is possible, yes. There you are! Since you are quite weary this evening, rest. It is I who will do the crockery. Besides... I will do it often.
- Promise?
- Promise.
- Let us see! Will you not kiss me, ugly as I am?
- But yes. When you are worn out and black like a chimney sweeper, I love you just the same.
- I am ugly. Don't kiss me, I beg of you. Take me rather in your arms »

It seems, now, that those two weeks passed quickly. It is because there were not any outstanding events, before the big final decision. There were some rainy days during which I made the sun go down in the hearth under the form of happy blazing fire of beech. The sky granted us some baroque operas of autumn. Since it did not rain much, we could sometimes explore the wooded hedges and the hollow tracks in search of mushrooms or chestnuts. The Lake of the Roche Dure was inhabited by moving reflections, reddish and bluish, wavy under the stormy strokes of the comb: it seemed to contain, quite some curious stories which one had to refrain from hearing before the winter fossilised itself completely in a shroud of ice.

In the evening, we read a little and we talked: we had so many projects! Virtual projects, because we continued to « act as if it were yes »: as if our deep disagreements had not been placed temporarily in parenthesis.

Like a butterfly after the metamorphosis, a third Jeanne was revealing itself.

The first, that of love at first sight in the mountain: she had captured me by making me believe that I was her god, and then she controlled my state of dependence by throwing me over the Olympus. The second had hardly anything in common with the first except for the name and the identity card: she had shown herself so odious that I did not suffer much to leave her. Finally, there was the third Jeanne who seemed to do with me the apprenticeship of life in common.

Was one of the three the true one? Not sure: a fourth could come out from the box of mischief.

There is near Landory, a modest and very old chapel where, it seems, that the pilgrims of the Middle Ages stopped to pray. Its granite stones having acquired a sheen throughout the years, welcomed throughout the long time the moss and the lichens. An enclosure of grass surrounds it, itself being belted by beech trees and oaks. One can see there an old one still green, a hawthorn so old that it has the same height as a tree: one could say that she saw the last Roman soldiers of our region. Below, in the meadows, the little streamlet murmurs and it hollows out here its bed

for thousands and thousands of years, creating obstinately its green ribbon of nature in the armoricaine rocks.

It's there where Jeanne led me the day of her departure. When I knew why, I found out that her choice was good: in that place, Mômmanh has seen passing such a big number of human beings and of events that it was a place inhabited by wisdom, a good place for important decisions.

She had adorned herself with an exquisite simplicity which highlighted the expressions of her face. At that time, there I read the one who had released the love at first sight: the air of being at times surprises, amused, and ravished by enjoying life wholeheartedly. I was a captive. I then sat next to her. Her expression changed as she had done so often, to such a point that I had the impression that I had somebody else by my side. So, with excessive seriousness, which changed her beauty, she announced: « Georges, I feel well with you. Moreover, listen to me well, because I felt bad till I arrived there: let us cease to act « as if yes », let us get married. »

Carried away by I don't know which stupid joy, I decided to marry Jeanne as soon as possible and to sow in her tummy my contribution to the little man who Mômmanh would have entrusted us with soon. The life which beforehand had appeared of a terrifying complexity, froth with hunting traps had become quite simple.

How the subconscious which sometimes governs us is not always bad.
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What sort of faith encouraged me to charge along in the fog? You have not forgotten Dionysus, my very precious guardian angel, but who, all the same, is mistaken sometimes: ah well, it is perhaps him who led me in that road without return.

What an adventure!

Afterwards, everything proceeded quickly. In the heart of winter, we were married.

After we did what was necessary to do for that, our Mômmanh placed in my Loved One's tummy the unknown which would become our first child.

It wasn't a matter to boast about, because it was truly very easy, even for Jeanne who had to carry it. But, during two or three decades, helping that child to become a man of his times, that is to say, a man of the future, behold that it could be sometimes heavy to carry.