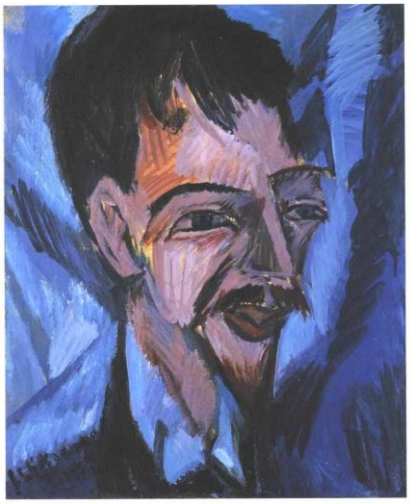
Alfred Doeblin



Beyond Alexanderplatz

ALFRED DÖBLIN

GERMAN MASQUERADE

WRITINGS ON POLITICS, LIFE, AND LITERATURE IN CHAOTIC TIMES

Edited and translated by

C.D. Godwin

https://beyond-alexanderplatz.com

Alfred Döblin (10 August 1878 – 26 June 1957) has only slowly become recognised as one of the greatest 20th century writers in German. His works encompass epic fictions, novels, short stories, political essays and journalism, natural philosophy, the theory and practice of literary creation, and autobiographical excursions. His many-sided, controversial and even contradictory ideas made him a lightning-conductor for the philosophical and political confusions that permeated 20th century Europe.

Smart new editions of Döblin's works appear every decade or two in German, and a stream of dissertations and major overviews reveal his achievements in more nuanced ways than earlier critiques polarised between hagiography and ignorant dismissal.

In the Anglosphere Döblin remains known, if at all, for only one work: *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Those few of his other works that have been translated into English are not easily found. Hence publishers, editors and critics have no easy basis to evaluate his merits, and "because Döblin is unknown, he shall remain unknown."

Döblin's non-fiction writings provide indispensable glimpses into his mind and character as he grapples with catastrophes, confusions and controversies in his own life and in the wider world of the chaotic 20th century.

C. D. Godwin translated Döblin's first great epic novel, *The Three Leaps of Wang Lun*, some 30 years ago (2nd ed. NY Review Books 2015). Since retiring in 2012 he has translated four more epics (*Wallenstein*, *Mountains Oceans Giants*, *Manas*, and *The Amazonas Trilogy*) as well as numerous essays by Döblin. Several excerpts have been published by The Brooklyn Rail. The futuristic dystopia *Mountains Oceans Giants* and the free-verse epic *Manas* will be published in early 2021 by Galileo. The website https://beyond-alexanderplatz.com offers translations and commentaries on Döblin and his contemporaries.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the six decades of his writing life, Alfred Döblin produced such quantities of output covering such varied genres and themes that even now, after a half-century or more of vigorous work by German researchers and critics (plus a few outside Germany), no comprehensive overview has yet emerged, and indeed may never prove feasible. Readers who become hooked by Döblin find, as they explore, constant surprises that invite ongoing revaluations. But those who do not comfortably read German have only a tiny sample of his works to go on.

In the English-speaking world, Döblin remains known, by and large, for only one work: his big-city novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. A few of his other major fictions have been translated (*The Three Leaps of Wang Lun*, *November 1918*, *Tales of a Long Night*) but are barely visible. Almost none of his non-fiction has appeared in English, and the autobiographical accounts *Journey to Poland* and *Destiny's Journey* have both been out of print for thirty years.

The aim of this selection from Döblin's wide-ranging non-fiction is to introduce to Anglophone readers a voice that represents both an acute individual sensibility and a kind of filter into which there flowed many of the currents of 20th century European culture, with all their confusions and contradictions. The selection focuses on three broad areas: politics, life, and literature. Döblin's philosophy of nature and his views on religion appear incidentally in a few places, but are beyond the scope of this volume.

Although Döblin, while still at school, read avidly in the philosophical and cultural currents of the late 19th century – a habit which endeared him not at all to the Prussian functionaries who staffed and inspected the school – for the first decade of his adult life his principal interest was in medicine. After qualifying as a neurologist in 1905 he published frequently in professional journals. But he also cultivated contacts with leading avant-garde writers and artists such as Else Lasker–Schüler and Herwarth Walden, and contributed enthusiastically to the latter's influential Modernist periodical *Der Sturm*.

It was not until 1912, when he was in his mid-30s, that a "damburst of creative energy" raised writing to at least an equal partner in his two professions. In that year he married and started a family, and began writing his first epic novel, which not only depicted an exotic civilisation entirely in its own terms as if Europe never existed, but did so in a language of extraordinary originality and power. He complerted it just before the First World War broke out; it was not published until 1916.

[To be continued]

PRE-WAR

The first three items pre-date the Great War, the 20th century's great destroyer of empires and fomenter of revolutions, which demonstrated the amazing new capacities for human mayhem made available by the Industrial Revolution. Revulsion at the senseless waste and its after-effects on Europe and the world is frequently evident in Döblin's works from 1916 to the end of his life.

Fabulations presents excerpts from the 1905 thesis that qualified Döblin as a neurologist. The excerpts focus on an aspect relevant to both of Döblin's professions: the remarkable ability of a patient with advanced alcoholism to fabulate completely false statements of where he is, and why, and who he has just met, while fluently explaining away obvious contradictions.

The vigorous riposte to Marinetti reveals Döblin's self-confidence in his own approach to the reinvigoration of language and narrative; by Spring 1913 he had almost completed his first epic novel *The Three Leaps of Wang Lun*. (The *Dedication* in *Wang Lun* reflects one of the Futurist pictures – Boccioni's 'The Street Enters the House' – exhibited in Berlin in 1912, where Döblin had first met Marinetti.)

To novelists and their critics is the earliest of what would become several broadsides fired by Döblin against mainstream "literature", advocating a new approach founded on the epic tradition.

FABULATIONS
1905

Anamnesia

Patient E.F.G., farmer, 54, Prot., no family history of anamnesia.

Very good physical and mental disposition, married 1875, 4 children, happy marriage. Well regarded in the village as orphan warden. Gradually worsening alcoholism. Hallucinations starting 4 years ago. Children report "delirium" 2 years ago, ascites and oedema since last year, improved by hospital stay. Said to be "not quite right" since the delirium. Mental condition varies according to alcohol intake. After much drinking expresses notions of jealousy, which when comparatively sober he admits are baseless. Under the effects of abstinence, in July 1904 sudden onset of confusion, loss of orientation, motor agitation, restlessness, insomnia, raised temperature. Admitted to clinic on 18 July.

Findings and Progression

Patient is amicable, comes willingly to the testing room.

Physical: [...]

Mental: Patient unable to orient himself. Believes the doctor is an acquaintance with whom he recently travelled to Schopfheim; he is here in Colmar for a wedding; it is February, 6 degrees of frost. His answers come promptly and amicably, patient is in an excellent mood. Says he is 29 years old, but then provides his correct birth year and age. When the same questions are repeated a little later, different answers are given. When the patient is unoccupied, he leaves the bed, staggers across the room, and every time lets himself be led back to bed.

19 July: Believes the doctor is a different acquaintance; states that he fed the cows early that morning, and then made hay. How old? "24." When born? "55, or 50." When did he do national service? "1850." Are you ill? "That's possible. It's been two years since I was taken by it." Where, here? "In a cellar tavern in Hasel."

23 July: Feels ill (lungs rattling), takes the doctor for parson come to read Last Rites; gives fervent thanks, calmly says goodbye.

24 July: Increasing confusion. Keeps getting out of bed to see to livestock wandering about the room. [...]

19 August: Wants to attend "parade", keeps leaving his bed, mood lively, but emotional in the evening. [...]

25 August: Patient now and then recognises the doctor. [...]

First exploration

24 November 1904: Does not recognise the investigator, asks courteously to whom he owes the pleasure, very happy to meet. Gestures to the orderly to bring a chair and scolds him for his inattention. When the investigator asserts that he knows the patient, and calls him by name to prove it, patient ponders a long while, then addresses the investigator as an acquaintance with whom he sat in a tavern in Hasel two or three years ago. It was a fleeting acquaintance, he knows nothing further of it.

He claims to be now in Hasel, the year is 1856, autumn, and he himself was born in 1856. He was in the war in 1870 (true), names the correct regiment. Married directly after the war, in 1856. When alerted to the contradiction, he declares with a laugh that it can't be true, the investigator should check again in his papers. He is adequately oriented to geographical bearings. But the reigning emperor is Frederick V,[1] he knows him personally, saw him in the war. He knows about religions. Luther founded the Protestant faith, he saw Luther around 20 years ago in Freiburg. Patient did not speak with him, for as a simple farmer he could not present himself to Luther. Luther was a small strong man with a firm voice, they were crowding around him. He handles the basic times table accurately but not quickly; he always repeats the question in a loud voice. He is unable to solve bigger problems. E.g. 6 x 13. Patient gives 6 x 10 = 60, then 6 x 3 = 18, and then says: "Makes 18." When reminded of the previous calculation, he starts again, then forgets the first number and asks for paper.

Asked again where he is now he replies: "In a tavern in Todtmoosau." Says that investigator is a notary with whom he is discussing all kinds of serious matters. He started out at 10 a.m. from Hasel to Todtmoosau. And now it is 12 noon. "But didn't you have lunch?" Yes, right, at home, now it's 5 in the afternoon and he'll have a coffee.

Patient follows the investigator's questions and objections attentively, undisturbed by interjections from other patients, the coming and going of orderlies, the coffee trolley, lighting up.

He promptly grasps what he is being asked, immediately and without effort understands the contradictions pointed out to him. When the investigator deliberately misunderstands him, the patient corrects him.

Only what is pertinent to the question is answered, one or two sentences. Then the patient waits expectantly for the next question. Answers are given with unhesitating certainty.

25 November: Patient does not recognise the investigator. Challenged to remember, he says: "Oh yes, you're the notary, of course, I know you, know you for sure, sir." Starts to cry, and in the following adopts now a formal tone, now sobs for half a minute at a time. Investigator is supposed to read out a Will left by a recently deceased relative. We are in Hasel town hall. He came here this morning, he says, having loaded up the previous evening. He gives a precise account of his route from

[1] No such emperor.

home to the town hall; he met no one along the way. “But how is it you’re lying in bed in the town hall?” Well, that’s the way they do it in Hasel, it’s often the case when there’s a need, and he is ill after all, has TB of the bones and brain. Patient is given a perception test: keys, matchbox, books, playing cards, photographs are correctly recognised at once; likewise very varied objects in a picture book, domestic animals and some wild animals. Patient also knows how to use the key to the briefcase etc. A picture of a lion elicits only the word “lion”; he does not know what kind of animal it is, what it does. Asked: “Does the lion crow?” he replies: “It roars.” [...]

26 February: Patient has met the investigator once before, but does not know when or where. Investigator knows all about cattle, right, he’s the vet. We are now on a ship in North America. “What gives you that idea?” There’s a constant rocking. The trees outside show we’re in harbour. What year? Doesn’t know, but it’s not 1856 or 1904. This morning he set out from St Louis after a splendid breakfast there, describes the breakfast, chocolates etc. The road was long, like that from Hasel to Basel. He was sent to America by the Hasel Union, to buy a cow, he set off from Hasel four months ago. The people lying here are all sick, they have their temperature taken so it can be compared with the cow’s temperature. This is so the cow can be kept at the right temperature. The cow is stowed lower in the ship, he’s already been to see it today, and heard it mooing. Investigator should go right away and take a look. Investigator is not a doctor for humans. The doctor’s already been today, a big gentleman, name’s Rhein, an American, he has been for a walk with him. The topic of their conversation was the sale of a bed in the next cabin, which has been bought by an agent in Germany. Doctor is interested in this bed; patient holds firm to his misperception for an hour while other perception tests are made: “I can’t read now, it’s dark on the ship, they ought to light the lanterns.”

A perception test is conducted using coloured slips of paper, numbers (black on white), picture books in colour and black and white, a hymn book. The objects are looked at but not named. The patient is alerted that he will be asked questions about the objects immediately after seeing them. After intervals of varying length, during which the above conversation is pursued, a question is posed and the object again presented.

Known animals: cock, dog, cat, mouse are recognised after 1½ minutes, asked before this (after 1 minute) what he has seen, he replies that nothing has been shown him, the pictures he recognises again were shown to him a quarter or half an hour ago. The investigator, who has just turned away with the picture books to ask the orderly for light, is no longer recognised. A giraffe is not identified at all, when it has been shown him and he has repeated the name out loud; it is presented three more times during the examination. The patient fails to recognise it each time. The animals are either coloured or in black and white; the patient cannot recall whether they are in colour, or what colour, as soon as the book is closed; at the same time he knows it was a cat etc. The action, the stance, the surroundings must be described as they appear in the picture: according to the patient the cat has seized a little mouse in its right front paw, quickly pulled it close and eaten it up. (In fact the cat is sitting in front of a mouse trap

with a mouse in it.) When he retorts that there can be only one animal in the picture, he cannot be persuaded. Of a tree shown quite isolated in the picture he asserts: a snake has twined itself around it. This snake is mentioned every time later, after brief reflection, when he has been unable spontaneously to name any animal actually seen. Asked if he has not seen any cat or mouse, he says: "Yes, there were lots of cats there, big cats and really small ones." (There was ever only one cat picture.)

He claims to know the colour of the cock, but gives the wrong colour. The cock, shown without anything around it, is according to the patient standing on a little dungheap with a hen sitting beside it that the cock is ready to jump on. He states exactly where the hen was sitting. Five minutes later, asked about the cock, he says it had jumped about, turned head over heels and been quite wild. When shown the cock, he says he has already seen this, but this wasn't the one he meant, and he searched in the book for the other cock. The cat, too, was a different one before. […]

27 November: Patient does not recognise investigator. He is now in the port of St Louis. Describes his outings today. With vigorous contradictions and suggestive indications of the room, the orderly, the trees, etc., we succeed in making him believe he is in Hasel. "Yes, but I thought I was in America. – But it must be true if you say so." "What is this building called?" patient asks. Investigator: "But surely you know the tavern called the Green Lamb?" "No I don't. It must be new. You must be the proprietor?" "Yes. Now tell me what the building looks like from outside." Patient: "Well, it's a fine big building with lots of steps. A very fine building it is, and there's a garden." Investigator: "Have you tried our green lamb sausage yet?" Patient: "Yes, I've eaten that. It's famous everywhere, lamb sausage." Investigator: "And how's the wine?" "It's expensive in America." Investigator: "But we're in Hasel." "In Hasel?" "Yes, indeed. In Hasel the wine's good and not expensive." […]

3 December: Does not recognise investigator. We are in St Louis. We write 1890, he is 90 years old. Born 1850. The Ten Commandments are called January, February, March, January, February. – He calls out to the "serving lad" to go down and look at the cow. "Where are we?" "In Constantinople." What is he doing there? He got married here, he says, and went to school here too. The year has five months, up to May, he can rattle off the rest fluently. The other months don't belong to the year, they've been presented to the "most honourable Prince Bismarck" as a gift. "And what should Prince Bismarck do with the months?" He lends them out to deserving citizens. A month has a long and black appearance. The month has 36 weeks, each week 12 days, the month 250 month days. –

Patient feels very weary today. He has already unloaded manure, driven into town, fell off the cart onto his side. Into which town? Thinks for almost a minute, then: "Into a fine big town." "Hasel?" "No." "St Louis?" "Yes, St Louis." […]

5 December: Has seen the investigator before. Where, he doesn't know. He thinks it was when he was buying cattle, investigator is a vet. Recalls a visit by relatives the day before, names almost all of them correctly. Cannot give any details of what they talked

about. Again a severe coughing fit; he calls the orderly and says: “Send a telegram to my home.” He is ill, the doctor has been. Cannot provide details of the doctor’s appearance or name. He is in hospital in Hasel. He only said send a telegram, what he meant was, send someone. Children are making a row outside. (It’s patients shouting in the bathroom.) He is “in his 50s”, born 1850, it could be 1895 now. “Where were you this morning?” “Lying down.” “Tell me something about your life.” Was in the war of 1870, parents both dead, he is a district administrator in Hasel and an orphan warden. He is impatient at having to lie here, and instructs the investigator to wag a finger at his son in law and tell him to look well after the cow. He was already in this hospital a week or two ago because he had trouble walking, and pains everywhere. It was not this room, that room was on the opposite side of the corridor. […]

Final exploration

21 February 1905: Patient does not recognise investigator. Patient is at home now with his parents, both are alive. The mother is 40 years old; he too. Father is still alive “as long as he hasn’t just this moment died.” The other patients are workers who have to be looked after for all sorts of ailments; the new law requires them all to be insured. The orderly is his son in law. […]

Commentary

[…] In all his confabulations the patient used conversational forms of someone well used to dealing with people, now and then with an official flavour (e.g. has been an orphan warden); his demeanour always corresponded with his actual age and earlier activities, never with his paramnesia. […]

The confabulation made use mostly of everyday memories. […] The patient’s suggestibility became evident many times, based on the fact that the fabulated thinking is only loosely associated and any other definite notion can be substituted for it. But the patient always returns to his own fabulation, no doubt swayed by the emotion that formed the starting point of the fabulation.

The tenacity of the individual fabulation systems is variable; some last one or two days, others weeks. The systems are of little consequence, […] contradictions pertain mostly to time data. But the coarser framework of the system is consequential. The investigator’s blue briefcase and his notetaking lead to the notary, then the Will, then the town hall, then the order to load up, etc. Even obvious contradictions with the current situation – e.g. that the patient is not lying in bed but is in the town hall – are brought forcibly within the system.

[…]

FUTURISTIC WORD-TECHNIQUE: OPEN LETTER TO F. T. MARINETTI
Der Sturm [1](March 1913)

Dear Marinetti, [2]

[..] I don't dispute your legitimate right to stir us up. You have energy, hardness, masculinity, which should be unleashed with pleasure on a literature bursting with eroticism, hypochondria, obliqueness and cruelties. [...] We both want no prettifying, no decorativeness, no style, nothing external, but rather hardness, coolness and fire, [...] the transcendental and the shattering. [...] Whatever is not direct, not immediate, not surfeited with objectivity, we both abjure. [...]

[...]When Baudelaire lets rhythm overpower him and he speaks through the mouth of its movements, floats on his back in the waves, he knows what he's doing. [...] Surely you can't mean there's only one true reality, and identify the world of your automobiles, aeroplanes and machine guns with the World? [...] For a moment you forgot why the rhythms and verse-art of Baudelaire-Mallarmé are good, necessary and heavenly: because Art also delivers narcotics, stimulants, can reveal what's above and below reality, because in this heightened tone, this scattering and this drifting descent lie intoxication and flight – really, you haven't flown enough in aeroplanes – because calmly, beneath the music of the words, the "objective" content, the "material" content can become contentless, meaningless, can retreat, evaporate. This and other music drags itself only wearily to the "things" that come knocking about behind it. Our German mystics have made endless such poems, with baffling hints of a darker reality behind; all they did with their words was jingle and whoosh. [...]

It's clear what you want – even if you did throw the baby out with the bathwater. The old song: we must approach closer to life. Life offers colossal treasures, and no shovel is needed to unearth them. Not only do we shoulder no tools: we go powdered in lacquered shoes and perfumed shirts down into the mines. In your haste you run past with an actual pick, leather clothes and a lamp. [...] Really I shouldn't polemicise against you, for it's all too clear for whose sake you err, for your own sake, for the sake of a few descriptions of battles, the tempo and noise of which you in fact bring out splendidly. But [...] there are other things than battles and – among ourselves – one can "make" a battle something quite different from what you have made.

But you're at your worst, you're most dangerous in your monomania, [...] when you bear down on syntax for the sake of battle-vividness. I find this kind of generalising horrible. How do you understand adjective, adverb! In a complete sentence there are various valences; several sentence-functionaries are on duty, now the subject, now the verb, now the adverb. You can increase the momentum of a word, or weaken it. You

[1] *Der Sturm*: Modernist journal (1910-32) founded by Herwarth Walden; Döblin was a frequent contributor.

[2] F T Marinetti (1876-1944): wealthy writer, aviator, glorifier of war, founder of Futurism; wrote the "Futurist Manifesto" as well as a Fascist Manifesto, and a novel *Mafarka the Futurist* (1910).

can shorten sentences, can roll along in periods, can put a single word, substantive, adjective, verb, adverb, and exactly in this way you come extraordinarily close to reality. [...] We don't all want to roar, shoot, clatter; surely you'll permit me to drink hot almond milk or eat a tart with cream. [...]

I say: your battle can be done much better. Your battle is from start to finish stuffed full of images, analogies, similes. Good, but it doesn't strike me as very modern, it's right doughty old literature. [...] It's easy to call generals an "island", have heads fly like footballs, torn bellies spray like watering-cans. Gimmicks! Antiquated! Museum! Where are these heads, what's with the bellies!? And you call yourself a Futurist? It's bad aestheticism! Things are one of a kind: a belly is a belly and not a watering-can: that's the ABC of the Naturalist, the real direct artist. To hold back from images: that's the problem for the prose writer. You really didn't need, in presenting that confusion of geometry, observations, literary reminiscences, psychologisms, to go to such menacing extravagance. The "island" of generals is a banal bleached image – and here I'll show you what, how little, your telegram-style can contribute. You give short catchwords to the head word, labels to many of your freestanding substantives: heads-footballs, bellies-watering cans etc. How cosy and trivial; they may be images, associations, indirections, but that's all. For you overestimate your listeners, your readers; you push onto them your task of forming this image-material. Some of your sequences of associations I couldn't understand, and why should I bother if you don't take the trouble to set them out comprehensibly: the catastrophe of missing punctuation, missing syntax. [...] Every couple of lines we can see: you lose the syntax, hunt around for it, you coerce, you violate your notions, leave them incomprehensible in order not to contravene the principle. This is barbarism against art; methods have no place in art, madness would be better. And what does your adjective-free, verbless, adverbless "generals-island" say to me, and the whole succession of unbound substantives that step nakedly across like shorn poodles? Everything, almost everything is left dangling in undefined emptiness. "General" means nothing to me, adding "island" doesn't help; maybe in your head it all makes sense, but it hasn't emerged, hasn't been written, hasn't blossomed to linguistic reality – with or without full stops, I don't care. I don't just want to hear trumtrum tateterata fifty times, which requires no great linguistic mastery, but to see your generals, your Arabs – but you're incapable of showing them to me. [...] A general can be brought to life by a movement, must, must be presented so or it's all just verbiage. Your cavalry floats without horses or soldiers through empty space; no vibrating ground or resisting air, just "cavalry"; I can do nothing with it; it's wan and empty like "sun", "spirit", totally abstract. [...]

Dear Marinetti, [...] no use wasting your gifts of persuasion on us, who also write. People aim at vividness, concentration and intensity in many ways; your way is certainly not the best, barely even good. Bestir yourself, learn from us! [...] Never forget there's no art, only artists, that each grows in his own way, each must be careful how he jumps around the others. [...] You tend your Futurism. I'll tend my Döblinism.

TO NOVELISTS AND THEIR CRITICS: THE BERLIN PROGRAMME
Der Sturm (May 1913)

THE ARTIST toils away in his isolated cell. He himself is two-thirds self-deception and blather. (The door is open for discussion.)

Certain things remain immovable over Time: Homer is still enjoyed today; art conserves; but in the course of centuries working methods, like the surface of the Earth, undergo changes; the artist can no longer fly into the arms of Cervantes without becoming motheaten. The world has grown in breadth and depth; old Pegasus, outflanked by technology, has been hoodwinked and transformed into a stubborn mule. I claim that any good speculator, banker, soldier is a better writer than the majority of current authors.

Writers of prose, always first to jump on the bandwagon, encompass the world not through new rigorous cold-blooded methods, but rather chew away constantly at "material" and problems of their internal inadequacy. One should rein in one's supposed inner needs, and hand the reins over to Art. Serious writing is not biting your nails and picking your teeth, but a public affair.

A fundamental defect of the serious prose-writer these days is his psychological manner. It must be understood that the psychology of novels, as of most everyday situations, is a purely abstract phantasmagoria. The analyses, the attempts at differentiation, have nothing to do with the processes of a real psyche; you never get to the bottom of it that way. The protagonist's "motivation" is as much an error in a novel as in real life: it's a poetic gloss. Psychology is dilettantish conjecture, scholastic verbiage, wool-gathering bombast, misguided lyricism.

Rationalism was always the death of Art; nowadays the most importunate and cosseted rationalism is called psychology. Many a so-called "fine" novel or novella – the same goes for the drama – consists almost entirely of analyses of the characters' trains of thought: conflicts arise in these trains of thought, leading to paltry or concocted "plots". Maybe such trains of thought do occur, but not so isolated; in themselves they say nothing, cannot be represented: an amputated arm, breath without the breathing person, glances without eyes. Real motives come from quite another place; these, lacking a living totality, are humbug, aesthetic froth: a bored doctrinaire author bereft of ideas blathering to educated people desirous of instruction.

One should learn from psychiatry, the only science that deals with the whole soulful human being: it has long recognised the naiveté of psychology, limits itself to the noting of events, movements – with a shake of the head and a shrug of the shoulders for the rest, for the "why" and the "how". The formulae of speech serve only practical interaction. "Anger", "love", "contempt" denote complexes of phenomena that impinge on the senses; beyond that, these primitive and vulgar concatenations of letters convey nothing. They refer to events, changes of action and effect, that were

originally visible, audible, partly calculable. They can never and nevermore serve as a microscope or telescope, these blind lenses; they cannot become the guideline for a life-emulating plot. One must hold fast to this original intention, this simplicity, and then one achieves the real, has demystified the word, has avoided inartistic abstraction. Just as the word-artist must at every moment "see" back to the word in its primal sense, the novelist must force "anger" and "love" back to the concrete.

And this shows the way out of psychological prose. Either: lyricism with its immediacy, open and no longer embarrassed; sure steps attaining to both heights and depths; first-person speech in which naïve reasoning is permissible. To be sure, I doubt whether such a form can be called a "novel" or a "novella". Or: actual novel-prose, on the principle that the object of the novel is Reality with the soul removed. The reader as the completely independent foil to a designed and created process; let him be the judge, not the author. The façade of the novel can be nothing other than stone or steel, electrically flashing or dark: it keeps silent. Serious writing oscillates in a process like music among the shaped notes.

Amid the enormous jumble of formed shapes, representation demands a cinematic style. "The abundance of faces" must parade past with the utmost crowdedness and precision. The utmost in plasticity and liveliness must be wrung from language. The casual narrator has no place in the novel; one does not narrate, one constructs. The narrator has the dependability of a peasant: concision, verbal parsimony is required; new turns of phrase. Sentences that allow the concurrence as well as the sequence of complexes to be rapidly discerned should be employed to the fullest. Rapid confused events in bald catchwords; wherein everywhere the greatest exactitude should be striven for in suggestive turns of phrase. The whole should appear not as if spoken, but as if present. The word-art must emerge in the negative, in what it avoids, a missing ornamentation: in the absence of intention, in the absence of the merely pretty or the linguistic flourish, in keeping mannerisms at a distance. Images are dangerous and should only be used sparingly; one should sniff out the uniqueness of each event, grasp the physiognomy and the particular growth of an event and present it sharply and objectively; images are lazy.

The hegemony of the author must be broken; never can the fanaticism of self-denial be taken too far. Or the fanaticism of kenosis (self-emptying): I am not I but the street, the lamps, this and this event, nothing more. This is what I term the stony style.

Carried away by this psychological mania they have placed individual humans far too obtrusively at the centre of novels and stories. Thousands of peculiar characters have been invented just so the author can bask in their complexity. Behind this ruinous rationality, the whole world with its multiplicity of dimensions is totally obscured.

Borne away by this psychological craze, the individual human has been placed far too obtrusively at the centre of the novel and the novella. Thousands of specific, thoroughly exaggerated individuals have been invented, the author sunning himself in

their complexity. Behind the pernicious rationalism, the whole multi-dimensional world completely disappears. These authors, truly, have toiled away in a closed room. The artist has demeaned himself to become the dogsbody of paltry scholars, has blinded himself, distanced himself from the friends of art and the reader, unable to look upon all the riches of life. A scribbler's workshop has been nurtured, a systematic impoverishment of art. And this has allowed a second craze, the erotic, to take hold. The writerly world is simplified step by step to the sexual relationship; a process applauded by the interest of a bad, or badly-led, public. This watering-down, this dilution of the little bit of life that penetrated to the writer's study.

Naturalism is no historical Ism, but a shower bath that ever and again breaks over art, must break over it. Psychologism, eroticism must be swept away; the author depersonalised, externalised. Let the earth steam again. Away from people! Boldly on to kinetic imagination and the recognition of unbelievably real contours! Phantasy of facts! The novel must experience a rebirth as a work of art and a modern epic.

AFTERMATH

In noticing the new translation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, the somewhat dismissive (and ill-informed) reviewer in the April 2018 *Literary Review* commented: "Our current political climate has made reinvestigation and reappraisal of interwar literature inevitable. Since that is the case, let us focus on books that might help improve our understanding of that time and are actually a joy to read… Perhaps Döblin was forgotten because his novels are boring?"

The six essays in this section may confirm beyond a doubt that Döblin has valuable and important and not at all boring things to say about interwar politics and literature. His eye-witness accounts of the war's end in Alsace and Berlin, of the murderous suppression of the uprising in Berlin's east in the spring of 1919, and of the abortive Kapp Putsch in 1920 make superb reportage. But as he reflects on these tumultuous events, Döblin also places them in the context of a much longer timeline of human striving and human folly.

REVOLUTIONARY DAYS IN ALSACE[1]
Die neue Rundschau (February 1919)

THE *STRASSBURGER Neue Zeitung* early on Saturday: "Our news by telephone from Berlin is unavailable today, the line is blocked; we hope to provide our readers with a clarification soon." That morning I stood in the Senior Inspector's office, he reported with no particular excitement, old army boots: a Commissariat official's here from Saarbrücken, someone just phoned from there, told me to change into civvies, sailors have come, there's a revolution, like in Kiel.[2]

Just then there's a call from the garrison commander in the nearby spa town of N: can a guard detail be despatched urgently, there's a mutiny. The Senior Inspector's enjoying this: "The world's gone mad, everyone in a tizzy, keep calm, always keep calm." Last night it seems there was unrest here too, in the barracks of our little garrison town, also choreographed by sailors. In the morning soldiers leave the barracks and occupy the garrison HQ encountering no resistance; the old man, General S., is livid, they threaten to break his sabre, then it all calms down.

Towards four in the afternoon, rumours already swirling, suddenly there's music in the enormous street of barracks: a massive horde of soldiers seething along out of formation, hands in pockets, unarmed, behind a wildly waving red flag, a corporal in the lead. They throng tumultuously about the barracks gates, the sentries grin and let them through, they surge from one barracks to the next, the procession grows ever longer, howling, shouting, a press of civilians, they fetch prisoners out of the local holding stations. Soon half the town is behind them. I run down, chat with some soldiers: they won't listen to officers any more, that's finished, and if anyone gets arrested just for overstaying his leave, that's finished too. That was all. Other soldiers when questioned said the same, they were all very merry about it; and anyway the war's over and we're going home; curfew at eleven tonight, no need to salute officers.

Strange uneasy excitement in the town. Crowds in the few streets, everywhere jammed with soldiers wearing red ribbons; I'm in civvies. The barracks squares have yielded up their masses of humanity, young puppies, cripples from the convalescent companies, elderly reservists.

The faces of these Alsatians, as if it's a carnival parade and they're the onlookers. Now it's out in the open: checkmate, we can do nothing more with these.

Rumours fly that the French have broken through at Saarburg, they'll be here in a day or two; drat, now how will we get out. Extra editions in the evening twilight, local fishwrap, people crowd around, read aloud in groups. And it's the second blow; the first was the horribly revealing speech by Prince Max seeking an armistice, now: the

[1] The border region of Alsace was taken by France after the Thirty Years War (1648), and reverted to Germany after the war of 1870-71. The Versailles Treaty restored it to France.

[2] Kiel: In early November 1918, navy sailors rose up to free their thousand comrades arrested for mutiny on 28 October. They formed a Council of Workers and Soldiers. Their revolutionary example spread across Germany.

Kaiser's abdicated, the Kaiser and King, the government's been handed over to Ebert without explanation, to the Social Democrat Ebert[3]. It's a mere formality, this 'handing over' of the government; lying behind it: we have a revolution, it's the same in Berlin as here, they're not giving the government to Ebert, he has it already. Here I sit in this damnable hole, the French on our heels, how will we get away, I want to go to Berlin.

Sunday morning at the hospital my people greet me with smiles and big red ribbons; empty corridors, empty offices, patients alone in the wards, in their beds; a sister wanders about: everyone went off very early into town, a soldier's council is being formed, the hospital's choosing its delegate. There's a dead body, flu, right among the living, she has no one to take it away. I run through the building, an inspector takes pity. Not long ago the big beasts came through this empty building, dripping with titles and medals, Inspector General, Chief Medical Officer, we trembled, they shone lights in every corner, the corporal trotted behind with a little book, every trivial thing noted down, every negligence in matters of dress, bedmaking, painting of headboards. Even now the doors all display a list of every chair, every curtain-rod, every spittoon in the ward. Now, at one stroke –. Downstairs the old morgue attendant greets me gloomily, he's worked here thirty years, who'll pay his pension.

In the afternoon a big assembly at the market square. Sunny autumnal weather. On the way little D. bumps into me, our radiographer, carrying a photographic case. After a few words he slips past, doesn't want to be seen with Germans. In the lovely wide old square, shingle roofs, ringed by excited civilians is a disorderly mass of soldiers wearing red cockades. The light is dazzling; confusion of voices.

And look, in among them are officers, pale, no shoulder flashes, in timid groups like lambs in a pack of wolves; and look, they too wear red cockades, these men marked for sacrifice.

Windows and balconies of the houses around the market are packed with civilians. A jamboree, everything radiant, malicious glee, contempt, entertainment for a cocky audience. In the window of the Café G. the whole smug upper bourgeoisie of the little town, smiling – no, grinning – animated, boisterously observing the spectacle. There's stout little M. with hands in his pockets, he's head of the food supply office, millionaire, complained all through the war with a big cigar drooping from his mouth, he nods: "A fine business for those Prussian gentlemen." Lawyer W. clearly can't come up with enough witticisms, he tells them to his left, his right, points out this or that group of soldiers. His worship Mayor M. is here, he's here, how could he not be. Up till now he's mimed being a Prussian government assessor, now the capable young man groups himself in a Franco-painterly way at the window frame; he's reflective, mulling over a speech he'll deliver in French two weeks from now. (A few days ago, during an audit visit to Pechelbronn, that evening at the station there was a fellow making a

[3] **Prince Max** of Baden (1867-1929), the last Imperial Chancellor, announced the Kaiser's abdication on 8 November and handed his office to **Friedrich Ebert** (1871-1925), president of the SDP, who would violently suppress several socialist insurgencies between 1919 and 1923.

jocular mocking speech to a bleating public: “Let’s sing it again, that lovely song: Deutschland Deutschland über alles.”)

Music, the infantry’s coming, the red flag bobs up and down in the hands of the childishly smiling leader, everyone parading their freedom with hands in pockets, smoking a pipe; they swagger along arm in arm. The civilians draw aside to let them through the ring. A table is carried from the café over the heads of the crowd, someone climbs on, it’s starting, everyone on tiptoe, a soldier speaks, then another, he roars hoarsely: “must not happen again, is not permitted, shameful for a soldier.” The barracks at the training ground O. have been broken into, the contents plundered, horses sold to civilians. I ask in bewilderment, what does this have to do with the essence of revolution, why are they doing this; soon I realise this is all a part of it.

Walking slowly behind us through the mocking jostling throng comes the old man of the garrison in his gaudy general’s uniform, on stiff knees, the same dandy as always when he came here. He struts about for a bit this way and that, speaks to no one, no one greets him, disappears. What fear and terror he used to blow about him.

A soldier, an Alsatian, waves his hands about up there: he didn’t join this movement just to see something like robbery take place. “You all know me!” (The other soldiers in the Soldiers’ Council are not stupid, they won’t let any militia in until the garrison has pulled out, won’t include a single Alsatian in the Council, no one wants to hand out muskets to this lot to use against us. And anyway, last night all the soldiers had their weapons taken away, none of the officers has buckled on his gun belt.) Someone else on the table, a North German by his accent, addresses himself to the locals: they should rejoice with us, we too are now free of an alien domination; mark it well: even we, actually in the market square at H[aguenau], addressed by a German in front of Alsatians and recorded here for posterity. The bourgeois crowd accepts it all graciously, stately on its throne, lets itself be flattered, some slip away, the balconies empty, it’s becoming tedious, time for coffee.

The dogs, they rock securely on their heels, just wait, gentlemen, you’ll laugh on the other side of your face. Conclusion, music, march off.

The revolution makes itself felt at home. My young man ran off with twenty Mark early this morning, that’s how revolutions are celebrated. The farmers deliver no milk for the infants, for ages it hasn’t agreed with them. Monday morning annual fair, many civilians running about with red ribbons, and some tricolours can be seen. The paper advises us to keep emotions down, don’t antagonise the soldiers unnecessarily. My colleague St. from Kreuznach has returned, we speak a little of our worries, he says accusingly: “Now you have your revolution, you and your *Frankfurter Zeitung*.”

On the way someone brings the rumour that the Belgians and French are fraternising with our red soldiers at the front, English ships are flying red flags. I almost fall for it, anyway it pleases me to hear it, and I think how to pour some cold water on our worthies here. On the way I meet our splendid senior pharmacist W., he listens quite distraught to my cry of jubilation. “Yes,” I laugh, “there’s no more blue-

white-red, black-white-red, now there's only red and red again and for a third time red." A few days ago we thought up a witty accolade for him, a blue-white-red frame with his name, but the last letter "e" graced with a huge acute accent. I go into the other pharmacy, the chemist receives the same shock. Only Professor E., whom I encounter on the way to the station – he's off to Strasburg, shaking the dust of H. from his heels, was stationed here on duty, but what is duty now, he's an Alsatian – he smiles and lifts a warning hand: "A victorious army does not make revolution."

The stipulations of the Armistice in the extra editions lying around everywhere are hardly remarked; internal politics have swallowed the external, the war has been swallowed by the revolution. But Alsatians stand around in groups stunned by the number of locomotives and wagons we must deliver; lucky them. The Sunday edition of the *Strassburger Neue Zeitung* headlines its lead article "Shreds", speaks dismissively of Wilhelm, who wanted to tear the Alsatian constitution to shreds, who through his undignified clinging to the throne drove everything to the limit, now the entire German constitution is in shreds, etc., etc:

> "From this perspective all so-called solutions to the question of Alsace-Lorraine are to be considered, from an autonomous federal state through neutrality to a plebiscite; and as democrats we do not shy from asserting that today we decline even a plebiscite: its only purpose would be to cheat France, a purpose which in any case we are convinced can no longer be achieved even with the strongest persuasion. We know what we want! Our forefathers protested not just in Bordeaux,[4] but also in the elections of 1873 and in Berlin, and so it is quite wrong to suggest that the opinion of the people of Alsace-Lorraine on the annexation was never sought. It is clear and unambiguous, and has been known to the world for almost 50 years. When, therefore, the question arises of a popular referendum, the only meaning this can have is that the French should ask us if we wish to remain with them. We are burning to give the French our answer!"

Such a prompt response to Germany's liberation; for them it's liberation *from* Germany. No surprise there.

In our little town this afternoon a session of the local council; his honour the mayor, erstwhile government assessor, reports on the changes in the Empire that have been accomplished, the hour has come when – see the "Shreds" article for the gist. Next day in the sewing room where the Patriotic Women's Union for Charitable Giving and the Wounded works away, twenty needlewomen quite silent and furtive, the town has commissioned them to sew flags, you know the colours.

On Wednesday night gunfire, towards one o'clock (two nights earlier I'd been woken at the same hour by gunfire, there'd been an air raid alarm at ten, but they just threw leaflets down saying they'll be here by the 15th); when I enquired next morning what the shooting was about they said it was a Bavarian transport, the men refused to go on, they'd rioted at the station, unhitched carriages, shot at signals. Tonight the

[4] Bordeaux: the French government retreated there when the Prussians invaded in 1870.

shooting is in regard to a fight with a speeding car that came into Strasburg and was seized by the sentry post there. The car had been driving through the town in the dark full of armed soldiers; what they intended was not apparent, people talked of an attack on a barracks, clearly it's simply a bunch of Alsatians heading home in their car.

On Thursday a crazy scene of plunder in the barracks street. The barracks form a huge long block of housing, at the gates at three or four places along the street a throng of civilians mixed with soldiers, many country people in flat caps, short jackets, with wheelbarrows, horse carts, ox carts, many more lurking in the background, they come up out of the side streets. Outside one of the yellow barracks, right by the door, is a crowd of maybe a hundred people shouting, jostling, flowing this way and that. As I approach I see several windows on the second floor are open as far as they'll go, suddenly soldiers appear, hatless, laughing and shouting down to the street. All at once several soldiers side by side bend back, throw down armfuls of boots and stuff; keep bending back, throw boots out high, scatter them in every direction. Everyone makes a grab, kids run off with a single boot, now there's a knot of people hitting out, yelling, scolding. The barrows and carts come closer. Crowds of soldiers at the vehicle entrances, they're closed today. Sentries with raised rifles (incidentally the sentries, like soldiers generally, are suddenly no longer carrying their rifles at the shoulder, or on the back barrel up, but in the Russian manner with the butt upwards; headgear too has given in and acquired a certain tendency to a Russian shape); the soldiers are wearing new clothes: it is said, credibly, that the huge stocks inside can't be moved out, no one wants the French to have them, but these newly-clothed soldiers are actually delivering to the greedily waiting peasants and the townspeople in the background; the soldiers keep going in, no one's checking how often the same one returns, in the corridors on the carts they change back into old clothes.

Towards evening the picture changes; the civilians with their raw red faces have been chased away, sentries have blocked off the whole street, no civilian can just wander in, word is the storerooms are locked, though some are already empty. In the town people move in a strangely lighthearted happy feverish colourful excitement, sacks being dragged along everywhere, there were never so many carts in the town as now, among them wretched Russians, released prisoners with bundles in their hands. Along the main street furniture van after furniture van heading for the station. Taverns chockablock with people, now provisions make an appearance, of course the French are bringing everything with them, they say that in Nancy trains are already standing by full of white bread and red wine for Alsace. The price of wine suddenly crashes, you can buy a fat goose for 5 Mark a pound, yesterday it was 12 Mark, or 15.

Someone calls to me in the street, I'm not wearing shoulder flashes now: "Comrade, the cockade must come off." Off, then. I encounter officers, mostly in civvies, who all explain how they propose to get away; you write yourself a leave chit, sign it yourself or have it signed by the Soldiers' Council, the Council stamps anything. Most of the bigwigs are already up and gone, in civvies of course, even General S. who yesterday attended a session of our Soldiers' Council in order to discuss essential matters

regarding the withdrawal of the regiments; after speaking he dropped back into his chair and said for all to hear: “You can imagine how hard this is for me.” Tonight the Dragoons will march out, over the Rhine into Baden. How comfortably the local colleagues stroll around. One of them, when I happen to express how little pleasure I feel in exchanging the meat stew of Alsace for the turnips of Berlin, says to me quite benevolently: “They’ll do all they can to prevent famine among you lot. They’ll find it, they’ll find it, you can be sure.” I: “But this tawdry Armistice.” “They’ll soften it down, they just want to humiliate the military, don’t worry.” How far we’ve fallen. And it’s all stealing, hauling away, thinking only of possessions. Overnight we’ve been struck to the ground in the most grotesque way, to be trodden underfoot. Many carts and people heading down B. Street to the airfield; most are too late; our big new airfield, they say, has been deserted by man and mouse, people and soldiers are forcing their way in, or trying to, huge amounts of materiel, petrol, metal are stored there. At last doubled sentry details are posted there.

This evening little M., forename Aron, appeared at my house, the trader, namesake of the fat millionaire. How he came here from Rumania a year ago, still suffering the after-effects of dysentery, totally intimidated, ground down, wretched, shaking with fear. The cruellest Prussian NCO regime had exercised its power on him, on the defenceless Jew, who could do nothing about it but keep his head down, beg, bribe, hide underground. He knows how to keep going, now he’s finally been abandoned here in misery. How he crows now, in civvies: “What do they want? Are you a human being when you’re a soldier? Are you for such officers and gentlemen a human being? And if you’re ill, an Alsatian? They had their Staff Doctor Sch., now he’s Senior Staff Doctor, you should have seen, he never touched anyone, monocle in his eye, cigar in his mouth. Alsatians A1, fit for service.” How happy he is: “It had to come, it should have come long ago. Let the bigheads feel it. Orders, orders, yes sir, hold the line, and we sit in the mud.” And he tells endless stories of his sufferings, some funny, some accusing. How Prussian ladies at the start of the war acted so high and mighty when they came to work in the hospital, their little jealousies; how a pharmacist had noted one of these young ladies in his register as “the pig”; how this became a matter of state; how he had to play along when one of the ladies treated him as her orderly: “Go across to my regiment now.” To my regiment.

An officer’s lady whose child lay ill had said to me a few days earlier when she visited: “So if they depose our Kaiser, I shall no longer wish to live.” She wasn’t emotional, it was quite genuine, but now I bump into her and she’s still alive, just anxious for the whereabouts of her furniture. “And our Crown Prince, such a dashing gentleman.” Well, what can you say, the woman had her beliefs, they worked splendidly for her, how should she understand other motives? When I argued with her a little, she said yes, property could be shared a bit more evenly and fairly, but it’s all the fault of the rich peasants and the bankers, that can be changed, but our Kaiser? “And really you can’t change everything. Take the head of a district, for example, he sits in his circle like a little king and everything goes like clockwork. And they cling to

him and obey. When that too should all be over and done with." Sister Grete in the infants' crèche, a resident of Alsace but German to her very bones, keeps pestering; she's been travelling around southern Germany for days to find a place for her parents, to no avail, there's nothing to be had. Her father's at the Strasburg cathedral building office, a pensionable post, he's an old man, will the French keep him on. "What's become of our great rich Germany. Look at the railway carriages, seat covers all cut up, no curtains, even the fastenings for the luggage-rack nets have been cut away. No heating, the locomotives can hardly pull, there's no coal, the engine's defective, people begging in the streets for bread, it's enough to make you howl." She will never and nohow become French, but there's nothing else for it but to stay.

By Wednesday we are quite headless, meaning: chief, senior inspector, corporal all gone on some excuse or other. The army hospital is supposed to march off, we wait anxiously for our train, there's a terrible shortage of carriages, three hundred are ordered from the railway, twenty arrive. We've sent all the serious cases to the town hospital. When I go to the army hospital on Wednesday, the ambulance is waiting below to take someone away, upstairs the man lies dead, died suddenly just now. This terrible flu never stops. Chests have been packed, straw lying in every corridor with hospital supplies, books, there's hammering. I find the big rooms of crockery, porcelain still quite full, women standing about, it's not clear who's in charge, who's going to check things off. We're supposed to be leaving on Thursday evening. It's clear there's a huge amount of thieving in the hospital. An orderly from the town's ambulance company was caught carrying away marble tops from the night-tables in his gurney. Every ward is empty, people go from room to room, prams moving everywhere without check, evidently loaded up with coal, out through the doors.

On Thursday evening, under the harsh glare of magnesium lighting piercing the darkness, the ponderous transport train departs. We travel all day. We're freezing to death. Three pigs, two goats were supposed to be slaughtered for the transport, we could have feasted, but where was it all? A day in the goods yard at Würzburg. Stroll through the town. A red flag flying at the castle, a red flag in broad daylight! Posters on the pillars, signed "The Republican town commandant". What sort of world are we entering. No newspapers for days, all we can buy is a local Würzburg paper, the masthead: "Free of Berlin". The contents the same old story, clericals playing to Bavarian pride, they're using the ploy of "Berlin Terror".

On Wednesday in Berlin, I head for Potsdamer Platz for the ceremony to the Fallen. Along the way I encounter a group of Social Democratic voters, red flag up front, respectably clad calm men and women, they're singing the tune of the Marseillaise. I have the impression of a little club outing. The lines of people at the Potsdamer Platz are not as thick as usual at such gatherings, it stretches across the city as far as Friedrichshain. In the endless procession wreaths with red ribbons, red banners, proletarian cries, otherwise nothing to remind me of revolution, a well-ordered petit-bourgeois event writ large.

First I must put myself to rights.

EXORCISING THE GHOSTS
Der neue Merkur (Special Precursor Edition February 1919)[1]

THAT SATURDAY, the memorable ninth,[2] in my little Alsatian hideaway, when I heard the cry: "They're coming with red flags" and saw troops swarming out, I had a feeling: this is total collapse, now they're losing discipline. Removing officers: what's the point? Sending the Kaiser packing, the last government packing, good; but officers altogether? They simply don't want any more of it, it's heading for anarchy. All I saw was undisciplined soldiers. Only now and then a twitch of pleasure: the conservative feudal system, it's smashed, no dog wants a single crumb of it anymore; but I'm not with this horde either. A few days later I strolled through Würzburg like a foreigner, exiled, the red on the flags meant nothing, oppressive, numbing, perplexing. I even had a vivid sense I was living under foreign rule.

Wandering the streets of Berlin, reading newspapers, listening to people, after a few days all became clear.

A few years earlier I'd sought points of common interest with the so-called political parties, and found none. Conferences of the so-called Liberals: trivia, party building, educational ideals, bourgeois philistinism, make eyes at the Left, yearn passionately towards the Right, fatal compromises, basically comfort, avoiding any pain or urgency, they were conducting a defensive campaign, though sure they'd be pleased to gain a few positions, little advantages. I felt a strong sense of revulsion against this party. Then the "party" of head teachers, professors, civil servants: I have nothing to do with nationalism, pension rights are for me no perspective; doing politics in accordance with the motto "If I eat his bread, I sing his song" appeals to me not in the least. The conservative party: it incurs not my hatred, but my wrath: the shamelessness of the propertied, the people who monopolise the government, parasites by virtue of birth.

Innumerable conferences of the Social Democrats; I read Marx, Lassalle. But when I sat beside workers, it was clear my love must remain Platonic. I didn't want economic advantages, as they did, I wasn't a factory worker. This was the only party that represented radically important and elemental things beyond class interest, yet was tied up with its class interest. But they viewed me as an outsider. I returned from conferences exhausted, at elections I rejoiced at the increased vote share of the Reds. It became clear to me I was floating in air, riding hopelessly on principles.

Now, strolling through Berlin, I recognised that the war had ended in a quite unforeseen way: perhaps won, perhaps lost, in any case had become irrelevant. It came into consideration only as a means, a heroic means, of – the socialist case. A new king arose in Egypt; he knew nothing of Joseph.[3] The lions of war had roared to no avail, no one now remembered them. It was evident we had here a suffering body that in wild

[1] This piece was rejected by *Die neue Rundschau*.

[2] 9 November 1918

[3] Exodus 1:8.

abandon had torn off a gangrenous limb. Seemingly unannounced, a disinterested idea had penetrated from an unremarked corner. The poor populace had rescued itself from defeat by turning to socialism.

Seemingly unannounced. Strolling among little people, riding with them, I saw: these banalities – officer arrogance, army chicanery, no leave, bad treatment – were the main point. They were here the only bare facts, untransfigured and unexplained by ideas, no comforts in life could prettify them. These ridiculous little facts were everything to them, the 'ideas' proved threadbare. They know nothing of German expansionism, English injustice, French revanchism, they have low wages, bad food, demeaning treatment. The populace has shrugged off the war as something of no relevance to it, merely draped on it like a disgusting ragged wig. It was no defeat for the populace, just as it was not their war. Socialism, democracy: no Freudian repressed idea, but an impregnable whipped-up inner momentum that grows ever stronger and eventually reveals itself. No more party programme. And on this ground it stands: this the victorious breakthrough of an accusatory truth. How good that it's politics as well!

They shut Germany up in a sturdy building like a fat nag, and wanted it to die, burn up; and then a bird comes flying out of the chimney singing, and they stand there below and can't catch it, and wonder where the nag has got to.

Astonished happy days in Germany. You could almost call it home. The first calm hours after the jubilant awakening of the Russian revolution.

If only things externally were not so gruesome.

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None of the so-called victories during the war moved me. The dreadful English phrase "You will win battles, but we shall win the war" was always in my mind. In the first weeks of the war I often went restlessly through the streets of Berlin, no more to rights with myself than during these first revolutionary days. Did not believe we'd been attacked, rather we'd seized an opportune moment to settle scores and put an end to quarrels now grown unbearable. The question, who started it? seemed puerile, and I was disgusted when in the midnight hours of 1 August the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* brought out an extra edition according to which the Tsar had 'deceived' the German Kaiser. A moral cloaking? It was clear that Germany is enormously powerful, and we'd been told for years that no way could be found for this latent power to develop appropriately, Germany was systematically – so they said – being denied the realisation of this power, and so the adversaries had risked the resort to violence. On the German side the war is undoubtedly about expanding its power, a modern war of conquest. Injustice lies with the other side; they should never have let it go so far. When the names Courland,[4] Livonia,[5] Flanders appeared, it seemed to me the war was

[4] Courland: a region of what was in 1914 the Russian Empire, and is now in Latvia. The Germans invaded in 1915; the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk separated it from Russia.

[5] Livonia: Baltic region now shared between Estonia and Latvia.

showing its true face. The population was in accord with this power-politics, the eternal appeal for armaments; hordes of volunteers streamed in. And at last this power was surprised to find itself used up, consumed by the war, it had taken on too many adversaries, the war became ever more evidently senseless, aimless, self-awareness and cleverness failed to take their place in good time alongside power. The war could be lost, reality was once more cleansed of our excessive power, we can no longer prate about injustice, the enraged adversaries can fall on us and do with us as they will.

As for me, as I walked about and pondered it all, I was not much concerned with this test of strength among nation-states, it was somehow all the same to me, even odious. I wondered hopelessly: how long will this war last, in the end it was just a newspaper affair that had become unpalatable. The war a private matter of the army, happening in Flanders, France and Russia! It was happening out there, it was an abomination, an irreparable dam-breach, why had everything to go into this devil's cauldron, we all had to go in, no sense, no salvation.

And as once I walked along the boulevards mulling doubts about the rotten state of Denmark, I was surprised by the sight of an officer emerging with his lady from *Rhinegold* in the Potsdamer Strasse. The man was in his peacetime uniform, young, slim, coldly arrogant, monocle, lifting his sabre he leapt into the car as it pulled up.

Then it flashed through me.

So there he is – the enemy! Standing there right in our own country!

A damnable feeling! Him there! And then all that came later as I approached closer to the war. The active doctor-general who heard about his starving patients, and tried to punish the messenger for failing to follow procedures. Staff doctors who strode through the wards with their riding crops, pastors who rode and loved holding services armed, celebrating the Kaiser's birthday, "our cordially beloved Kaiser", this service of mysteries, this ossification of forms, alienation from life, alienation from humanity, from the people, this whole forsaken bad-tempered mess. No, this unreality!

For what's real and powerful is not the army, but industries, technicians, scientists.

And then the second event, the ghastly spectacle flashed like lightning: the German Kaiser with his court and his generals entering the cathedral as the war began. Invocations of God in victory telegrams. At the war's end: the English Parliament with ghoulish Lloyd George marching into the cathedral, thanking God not for the end of war, but for victory.

Religion: for this we have the shocking unforgettable example in Syria.[6] The utter brutality of this time and place, this mechanical pseudo-culture. Religions good enough only for building churches, creating a cadre of officials, so-called men of God, and handing them to the tolerant populace for their upkeep. Systematic suppression of higher thoughts of humanity through bourgeoisification, governments bearing

[6] Refers to the murderous actions of Ottoman Turks against Armenians in 1915.

witness, going into churches with warlike aims and not being thrown out by the priests, but rather blessed.

My sojourn in Alsace was a terrible lesson on the core of the war and the spirit of the times in general, on the nation's spiritual dilapidation. Across from me a school building, a Catholic educational institute. Children from five years old, maybe even younger, girls and boys, sit on benches in low rooms. Nuns and men of God are at work. What kind of work? Hour by hour I hear a shrill buzz, it's a dressage facility, an assault on brain and soul. What goes on there, I cannot feel it any other way and must say it out: it is a crime, and I shudder for the state that does not protect its inhabitants against such assaults. What are robbery and theft against this? But to have all mental, moral and spiritual freedom stolen away under the rubric of education, to have wretched helpless people and whole classes spiritually enslaved, immiserated and atrophied. This is what the German Empire does, tolerates, supports. A parson, confronted with this, will say something like: "You can do nothing else with these people. Of course they pay only lip service to the rosary. But now and then they think of Mary, and that's something. Of course they have to be pressured to attend church, the Protestant churches are admittedly always empty, but it's better to have them forced to sit an hour in church than get up to mischief outside in the drinking dens." The man of God as corporal; he speaks with ineffable disdain of the people, its needs, its spiritual rights.

German Empire. This: the feudal lords and the clergy reached an understanding, and it's called the German government. They can't abide each other, but each side commits its robberies.

The feudal lords built themselves the military. Who could oppose a regiment; every lieutenant is in command; mass suggestion rules, it's called Obedience. And for those who've undergone systematic spiritual immiseration and enslavement, the clergy have Heaven and Hell. I've heard lively sermons in a church about the devil, in broad daylight. I heard a pious nun in Berlin say, when I quipped that the oven was hellishly hot: Oh no, with the greatest respect, Hell is even hotter. I looked at her, it was shockingly clear she wasn't teasing me. These crimes occur. Every week I saw on the high road small and larger troops of peasants coming to our town, men and women chatting, telling rosaries, in between gabbling their litany. And it's no blasphemy; how good that there's no God, but perhaps nothing shows it so well as this, the only remnants of a belief in God. What can be expected of such an enslaved people?

We're fighting England, France, America? Otherwise nothing to worry about. This the people harried by dreadful food speculators, and in another sphere piling up war profits. Here the root of barbarism, this sour neglected soil. Religiosity lives within us, but those religious have no life, only history, machinery! Unsubstantial unreality!

These priests, one class alongside others, have brought it to the point where the holy thoughts of religion float like a veil over life, life goes on beneath untouched from within, holy thoughts are Raphaels without arms, they can't grip us, find no way to us.

On one side the ruling caste, on the other side the teachers of the godly; running behind both are all teachers, all education, intellectuality.

The Kaiser of the ruling caste has gone. If God were alive, he would have to abdicate. Cry 'atheism', cry 'patriotism'.

What is the fatherland of the Germans? South America.

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Third unreality as Moloch looking for a sacrifice: the entrepreneur, lording over his workers. What a master-class long since powerless, existing almost only as a historical relic, was to the nation-state, an idol, a false god, so the entrepreneur vis à vis the mighty workers. Ideas, even when they're dead, exercise omnipotence over people. The most dangerous organ in the human is the head. Idolising the entrepreneur's capital, the workers render themselves impotent. Where they don't willingly idolise, threats are added, with guns wielded by the same workers in different clothing – a token of their subjection. The insanity of the situation came fully to light, in war. It came to war, it was able to come to war. The workers acknowledged the deadly but non-existent force of the entrepreneur, the roaring deafening moment of war tore them away, victims not only of the constant deception they could hardly see through, but also of atavistic instincts. Allowed themselves be harnessed to possessions they did not possess, the object of their struggle, let themselves be told that everyone must unite. The head: the most dangerous organ of a human, especially when it's missing. Knew not what was up with them, half lifted the head, half let it droop, and suddenly they were at war. Graspable by the hand: the power not of reality, but of unreality. The corpse for which they were fighting had clothed itself in the most terrible attributes in order to conceal the appearance of death; it was the ally of feudalism. People hated both, but succumbed to both of those claiming moral values for themselves: nation, patriotism, German Empire. Idea upon idea, unreality on unreality.

It was not necessary for the entrepreneur, for Capital, to ally itself with feudalism, but even Capital succumbed to the Crown. And so the worker went with the entrepreneur, with the feudal class: threefold remarkable ghost-step. The corpse tied a gout-ridden dog to its body, it was supposed to pull it along, the dog got hold of a horse, it bit the halter, pulled bravely, though it left a stink behind.

The horse is no longer pulling where we are, the corpse has been buried, the dog will have to undergo a cure, but out there in Abroad the horses still believe they must pull. The deception continues. Reality counts for nothing, ghosts walk in broad daylight. The calendar numbers are written on the wall, not in heads and hearts.

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If it is carried through, what is happening now, Socialism, if the evil is grasped at the root, then for the first time in history we can speak of real progress. The path from slavery through pittances to justice, freedom and moral consciousness. People coming together in true communities. Against the conqueror of a state we are powerless; as for

the conqueror within the state, the monarchist entrepreneur, society can clap a hand on his shoulder. Society up till now has been no society, but the compromising cohabitation of several hundred million people, a few of whom are clever enough to put everyone else to particular kinds of work, to let them live and in return take from them a large commission. If society, after an act of self-realisation, takes the lead, it can point out to the clever people that their profits arise by the grace of society. The whole body has the right to find the hypertrophy of particular organ parts awkward and unhealthy. The totality has the right to play the role of judge, for the clever man, the master, is not solitary, and even with his company of slaves earns nothing by himself. The slaves need clothing, coal, heating, a place to live, a postal service, railways, food, schools, doctors, and these can be brought into existence only by the planned deployment of large numbers of people; the totality first provides itself, and thereby him the clever man, with railways that take away his products and deliver his raw materials; the totality lights the places of work, provides bricklayers for buildings, includes mines within itself. The apportionment of proceeds must be organised according to differentiated norms, and this is one of the most important considerations where morality and ideas of biological breeding can talk to one another. Society must systematically set aside the unsocial, and hence senseless, immoral and boneheaded concept of private property; ownership will become something relative, mine and thine must be lifted out of their personal fixity onto the warm breast of society. The slavery practised by ownership must be set aside, I mean the slavery practised on owners and non-owners alike; perhaps we shall learn to understand better why St Francis said his bride was called Poverty.

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National sentiment, national culture could now really emerge, as long as it is not driven away by the much more significant and extensive Un-nationals.

No mocking laughter, please, from your high horse at those whose motto is: where I feel at home, there is my fatherland. There are children and grandchildren too, even if you care nothing for yourself. One does not live in memories, one is not a Chinese, with his cult of ancestors. Patriotism was up till now a cosy matter for the propertied, a cheap spiritual comfort for which it was unnecessary to trouble poets, you could get by in it without poems. The rest were denied this joy, this spiritual joy in one's native region that binds most deeply and entices one to activity. Why do we treasure our native region? Because here we find our life-assets – the spiritual, after we have won enough of the material – that lifts man above the animals. But if you can't find these assets? Now people should demand, should be allowed to call for, a general right to patriotism: I am a German.

During the war and before there were debates about why Germans have so little national sentiment. It wasn't hard to answer. The nation had been pulled away beneath their feet, they were deceived with schoolhouse dogmas; a bad cadre of teachers – such intellectuality – offered itself as the instrument.

Mine and thine must learn to swim. Every piece of property must be answered for in the forum of society. A minority have understood up till now how to obstruct, cleverly and brutally, any test of the legitimacy of their property and the extent of that property. Enfeoffment, wresting away, new enfeoffment according to common use.

Even heaped-up spiritual property must answer, must be rousted out of its placid seats. Spiritual capital must stream over the masses, multiplying in a lively way over the living. The sources of true surging spirit are at present constricted. What can we expect of the few spiritual literati and scientists, who being rootless are easily crippled, and if they set down roots, the soil soon becomes barren.

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You must know that the main struggle in the life of groups is over slogans, and that the ruling class always grabs for itself every flowery word. It strives to make itself the advocate for the whole of society, wants to represent the nation. In the past few decades it reached the point where national capability was flowing in a very broad bed. Complete backwardness and unconsciousness reigned over Germany. It did not come about that the one who reigned also wore the crown. The most heated efforts of young spirituality were to pierce through from the abstract to the real, the concrete. It sought to penetrate undepleted senses, acute perceptions, uninterrupted productivity. Its enemy: educational ballast, classicism, the world of words gradually reduced to platitudes. These words hung only like corpses about the shells of words. National capability spread out, work was going on in every corner, for every purpose. A disaster: this reality could not find its meaning. We made our revolution a spiritual one, we did not allow ourselves to be enslaved by Geibel[7] and Goethe and whoever. But they came into the war. Wealth in Germany developed in the stormiest way, our capitalism conducted itself most strenuously, and it was tied to the feudal corpse. Most obvious is the total picture, the biggest is backwardness, the most absurd is mendacity.

The tarted-up spectres standing there as the bearers of imperial power grabbed to themselves the strengths of the wider nation. Ghosts trying to hold on to existence. Ghosts centred the life-forces of the national empire on themselves, led the nation into a whirlwind. People were lured by a ghost that led them madly into war, untold wealth thrown away, until the bedazzlement faded and the blindest could see that we had allowed shadows to make use of our blooming life, that the past had triumphed horribly over the present and future. For what was left lying on the fields of battlewas blood spilled not for the German Empire, but for old chestnuts, for Frederick the Great, for the castellans of Nuremberg, for the Victory Avenue. For these corpses of history the blood was spilled, and the next generations will have to work for it.

Threefold dreadful ghostly footsteps.

[7] Emanuel Geibel (1815-74): popular lyricist whose verses inspired Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms. His lines '*Und es mag am deutschen Wesen / einmal noch die Welt genesen'* (May Germany's existence one day cure the world) were used as a slogan by Kaiser Wilhelm.

Away from the ghosts of the Church, whispering millennia-old phrases into our ears not to bring us clarity about ourselves, our fidelity, but to make our cultural soil, the masses, wither, suppress their freedom and responsibility.

Away from mediaeval and contemporary platitudes in economy and politics. Revolution must never rest. When it rests, ghosts emerge. Life conceived and reality are the solution. The fundamentals of existence ever and again put to the test. We live but once, so it seems. So existence must prey on our minds. The stale word, the breath from history, the arid abstraction, the dream want to be swallowed by our brains as Kronos swallowed his children. This or that ghost have still hardly faded away. The time for new building has hardly come. Whole pyramids, the Moloch of yesterday require all our resources.

CANNIBALS[1] by 'Linke Poot'
Die neue Rundschau (June 1919)

A MINER somewhere not long ago slaughtered a young child, sold the musculature as mutton, and some of it, to the horror of every mutton-eating reader, reached Berlin. A similar case has been known since ancient times, when it gave rise to the craziest tragedies. Now lots of mutton turns up in Berlin that actually is not. One consequence of the meat shortage is a certain expansiveness and catholicity in zoological matters; judgement clouded, hunger stilled.

What is it that causes the sated and the starving alike to shudder at this encounter between miner and child – I believe it was a miner, but that's not to say more overground professional classes are entirely in the clear. What exactly offends us in this trick of demoting a human being to a lower class of animal? The snuffing out, or the mutton chop? Snuffing out is commonplace, the chop uncommon. And the vegetarian declares: a corpse is a corpse. What's fair for the ox is fair for the human, we're all vertebrates, there's no discernible difference between the cannibal and the average European. From a culinary standpoint it's hard to give an opinion; there's evidence that even a human-based mutton chop is nice and tender and bears comparison with any cuts from bigger livestock. What's more, ethics and human pride bid us reject a contrary opinion.

So I don't know if people are wrong to say that the whole business about human mutton chops is hysteria and prejudice; one simply should not do such things. Behind it, according to these sceptics, is nothing more than contempt for one's nearest and dearest, who are deemed inedible and arouse revulsion. Clearly the only way forward is a compact between the classes of animals: to eat each other only in accordance with specific rules; within each class individuals rub along together and practise pacifism with hindrances. Humans are eaten professionally only by such and such animals. Humans eat humans by devious routes. This is the dietary rule here on earth. It's the law, it's etiquette.

Since cannibalism has already had consequences as bad as those in the ancient tragedies, we can surely perceive wisdom in this precept.

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Kleist's *Penthesilea* is an extraordinarily ranting piece of theatre. It made him *persona non grata* with Goethe, but retains a horrible beauty. It's typical that this play, for long a morsel known only to the literati, can under excellent direction be performed on the public stage arousing great emotions, powerful tension and sympathy. An unsettled time requires strong accents, the strong accent resounds in echoing souls torn open. In this play the heroine, in a state of mental confusion and fog, throws herself on her beloved in a misunderstanding – so great a misunderstanding that she herself speaks

[1] This translation was first published as 'On Cannibalism' by *The Brooklyn Rail* in March 2019.

of transposed syllables, küssen (kiss) and bissen (bite), a rhyming error – and 'kisses' him to pieces with teeth and hands, only to come to her senses dripping with blood.

I'm no friend of the theatre, and especially not of tragedies. I don't willingly allow myself to be robbed of the little bit of sense that God or one of his functionaries gave me. Up there they show how some man or woman or thing can't do something, and I'm supposed to marvel or find it tragic when they try to do it regardless. As if I, let us say, with my knock-knees try to jump two meters, or when that very famous man in a certain situation finds a certain Iste – that's what he calls him – to be not amenable, and yet still pushes at him; this happened with Casanova too. Comical, tragic, stupid, painful. It's long been said that a person is seldom as stupid as the heroes of tragedy, and maybe this is enough to justify how seldom they appear on the stage.

That Penthesilea, out of grief born of love, falls into a trance is doubtless an everyday occurrence. That she then assaults someone – that too occurs often; in most cases crockery and window panes can attest to it. That she then half devours him is a less common case, but the mad devour all sorts of things. The whole point is: in her agitation she doesn't notice that Achilles has come to her as a lover; that's the key point, everything is built on this overhasty act; I must go along with it, I'm duty bound to marvel at it. But this is only a means to an end; the point, for Kleist and us: someone must be eaten, figuratively, and – what is so sensational here – not figuratively. It's like this in every tragedy, and here you grasp it in your hands. A sacrificial victim must be found, the sacrificial victim that we need. The word *tragedy* comes from the goat [*tragos*] that was once sacrificed; the little goat has disappeared, let's make do with humans! For we are cannibals, and every day we contravene the dietary rules here on earth; we stuff ourselves full at the theatre. A vegetarian won't watch a tragedy, not a total vegetarian. We declare it a cunning piece, speak of Art, retain professors who must write thick books about what tragedy is. But we gladly let our brains grow dim, we accept with credulity the boundless nonsense, the blinkered absurdity of the heroes, when in Homer for example we see the suitors at their dinner: "And Athene set off uncontrollable laughter in the suitors, crazed them out of their minds – mad hysterical laughter seemed to break from the jaws of strangers, not their own, and the meat they were eating oozed red with blood – tears flooded their eyes, hearts possessed by grief." [*Tr.Robert Fagles*]

We feast on Othello and Desdemona, King Lear and his sweet daughter. The more radiant the Achilles the more willingly we accept him, for out of common clay is the human made.

And that is why the theatre requires a hero, whereas in the newspaper a janitor's child suffices: it must be unwrapped, must be dished up for us with all the details, and we must tuck in – both senses apply. That is the meaning of the word: the hero must be brought closer to us as a human. Hence the routines of the cooks and waiters – I should say actors and actresses, directors; not to mention authenticity, persuasive force, sensory and extrasensory fiddle-faddle.

Then at the end, the sweet dangerous end, this sense of annihilation whistles and twitches in us, we love this best of all, the professionally inserted needle.

From apes we inherited a sense of sympathy; we ape most of what we feel for things around us. We have this capacity for sympathy, this ape-instinct we're so proud of that we erect whole philosophies on it. We make cunning use of the ape-instinct, we can extract our honey from anything: the hero is snatched and swallowed, but – it's not enough for us. For we are Europeans, over-cultivated. We leave devouring to animals, and seek unusual enjoyments. Our capacity for sympathy gives us a pleasant possibility: every thrust and blow against the hero is felt – by us ourselves. Ourselves! So near! How we tuck in now, how wolfishly we crane over the balcony, offer ourselves as the sacrifice, spear ourselves on the spit, relish the slaughtered feast with every fibre. Of course that's not what sympathy is for, but that's just the beauty of it; we have that extra thing: we can misuse our sense of empathy, violate ourselves, violate morality. Complication, peppering of a cannabilistic snare with immorality, with delight in immorality. A so-what cannibalism, cannibalism with inhibitions: the root of tragedy.

When we rise dripping to our feet, only the naïve say: we are purified. Rather we are sated, for the moment.

Humankind has preserved these tragic games from the most desolate period of our history. We well recognise ourselves in these games. What do we expect from it? What sympathy towards each other?

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I was barricaded in Lichtenberg during those March days. Already on the Monday when the General Strike was called, a broken sabre lay on the Alexanderplatz late that evening. Everywhere restless angry masses of humanity stood around. Motor cars were stopped, people shouted: "Once we can move, you can move." They chased after a car that refused to stop in the König Strasse, crack! the windscreen was split in two, the driver surrendered. Next day already a distant rumbling could be heard, people said it was from Alexanderplatz, but we couldn't see who was fighting; up to the Wednesday we had the newspaper only once. Day by day the press of people swelled on the Frankfurter Allee, that great eastern boulevard. On the Wednesday I tried to push through to Alexanderplatz from Lichtenberg, but beyond the Warschauer Strasse the throng was considerable. People shouted in groups, debated, the mood almost unanimous against the government; these were the typical middling and labouring people of the district. Workers at a furniture factory not yet on strike were dragged out by a mob; this was around 4 p.m. On Königsberger Strasse a man shouted: They nabbed one of the government troops at the bridge, and they've done for him good and proper. Jubilation.

The people so aroused. Suddenly it all streams to a certain point, then flees apart: an aeroplane overhead. They scream: "Take cover, he's got bombs." You run too, though you don't think it likely. You turn slowly back east again, and – look! – five civilians walk past with rifles on their backs, grim determined faces, a mass of mostly

silent people around and behind them, they search from house to house, cross the street. Two armed men half in army uniform link up with them, they enter a house, one stays outside, people say they're looking for weapons. They come out, and turn down Warschauer Strasse.

The wildest stories from the city are passed on by people who claim to have seen it: there was a battle between Marines and government troops; the battle went back and forth, the Marines had the upper hand; two hundred government troops were barricaded in police headquarters and fired on from Alexanderplatz and the Waisenbrücke; the insurgents had begun digging trenches in the zoo; they meant to hold the government troops there until their food ran out; reinforcements from Spandau would soon arrive.

And then Thursday afternoon, late afternoon, trying to turn down the Allee, you see something that hits you like a blow: turned onto their sides across the carriageway, wheels towards you, big vehicles like dead beasts blocking the boulevard. Under the rail overpass the road into the city is blocked. Two or three rifle-toting men in torn military uniforms pace up and down by the vehicles. And now more trucks come pouring down the road from the freight depot, into Gürtel Strasse; word is they've been called in to block off every access to the Allee. You stand and watch astonished, along with many others, to see what the men do with the trucks. Eager youths leap forward to help, it's all so solidly calm, workmanlike. There's a small machine gun, a man punches a hole through the bed of the lorry, shoves the barrel through. Muttered questions left and right, what's that about, a grenade'll smash those thin planks. By evening Gürtel Strasse too is blocked; we're barricaded in. Strange thing is, we see hardly any defenders. Wherever you go two or three men are standing together, five at the most, word is the rest are in taverns and residential buildings, but until the last day they were nowhere to be seen. And those who pushed past the barricades reported the same: that's all there is. Hardly any traffic in the streets beyond; once a day the Bolle milk-cart, very very brave, through real gunfire, admired by friend and foe. A stirring picture from another world.

Similar scenes in the streets on the following days. Small groups of people outside buildings, on street corners, loud rifle shots, machine-gun fire – but who are they shooting at? – frequent shouting; the streets empty, shutters lowered on many buildings. No gas in the apartments, no electric light, no water. Every morning men, women and children come running out with cans and pails, run to the well; when the machine-gun ratatats they all run back in. Around eight in the evening, what they call 'going to sleep'. Now and then through the night, heavy guns pounding.

A strange sight from Saturday onwards: Workers' Samaritans and female ambulance staff. These are normal vehicles with boarded sides, closed trucks, boards and stretchers piled on them. A nurse sits up there next to the driver with her Red Cross armband, behind, often squeezed in, the other personnel, each waving a big white flag, waving and signalling without a pause. It's a most remarkable sight, medievally sweet. When they go by themselves they also wave a white flag; obviously

the armband is not visible at a distance. Near the Town Hall five machine-guns have been posted, often there's one standing quite exposed in the street, the location changes, they're probing. Now and then a lorry drives down the street, contents unclear, covered; handcarts are pushed along. Patrols of two or three go past, civilians and half-soldiers, now and then a sailor's uniform, not much weaponry, they hand rifles one to the other. Soon it's not easy to dare the approach to the Allee, there's shooting from too many places; if you do make it nearer, the so-called barricades are still in place, word is there's a trench mortar; the groups of people are smaller now. It really should be a pushover to deal with these few insurgents, but of government troops there's neither sight nor sound.

Flour days. From the goods yard across the town park come funny figures: little men and women and children white with flour. They haul packages and sacks; wherever they walk or stand they leave a white mark. A cart comes down the street, unloads outside a building not far from the Allee, a shop sets up, selling eggs and flour; one egg fifty pfennigs; flour, I heard, a Mark for a pound. Mobs of poor people run about. The stuff, they say, was taken from looters. The machine-guns at the Town Hall suddenly point in a new direction, towards the town park, the station from where the funny people are coming. They're being chased by the few insurgents who are visible; anyone carrying a package is taken to the Town Hall steps where a small crowd of people and a few soldiers are standing about. Every package is checked; anyone who can't provide proof and seems suspicious has it taken away. A sad pile of sacks and packets builds on the little staircase outside the Town Hall. Suddenly everything becomes orderly, forms a nice queue as if at the grocer's, rations are meted out for free, people come running from the buildings with their little shopping bags and baskets. The looters often don't give up their stuff willingly, they howl and threaten, a woman curses: how long since she saw any flour and now they're taking it from her, have they no pity; she finds she's lucky to escape with her skin intact.

From ten on Sunday morning heavy shooting nearby, and then all day and night with long pauses. Most casualties are said to be in the Allee, many civilians killed, especially children fetching water, and women.

So who else are they to shoot?

In neighbouring buildings they go down to the cellars. Things seem to be on the turn. Hardly any defenders to be seen. What are they actually waiting for? One stands outside my building fiddling with his machine-gun, runs to another because he doesn't know how to operate the thing. The man works on it for an hour, then it rattles away merrily. On Monday evening – weekdays hardly mean anything to us – everywhere there's the comforting clatter of the little guns. Early on Tuesday the machine-guns are still there, but strangely there are lots of people, even children, on the street, standing outside doors. And look: there, led by two boys, someone in a steel helmet is coming over from Normannen Strasse, and another, they go up to the machine-guns, carry them away one behind the other, the two of them exactly one behind the other just as when the insurgents brought them, they have the same

technique. Ever more civilian presence on the sun-bright street. Government troops are rumoured, the insurgents have run away, that night they'd still been quarrelling at the goods depot, they took the pins from the guns.

Clop clop down Frankfurter Allee, in broad daylight, thick columns come marching with cannon, field kitchens, baggage. So, the barricades are gone. They come from every direction, one huge cannon in camouflage paint is emplaced by the Town Hall, they dig a hole for it after lifting some stones, set in it the long-barrelled thing that hasn't yet spoken. Incredible how many soldiers there are all of a sudden. And at once crowds of people in the street whom we'd never seen on the previous days: well-dressed men and women out for the air, most have something in their hands, cigarettes for the soldiers; from several shops and buildings they bring out flowers. But here and there I catch a fleeting glimpse of a little woman and a child, creeping: our goodly flour-creatures; quick, along behind the houses; where on earth do they find it all. The machine-guns we now see and hear are considerably bigger, unusually mighty beasts that crack like cannon – I've no idea even now against whom, there's lots of shooting in a war and not much is hit, and now it *crack cracks* even into the air, that's progress, low over the buildings aeroplanes come flying, apparently shooting the roofs off; this doesn't much clarify matters for me; a plane flies pretty fast, who does the man think to hit with this procedure; most likely once again – us. But anyway it looks like something, you have to understand the military view of the situation. In the morning hours numerous patrols set out from the school. And now people say: Aha, they're going into houses. Youngsters stand and chat to soldiers and guide them, and from balconies older people point soldiers in the right direction. And soon we see civilians between two soldiers; who knows if these are the ones that lay in the street; they're taken to the school, towards the Allee. Towards noon I go down and hear: They're shooting people over there in the churchyard, or the schoolyard, it's martial law. I don't believe it, there's also talk of aeroplanes dropping bombs, and I saw myself how the insurgents cursed and manhandled a prisoner, and two minutes later a woman who couldn't have seen any more than I did said the man had been shot dead, and this ran all through the houses. The martial law stuff was obviously bogus.

But – it's strange. People stand in such clumps outside the churchyard and opposite the churchyard. Red posters are stuck to walls, remarkable words: Weapons must be surrendered, there and there, it makes sense, but then: Whoever has not by such and such a deadline handed weapons in at the Black Eagle will be punished, failure to surrender, it said, will be treated as suspect according to martial law. The next day brings clarity; certain things you can't believe until you see them. At the end of the war I argued with a French-leaning lawyer about Wilson's armistice telegram; the accusation of looting etc. struck me, as one who knows the German soldier and army, as absurd. The lawyer smiled: he wasn't naive enough to share my opinion. A scoundrel, I thought, this fellow. Sentries stand at the churchyard, barbed wire fences are being erected in front of them. Word is three bodies lie shot outside the school. I go across, push through the crowd of soldiers and civilians, past a machine-gun;

outside the gate near the churchyard wall on a bare patch of ground lie three unmoving bodies, caps over faces. Past women with handkerchiefs to their mouths I come to the schoolyard; half a dozen flamethrowers stand along the wall, lively barracks movement, wagons being unloaded; a captain goes past, steel helmet low over his brow, monocle, cold look. At the wall close to the entrance three pale men, ordinary crumpled clothing, they look wretched as if they've been up all night; the younger gives a challenging yawn, the other two look miserably at the ground. They're not yet sentenced, I hear; later: all three were released. When I try to reach the Allee, a procession comes up the street, strong marching steps, twenty men, rifles at the shoulder, steel pots plonked on their heads. What do they want, we have enough soldiers here. A man tall as a tree leads them, pale bold serious face, strange they all wear a helmet and he only a cap; even the volunteers seem to have trouble with their outfits, for all of them are neat and tidy while he has a shabby black soldier's greatcoat. And when I try innocently to go past, the people run together behind me, there are shouts of Clear the road! Everything runs to the other side, and when I turn around the tree-tall leader is climbing the steps to the church, they shuffle left and right: another one's about to be shot. And just as we close our eyes tight, a salvo bangs out.

So so, so so. That was one. It lies there in its soldier's black greatcoat. Once it was a human and now it's a thing. The notion is damned heavy. One is undeniably shocked. One has seen many people die, but – that was something special. It was so methodical, one could almost go mad at the thought. He's not the only one; people point between the palings of the churchyard fence and count three, four, five.

A heavy *boom* sounds. They say the fighting has moved on to Boxhagen.

*

I won't talk about how the whole tactic is beyond my understanding. You must have some particular military background to understand how a few hundred badly armed, hardly armed men thrown together, spread over a wide area, are for whole days, by thousands and more thousands of heavily armed troops with cannon, tanks, armoured cars – not attacked. The German army didn't collapse, was lively at least on the principle: always slowly onward. And at a pinch I can understand the use of heavy artillery, armoured cars: they wanted to show they had them and the insurgents didn't. In order to scare the insurgents and warn them they killed several hundreds, maybe many hundreds of people, citizens actually. The aeroplanes had the task of finding how many of the enemy were at a place; but perhaps it's enough from a military standpoint to let us civilians know that they are there; and we were very glad of it.

But what I do understand clearly is martial law. The work done after the battle. Spiegelberg, I know you. That's him again, the one I met so often: *tabula rasa*, piff, paff, victory, Germany first in the world. Captain Fryatt and the indecent haste with which he pronounced sentence i.e. topped someone. Somewhere two gentlemen sit at a table behind a telephone, they grind their teeth and say: Hold on, young 'un, we'll be at you soon enough, slow and steady, chuck a couple of grenades in so they know what's

what, and we'll have 'em by the short and curlies. Short and curlies, ha, they won't stray again.

Lots of heads have thought about the death of a person, and killing, and we only need to reflect on it. Even among the masses memories of these thoughts swim about: see the movement to end capital punishment. I take no pleasure at all in the deeply impure desire for human tragedy-deaths; I've already registered my distaste. Here a more particular distaste. According to reports, the insurgents too killed people. But what I saw of killing was organised by the authorities in a legally methodical way, you might say ordered as a piece of wisdom. There was no passion, greed, infatuation, hatred, revenge, the judge here had at his disposal every reservoir of superiority and deliberation. Hatred and passion explain the insurgent killings. The office that ordered this cannot even make that claim.

When Captain Dreyfus sat on Devil's Island, a man alone, still alive, object of a questionable trial, whole crowds in France were in uproar. We know what Zola and Voltaire thought about lawbreaking. And now we know what people in Germany, the imperial republic, think of it. The population of poets and thinkers has no time for it, must deal with all the old detritus. The poets poetise, the thinkers think, they've done it since the Ice Age and will still be doing it until the next Ice Age. But the people this is all about are not alive but dead, dead as a doornail, and gone is gone. Yes, they were taken away wholesale and struck down, and those who ordered it and cover it up are German public authorities, yesterday today and tomorrow German authorities, our law courts. They are unshaken even now, these law courts, by the normally so powerful pathos of our spirituality, for which Goethe and Tolstoy lived. Lived, I say? Bound books they produced for them, material for empty hours. Where are you now, you who are cultured, spiritual, you swashbucklers? You bigmouths! You're sickening, the lot of you. With your stupid modern plays, your poems where you're imagining God knows what, your ridiculous new forms of expression. You can't even express in simple terms the oldest feeling: the rage and horror of a man at such misdeeds. No, it's too much for you, you psychic cripples!

Understand: a cannibal thinks what he does is right because he knows no better. He devours my uncle as I eat spinach. But the devouring office here, loaded up with all wisdom, all morality, does not overcome its inhibitions like, say, the aficionado of tragic dramas, no, it ignores them. It glibly says No to everything that has meaning for us. For, for, for it knows something else. It believes that it knows, more, it does believe it: This state must preserve its order, better: my order. The state must be preserved, my state, even if the blindest injustices and unrighteousness pile up to the ceiling. This state, that exists only in their own heads.

I'm not troubled by one or two deaths, we all have to go sometime. But this senselessness is unbearable, boundlessly repulsive. I won't be fobbed off with expressions like: "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." The law of the state cannot be restored by an insolent breach of the natural claim to justice.

And what lies behind it, behind the Theory of the State: the primal cold of ice. And what lies behind the silence of half, three quarters of the population, its spirituality –

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The folk song designates, as the loveliest place for the nearest and dearest, the parental grave with its grassy bank. Other modern people have an understandable preference to meet the parents on a note stuck to a house wall; it's not without interest to observe how a mother reacts. She's used to it, she moves quite domestically. She already has a certain routine, walking by the walls of apartment buildings, you saw her during the war. She shouted for people to subscribe to war bonds, threatened those who refused to sign while sighing for her little child. Now she sighs for the same child if we don't vote Social Democrat. From her windy pedestal she remarked how we must swiftly defeat England, U-boats U-boats, starve England out. She protected religion for the Centre Party. Most recently she sheds tears for the eight hundred thousand prisoners, complains about the blockade, rails against Bolshevism.

Clearly she is many-sided. She becomes reconciled to everything. She shines on the just and the unjust.

Happy is he who has a mother. Two would be too many.

*

When a fox grows old, the following tale can be told of it: He sticks his brush, the famous brush of a fox, straight up in the air, takes himself off to the other animals and makes his proposition. He renounces vegetables, rotten wood, green cabbage, asparagus, celeriac, radishes, and furthermore the enjoyment of lions, elephants, crocodiles, frogs and ants, and will devote himself entirely to the service of young chickens. He requests the assembled creatures, his brush straight up in the air, to support him in his sacrifice by reserving to him all the young chickens, or at least making it easy for him to reach them.

The Imperial German Republic is regaining strength. Its teeth may have been knocked out, its back is done in, but it's doing well for a start. People can set to work again. A treaty is proposed for setting up a League of Nations, and tucked away you see the paragraph: "No country may interfere in the internal affairs of another country."

That makes sense. Germany needs to be left alone to restore itself. It must develop from scratch, unhindered, its national characteristics: servility, and poverty of feeling. People of Europe, guard your holiest possessions, do not let yourselves be robbed of your weak judgement! Even the Turks won't let themselves be robbed of their fun, meaning massacres, with the Armenians, under the banner of self-determination: "Everyone his own Cesare Borgia!" Germany so much the less, where the phrase "to each his own" still shines in all its glory; "his own" included Poland and Flanders. Everywhere doctors prescribe massacres at home; from the pulpits they preach: "If your neighbour's eye offend thee, pluck it out." You can understand that countries finding themselves in the undeserved crisis of having no Armenians look desperately

for a way out: they stick to their criminals, i.e. the other political parties. It has proved expedient for these nations in crisis to position certain parties for the purposes of pogrom; if necessary everyone can take turns; changing places makes it more cosy. At present in Germany we have available: Conservatives, Jews, Spartacus, Bourgeoisie; if you like they're ready to start their own pogroms against the others, and you can find lots of variations to keep a tolerably great people going for the foreseeable future. In Germany everyone can act on his own account: here they take democracy very seriously.

There's a proposal for a different international treaty. In one place, almost as an afterthought, we read: for undeveloped peoples, on the Equator or nearby, mandates shall be assigned...

DIONYSOS by 'Linke Poot'
Die neue Rundschau (July 1919)

ON THE wall of a very northerly tenement block is a big garish cinema sign. An arrow points down from the first floor. You go past a bar into a gloomy passage; there, in a little wooden lean-to, a kind of watchman's booth, an elderly woman gazes out on the day-bright street. And when you slink half reluctant into the passage – you're shaken.

For – there they are. They. The patrons of the cinema.

They walk snuffling up and down past the posters, it's six in the evening, Saturday. The clothes, men's and women's, are loose sagging jackets, skirts, trousers. All hanging on them. The faces are all dull, moistly grey-white, no expression. The women wear shawls over the shoulders or under the arms, hair unmade. They hunt in their bags for the purse. Man and wife converse in low voices, the faces don't change as they study the provocative posters. Wearily, like crumbling clay figurines, they lay out the money for the grinning cashier woman, and slip into the dark – stable. For this is the space into which these people creep from their noisy tormenting factories, their stuffy little rooms; it's filled with musty smoky air. Blackness, a huge daunting blackness, pierced in the middle by a solitary flickering bundle of rays, hardly finger-thick at the back, expanding as it aims for a dangling patch of cloth. There it jiggles, twitches, grey muddy spots on a harsh eye-watering white. And all stare at this cloth as they take their seats. They're content to sit and place their hands with the hat and shawl on their knees. A piano plays, all evening the same two or three silly pieces, incorrectly, same mistakes every time. Suddenly a shrill female voice rings out, declaiming in Berlin vernacular, it's the promised first-class commentary. Some detective business, what does it have to do with these people, weekly roundup, races, unrest here and there, interlude. "The interrupted supper".

Not a face changes expression the entire evening, all remain slack; if a young thing turns around and laughs, she meets blank stares. Numbers are called out, men and women stand, they go back down the passage, the booth is shut up now. The street is dark. Shawls over the head, fists in pockets. They don't talk, drag themselves off home.

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When you see them in the factories, in ranks like companies of soldiers, the same hand movements day in day out: that's – how it is.

When you see them outside, it's not far from unbearable.

*

Berlin streets around seven in the evening, eight in the evening. Summer-bright streets and boulevards, half empty, empty. Work has ended, shops are shut. People still sitting in trams, heading for home.

Where are the people now? They've crept home, are eating supper, reading the paper, their party's paper – stirring up hostilities, unsettling – and off they trot to be entertained. Oh the gruesome spectacle of the cabaret, these music cafés, these dance

amusements! They cannot be amused, it's not been granted them. Bourgeois or proletarian, they're workers. In this country the word has been given: if you don't work, you don't eat. The worst swearword here is parasite. They find their – shall we say, good cheer – in the factory, the office.

What a stroke of genius, what psychological perspicacity: a people to whom joy has not been given are to be helped to find themselves by – enslaving them. Ah, socialism never thought people would take it that much at its word: the duty to work. The Entente saw how almost from nothing this Herculean people strove to make its realm into a behemoth, for whom, for what? Work, pile up luxuries and not use them. Build high speed railways, aeroplanes and, having done so, not know what you've begun. Start a war, ever more territory, what for, work even harder. They've made virtues of necessities; earnestness, tragedy, dignity, music are held in the highest regard here. People have their surrogates and sidetracks. When the people are already factionalised, we do them a favour and remove the burden of having to think why they're in a faction. The world is sundered, there's the division of labour: people who join factions, for people who enjoy themselves.

Fate, not politics.

*

The big reality: May, June. Loose clothing now, colours, livelier movements. You see that people are not just a head, thinker's brow, irritable mouth. Deep within they carry all sorts of things around; these animate them, make them jaunty, they're glad. Nature's better than a barrel-organ. They swarm around in the warm air. Shops provide fine footwear for this, net stockings, bright neckties, they swing walking sticks, blow cigarette smoke. You see that even shops have meaning. You can see what they're there for. What a joke: the arid dismal solemn rows of factories, industries, warehouses, all that lies behind it, import bans, customs laws, blockade, what it is that is brought to life and flaps around. What it is! The sun hatches them all, little men, little females, maidens. Ah maidens. We weave for you the virgin's crown, of many gonococci. Oh love, ultimate victor in the struggle.

Now even the National Assembly has taken note of its trade. Last winter it was quite bewildered. It made excursions to Ilmenau[1], trips by water. At Weimar a big slide has been erected, electric swings and carousels are in operation. The assembly members, in carrying out their trade, are implored not to disturb anything, and definitely not start doing anything. They're autonomous, and in consequence can ride the carousels as often as they like. They'll all be painted yellow at the state's expense, will stuff their ears with cotton wool in the colour of their party: blue, red, black. The district council has calmed the German people, in these parts we're all on intimate terms with various natural events, so we can reckon on a loving understanding with the populace. Thus do the national representatives offer a stirring picture of the nation's unity, and its strength in difficult days.

[1] Ilmenau: town in Thuringia associated with Goethe's efforts as a government minister to tackle corruption.

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"The activist Tribune Theatre" didn't leave them waiting. It hands out principles. All this activity by the younger generation gives printer's ink a hard time. It can't be excluded that this activism is a cunning plan to use up all the ink; they think they'll make the running when it's all gone, others will be left high and dry, or at best with a shandy and whatever else reaches the mouth, whose only relevant measure is its size. And so the "Tribune" chides the lack of principle in the theatre up till now: says it's a museum for collecting and organising literary relics from every age, and the only acceptable criterion is prevailing aesthetic considerations (considerations as a criterion? I don't understand; the activists seem to have taken on the struggle with the German language all the way down the line.) "The planlessness of the programme: today ancient, tomorrow modern, today a mystery, tomorrow comedy; a theatre that is nothing but a performance stage is an amoral institution." Now it comes out: the stage of illusions belongs to a bygone cultural epoch, the ethical spirit of today's drama cannot tolerate such manifestations; they want a community in an integral space, a kind of pulpit, a tribune among the people.

It may have something to do with the weather, but I really can't sign up to such notions. There's supposed once again to be a concern for morality. Recently I went in my despair to Wedekind, he not long dead, of whom people told me: he's a great eroticist and immoralist. I noted numerous indecencies in a very well-acted piece "Pandora['s Box]"[2], but waited three hours in vain for immorality. The crime of passion left me icy cold. The company could have acted out whole encyclopaedias of perversion on one another, it wouldn't have moved me. This stems from my well-attested callousness on the one hand, and on the other from the moralistic sauce, namely the play. If you drench your asparagus in such herring-brine, of course all you taste is brine, and at best only the fibres between your teeth remind you that you meant to eat asparagus. How can you acquire an appetite as long as this Alva is babbling and howling away – all you hear is the fatally intrusive voice of Frank of the Wedekinds. After this play I began to wonder whether Wedekind hobbled on only one leg. I won't take a single bite of bread from such a hand. The man manages to turn the most robust dirty joke into a metaphysical proceeding, and ruins it. No use trying such stuff on me, and as for the shiny paragons of virtue, they've already made their exit. All that's left is a vexing enjoyment, swinishness in silver paper, or the Venusberg[3] in the memoirs of Septimus the Tedious. It blew over.

Now the "Tribune" wants to make a place for morality in Berlin. I already have my doubts in advance whether the announcement is well targeted, especially in this weather. In any case I'm not at all inclined, and I speak for a large number of others, to reserve a place for morality in Berlin, insofar as immorality is not also taken into consideration. The reconfiguration of the theatrical space is expressly intended to serve, according to the activists, a stronger shared experience of the ethical

[2] *Pandora's Box*: play by Frank Wedekind (1864-1919) featuring the tragic heroine Lulu.

[3] Venusberg: legendary mountain associated with the minstrel Tannhäuser.

proceedings on the stage; thus they are first and foremost ethical berserkers. They declare explicitly that the church isn't enough for them. Here I stand up for the immoral. There are already too many empty churches. Too many swearwords aimed at me are linked to ethics. That's why no one goes to the priest without bringing admission money. These people get a lot out of what doesn't interest me. For such purposes I need no theatre. Since, anyway, metaphysics is practised only in the air, a trapeze will do.

Moreover – this remark comes from my waistcoat pocket, where I collect observations – when certain modern authors lay it on so thick about ethics, it has nothing to do with the scandalousness of immorality, but on – readier access to morality. Morality can prostitute itself, sorry, be caressed, by any green young novice, but immorality only where it lives. Even Wedekind never found his way to immorality, and he was already something. A well-soaped pre-warmed slide takes you to ethics, and the way to heaven is paved with platitudes; but the way to Hell passes through the eye of a needle. And you have to make your own needle-eye. Where does it come from, the success of Dostoevsky – in German? Why is Goethe still a problem – in German?

The 'Tribune' announces the already well-worn 'fanfare of love, humanity, opposition to violence, joy in the world, renewal.' Don't let yourself be bowled over by it, just insist that the fanfare blare out nicely. The topic itself will be discussed elsewhere, maybe at Versailles or the next street barricades. As for love, the consequences shouldn't be drawled through the nose, and opposition to violence makes a bad impression alongside pigeon chests and bow-legs.

On the other hand, "humanity" is entirely my affair, but humanity in the round, humanity with hair and hide. Yes, we want to share experience with these. As snug and close as possible; even the "Tribune" isn't yet close enough. Humanity must smoke, produce more smoke than this ethics when it's lighted up, because it's made of paper.

*

They say that not so long ago I spoke differently. That's merely an assertion. You can't contradict me with assertions. I've done things sometimes, I don't know what, I've stood on my head sometimes, even on the heads of others.

Only memory loss can dissolve the world. Unless you're cuckoo, you've no right to join the conversation.

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Many moralists today are nothing more than Holy Joes in disguise.

*

Let's talk about Barber's Itch. Medical opinion has it that a lack of fat makes the skin brittle and receptive to infection. Hence the mass epidemic of the Itch. The same goes for politics. But the cause here is not lack of fat, rather insufficient enjoyment of alcohol. Doctors at one time assumed a mocking smile when broth was mentioned: it has no nutritive value; those gentlemen drove around with their calories like a peasant

with his dung-cart. Until one day it emerged that one must have an appetite to eat, and food can be digested more easily after broth, which until then was known to doctors only semi-officially. (Those gentlemen have more to do than bother themselves with this. They're fully occupied preparing for a doctors' strike and anti-strike and have come up with a plan of genius: let the sick die off; then only the healthy will be left.) Now you can see the significance of other matters. I consider Germany's political excitability a symptom of alcoholic abstinence. The masses receive fake nourishment and fake beer, and no schnapps to go with it. That's for the higher classes, hence the conservative and liberal tendencies. Those who lack schnapps take refuge in politics (not to demand schnapps, but as a schnapps-substitute.) Hooch and politics represent two sides of the same coin. Brains are empty, bloodless, they need stimulus. For centuries in Germany there's been too much drinking; it was predictable that if an effective blockade should happen a revolution would break out. It's decidedly unjust and not symptomatic that at the head of a defeated Germany there sits a saddler fellow[4], at best showing only that leather too is totally unavailable and nothing remains to a saddler of advanced years than to become President of the German Republic. A tavern keeper would have been better.

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Don't find fault with this government. It knows what it wants. It showed us, quite recently[5]. The communal worker councils are abolished because they, heh, because they, tee-hee, because they, I still can't say it, hohoho, have completed their task, the democratising of the government having been carried through, hahaha.

I steal, you steal food, he deals in the black market, we exploit tenants, they –. People say the government is useless. This government that concerns itself even with the people's entertainment. And has so swiftly adopted the trade of a real government that it conducts public enlightenment by means of antiquated jokes. Is this nothing?

The Dada movement differs from the German government in that the government sticks up posters for every diverting fancy, but the Dada movement turns theirs into much prettier little purposeful books with pictures. Pages are red, green, blue, of different thicknesses, the typeface changes even within the same poem of essay, to keep us amused. Tristan Tzara's *Dada Anthology* also has the advantage that whoever wants it needn't buy it without risking a rifle butt to the head. They don't want the positive and don't want the negative, but they want both it and us to jump, when any pepper or dynamite would suffice. One of them said once: "Lyric: ask him whom he dreams of, and you can tell him whom he hasn't slept with. Music: Pantopon[6], or a substitute for sex. Fiction: a volume from Fischer takes too much time away from setting up the airline route Syracuse-Sandwich-Central heating." They have an uninhibited aversion to the second-hand, the boring. As far as music goes, you could

[4] Friedrich Ebert, president of Weimar Republic 1919-25, started as a saddler.

[5] Refers to the violent suppression of unrest in the east of Berlin described in 'Cannibals'.

[6] An injectable opium preparation produced by Hoffmann-LaRoche in 1909.

say the opposite: a chap doesn't stop smoking opium even when there's music, and he revels in sexuality even when there's music. And so obsessive and inventive is the human that he can have it all ready-made, and demands what the rest of Nature does not provide: to make opium sing and make a quintet out of Muirazatin.[7]

But Nature is boundless and inexhaustible. And she even makes use of Doctor Magnus Hirschfeld[8] when he brings his public enlightenment among the masses and sponsors his sexual films.

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Trucks roll, everything wants to work, they unload, cranes swing. It all looks like peace. Then the whirlwind comes. Things take on another meaning. They fall from your hands. Posters call for demonstrations, the newspapers incite. Steel helmets move outside the tenement buildings, put up barricades, haul rusty wire.

Dionysos calls.

These people run to the pleasure gardens, the Victory Column, Wilhelmsplatz. They neigh almost like horses when the music blares. They march. They're the dice, the stake. "Hup hup hup!" "Down down down!" They laugh. They threaten. What a heavenly feeling.

*

Dionysos!

Once he was a revolutionary.

His story is told in a book of sexual biology that is obtainable only with difficulty in libraries. He was captured in the Russian revolution of 1906 and was supposed to face a firing squad. The colonel who was supposed to supervise the execution was struck by his demeanour as his comrades fell to the bullets. Then in prison he wrote down his actually phenomenal experiences. He had early on found that people will go only so far when they torment themselves. A young girl in his area accused a youth of indecently assaulting her, she was lying. And when he was sentenced and wept before her, she was seized by a violent love for him. He came into a love relationship with a respectable young person; he noticed how their desires, his and hers, were inflamed when they provoked one another. How they always goaded one another on and could not desist, as long at least as they were in love. They decided to have a child, in order to draw the anger of their milieu upon them. And then he took the impassioned tormenting so far that she could do nothing but commit suicide to free herself of him. Then he had had enough of women and slipped along in the wake of revolution. What happens now is hard to confirm; the man depicts in words of fire what became of him and what happened to him. How masochism appeared ever more clearly to him as the core of everything, even politics – doctors call this algolagnie.[9] He jumped into

[7] Muirazatin: a patent cure for sexual malfunctions.

[8] Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935): doctor and sexual researcher.

[9] Algolagnie: late 19th C. medical term for the desire for self-harm or arousal through pain.

criminal company, the lumpen-proletariat. Thinking to obstruct a pogrom against Jews, he sees himself tempted to start one. In a Caucasian town he senses the inclination of the tribes to tear into each other; after a hefty struggle he throws out the watchword, they set to, he triumphs, falls asleep as if after drinking. His verdict is that pleasure and pain stand in the same relationship as light and shadow, no one can experience pleasure without pain, and the more profoundly we want the pleasure, the harder you must stab the needle of pain.

This sounds different from the Frankfurt view, meaning Schopenhauer: pleasure is an absence of pain. Dear, dear, many very personal facts and observations must be in play; who can say where the absence lies; look, there's the six-volume philosopher with his works: "The weak will and the false conception." I don't know if this revolutionary was shot, but that would only have removed him, not refuted him. There's perversity underlying it: but the same biologist who diagnoses the perversity asserts too that it is nothing more than the unhealthy intensification of a normal desire.

It's a higher standpoint that presents itself here, above all political, philosophical, economic views. Oh the possibility, the conceivability that there could be different perspectives, a saucy confusion of values.

It triumphs over every revolution, war, peace. You cannot bring a human being into line. He's untouched by every world-improvement. Who knows what it is, what today calls itself pacifism. Whatever it may have called itself in the past. The monkey-business of lovely big words.

Landauer[10] lived his Krapotkinesque anarchism in almost mystical contemplation, and suddenly, his wife is dead, and Eisner[11] takes him to another world. Both sniff the morning air, and – they did not suffer, not suffer at all.

Dionysos went ahead of them.

Thundering, ripping through torment and pleasure, overcoming, annihilating Dionysos.

[10] Gustav Landauer: (1870-1919): Political writer, anarchist philosopher, friend of Peter Kropotkin. Leader in the short-lived Munich Soviet in 1919, murdered by the Freikorps in jail in May 1919. [Film buffs may note that director Mike Nichols was his grandson.]

[11] Kurt Eisner (1867-1919): Social Democrat, first President of the Bavarian Free State; murdered Feb 1919.

THE BEAR, RELUCTANT by 'Linke Poot'
Die neue Rundschau (August 1919)

THE LEG was gangrenous, was removed. They cursed the doctor because they'd lost a leg.

They shuffled along in chains, a smith cut them free. They yelled, scolded: we can't walk straight, our hands and feet are raw, they hurt.

Their smith was an unusual fellow. The prisoners were none of his business.[1] This they know: now they have something.

These predators, complaining. Released from the cage, unable to run. Sand trickles between the toes, over the soles, the ground is soft, they slide and lurch, wind ruffles their fur. They want to return to the cage, huddle, stand clutching the bars.

You see this horrible situation when an animal is being tamed. The beast is led to a confined space, and at once everything it's used to is no longer valid. Yet instincts continue to present themselves. Every organ now superfluous, but still there, importuning. How they chafe and scrape themselves raw. The clang of the prison house: the human being, isolated, suddenly nothing to look at, nothing to activate the auditory nerves straining for a sound – but the nerves are intact, and waiting. The whole human being, attuned to an enormous number of stimuli, now suddenly deprived in every organ, and on top of that it's as if they deliberately stimulate and torment him, he's fed, charged up; they pour stress into him, inspiriting anew the organs, eyes, ears, bones, feelings. If he were a boiler he'd explode. So the whole thing is askew, runs idle, hallucinations, phantasms, excitation-states.

Germany tipped from its cage. The problem: how to make a tamed animal wild again. It should and must return to the wild. It should and must make revolution.

So it's not wrong and no laughing matter when the instincts of hundreds of thousands or millions come surging up. Not even the apparent misery of those who weep for the defunct regime and are pained by one of the peace conditions above all: surrender of the dungeon-symbol. Posters on the wall, German women proclaiming: the sailors should redeem their shame by scuttling the fleet, the land army should not hesitate. How glad they are to hide behind instincts now bereft of purpose. How they refuse to see they've lost all purpose, and wave their sweet little flags.

A roar from the National Assembly: revenge. They're unhappy; people goad them still. They don't know if they're coming or going. What should they do but cry revenge on those who made them unhappy.

A secret: they're lying when they make a big to-do about this peace. They're glad of it, expected nothing else, maybe a bit more lenient here and there. How outraged they would have been, how ashamed and broken, if a just peace had appeared in front of

[1] The Versailles Peace Conference opened on 18 Jan 1919; the German delegation was handed peace terms on 7 May; a peace treaty was signed on 28 June, and ratified in the National Assembly on 9 July.

them. This fact, this true revolution: justice, in which they do not believe, and will never ever believe.

What more do they want? It symbolised what they've lost, what 's been taken from them, for centuries the optimum of their conditions of life. From which they had become inseparable. They themselves were half-destroyed when those conditions were destroyed.

The great revolution of 1789 was preceded by decades of very serious disturbances. The populace was loosened and freed from the soil and the constraining fetters. There was Montesquieu in the *Persian Letters*, mocking spirituality and all the institutions of state, he, president of the Parliament. In his youth Voltaire wrote satirical verses about Louis XIV, for which he took a trip to the Bastille; this was early in the 18th century, the revolution came at the end, and in between the man had not sat quietly, had not sat alone, the Encyclopaedists and Materialists toiled away, a war of liberation was fought in America. Slowly the apparatus of government began to malfunction, to the point where the wheels began to squeak and fail. Taxes were the last straw.

In Germany on 4th August [1914], even some workers rejoiced, to say nothing of the middle and upper classes. The Radical MP Frank went off to war, to set an example.

In the end the Entente's foot stomped on the antheap. The disarray of the shaken tumbled little creatures. And these are meant to make a revolution!

*

There is no intention and has never been any intention to set you free. They could have done it already, maybe for the sake of your blue eyes, there's something about the Germans, there's enough raw material in them. But even the sun doesn't intend to draw forth plants and trees, yet here they come. The sun is an awesome ball of fire, a dreadful glowing mass of gases, and tender flowers live from it, can't live without it, they wait for it.

In Nature there's a thing called Adaptation. It's no imposition, no weakness, rather the capacity to become the master of chance, to attain power over circumstances. It's entirely up to any being to be a slave or not. As long as you keep baying at foreigners and their peace, you'll be their slave.

Like flowers shrinking from the sun so they won't be burned. But still they grow towards it.

I repeat: grow.

Gratitude for the Entente: where is this sentence? When will it be written?

*

See there: as they sit quietly after the foot has stomped, and set themselves to rights, something has come among them, guests, several guests, in amongst us. No one knows them, they look bad, grey earthy pallor, you want to usher them politely out. They don't understand German, or any language, are themselves dumb, have horrible

big white eyes, heavy fists, iron jaws. They are Rancour, Mistrust, Want. The same foot-stomping brought them out. They're inescapable.

*

Meanwhile others are yapping. Who to blame for the War. Germany's to blame, the others are to blame, also to blame, both are to blame. The war's not over yet, they're still fighting, with words. Even in the Trojan War the legendary heroes swore at one another. What's new is how the heroes swear using the words of priests. You can see Christians swearing.

They're ashamed of having wanted war and glorified war. One, almost as wise as if he were [President] Wilson, has collected the essays he wrote during the war into a book, but he left out the embarrassing ones.[2] My son Brutus. Just publish them. The war was a moment of happiness for a thousand souls. The world of a vanished time, senile from mercantilism: everything revolves around cotton; no one need feel shame at not wanting it. That was something, that wild lightning-storm, that greedy gulping down of crazy ideas, and many, many people, young and old, were drawn into the war and died with the feeling: this is better than how we were living. A biological resistance came to the fore; the world of neuroses, hysteria; jobbers and frauds trembled in the face of meaningless lives led along the wrong path. War was torment, peace the prison-house.

Don't misjudge yourself. Don't gabble slogans. Find yourself.

*

Should one laugh, should one shrug the shoulders? They'll still be playing with dolls in their old age. All through Germany, from town to town they march, the old dear dear soldiers. They've lost their self confidence. Don't cry: there are still the old party-puppets. Millions upon millions gave their lives to the fires of war, a foot stomped, the survivors have rescued almost nothing, just bird-cages, junk, sofa-covers, absurdities. The centre holds and so on. And they cling to it; it's their world-view; don't cry. Even though nothing makes sense any more, the hour has its own specific targeted necessity, but the necessity stopped acting on their nerves long ago, long ago. They're not living this real life, they are hostage to tatty sofa-covers, to dead unreal ideas. Hence their incomprehension, their unfairness, their mutual hatred. They don't actually see one another. That's how parties are made, don't cry, Ministries are formed, as far as possible with equal representation, in order – to reflect popular opinion!

That's how helpless, how stupefied they are. Ants in a ruined nest. And at their backs the grunting and groaning of those guests with the earthy pallor. Inescapable. And one would have to ponder the decisions to be made.

*

Drastic intermezzo.

[2] Likely reference to Thomas Mann's *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man* (1918).

A certain man addressed a great gathering: "The dignity of Man is in your hands." Whereat they swore to wage an avenging war. A few weeks later the same man felt the need to pull them back. But the Dignity of Man still lay in the hands of the Assembly.

4th of August, in perpetuity. But alongside this 4th of August – with its words: 'I no longer recognise parties, I recognise only war credits'[3] – were other words, namely those of 1789. In the night between ten and four, representatives of the privileged appeared before the legislative commission, foregoing their prerogatives. Until four o'clock. In the morning some regretted it. Our privileged class have taken note of the latter part: they will not be the first to act.

Everything comes around. We are living in Byzantium. Whoever has the army has the power of the State. Since no one knows what to do, they play tag, rearrange the parties, today thus, tomorrow thus, count heads. In the absence of higher modes of calculation they make use of the Rule of Three; as a democracy, this method is everywhere praised. You could make it simpler: count the buttons on the jackets, or, like Gretel in the open air, the petals on a pretty flower. The pleasant choice is ours: games with guns, or counting buttons.

I mention Herr Erzberger.[4] There's nothing much for him here. But he'll make a place for himself.

Bread these days causes gastric fermentation. And the gastric fermentation leads to phenomena like these newspapers and periodicals *(omitted for lack of space and consideration of the reader)* [sic].

*

The talented, those gifted with ideas, occupy themselves with such matters. What else.

It's a feeding frenzy for the pacifists. They like a nice stately congress. They pour forth speeches bearing witness to great thoughts. They took their seats in the Herrenhaus and began to debate before the whole world. As expected they placed the guilt on Germany, the war-guilt. Germany alone. Their first item. The crowd shuddered in awe. One of the gentlemen was able to point to a magnificent deed: he had flown an aeroplane to Denmark, and then back again. He brought a fine tone to suffering humanity. He gave pacifism a foundation in the natural sciences. Erotic love takes precedence over humanitarian love, takes it for granted. They lapped it up, praised the doctrine. But some reminded themselves that love can turn to hate, really, crimes can be committed even among people of the same race and the same tribe, and educated people thought of Strindberg, but all it does probably is reveal the pettiness of people and doesn't refute the doctrine. He pointed out that war nowadays isn't selective as it was earlier, and so cannot be justified in Darwinian terms; as is well known, whenever we do something important, good deeds and evil deeds, we do so on

[3] Variation on words of Kaiser Wilhelm on 4/8/1914.

[4] Matthias Erzberger (1875-1921): Centrist politician. Took part in November 1918 armistice negotiations. 1919-20 as Finance Minister organised a unitary tax authority. Murdered by former officers 26 August 1921.

the basis of Darwinian theory, for the furtherance of selection and the delight of biology professors. The human being, then, is the implementer of biological theories. He crowned his remarks by noting the ridiculousness of German policy that had increased the population by half since 1870 and now all it demands is a few square kilometres. What can a people do but grow and multiply? There's a thought to grasp in all its fullness. He said nothing of the quantity of gentlemen's hats, woollen goods and trashy literature produced in Germany during that period, and that might have seen an even more colossal growth, so that the [clothing] firm of Hirsch & Cie could have supplied the whole world, which would have been very good and a joy for humanity, for Germany and the firm itself. Thus far the personally very courageous and today pacispiffing aviator and biologist. Ah God! Pacifism is a nice little idea to stick in your buttonhole, and now it's supposed to be the Big Idea.

A lady spoke after him, very nicely, about young people and ideas of peace, she snorted at the bestialities of war, the atrocities in Belgium, you could feel your pacifism stirring, and I found it quite comforting. A professor from Munich was advertised, but didn't turn up. Perhaps he didn't fancy his chances in the race.

The Social Democrats will become the masters of misery. They do what they do: put Democracy up front and let things grow until they're ripe for Socialism. They are the true Marxists. As Marx said, at a certain point the time comes for Socialism, it's in *Das Kapital*. Of course it's hard waiting for Socialism until that point comes, but we shouldn't be led astray by chance events of the age. Jews have already waited two thousand years for the Messiah, thereby becoming a Chosen People. They survived persecutions, burnings, they gradually reached the stage where they can hawk second-hand trousers. The Socialists too, if they wait two thousand years, could become a Chosen People, they wouldn't be disturbed in that effort by any other nation, whether by persecutions or burnings. On the contrary, they'd be accorded love and attention the whole time, would be observed with sympathy as they approach the stage of old-trouser-hawking, and informed promptly when it reaches that point.

Lovely flowers grow in Weimar, and there's a park where the rustling is iambic and sweet nothings fall as golden offerings from the trees. There the gentlemen have gathered, classically thrilled, for their party conference.[5]. Nurturing Socialism, i.e. a sense of economic community, is today a party affair; that's where we've come to; it will come to the point where we must form a party to nurture parental love, or care about justice in the State. At this conference they're going to settle the principles, confirm the fundamental truths according to which they will act.

A man, a leader, was accused of having made himself guilty of breaching convention in all sorts of ways. He had restored the hated militarism. But once they'd shouted enough and made their points, he stood up and said coldly: My opponents wanted to enlist even *him*, they wanted to tear *him* away from me. At that they all fell

[5] SPD Weimar conference in June 1919 attacked the 'bloodhound' Noske, who as SPD Defence Minister violently suppressed the March uprising in Berlin.

silent, the matter was dropped and the fundamental truth confirmed and strengthened.

Another speaker left a lot out. He started speaking. He sang of love and loyalty, of times new and old, he recited Uhland; the trees, the trees of Weimar acquired voices. And after he had twittered and recited proper German to the delight of those present, he demanded a vote of confidence. They were horrified how far they had pushed things in their presumption. What sort of man was this. He spoke like a charm. His vote of confidence would not be denied. They stood fraternally together. The classically oriented trees rustled, down below they sang the Internationale; up above, banalities fluttered.

It comes from heaven, rises to heaven, and must come again down to Earth, turn and turn about forever.[6]

*

Lice crawl over the bear's pelt and make their music. The bear is supposed to dance.

Oh, how weary the scene of paradox and confusion makes you. Who wouldn't rather be in Turkestan or further east, lie under a felt tent, let, o world, o let me be.[7]

And just one happy thought: the lice can pipe whatever tune they want, the cage, the cage is broken open, there's no denying. And if the bear wants to go back into the cage, the iron bars of the whole world stand ready to greet him. He must turn round, must come out into the open. The bear groans and grunts lamentably.

When shall we hear you, at last, grunting sincerity and gratitude?

[6] Goethe: 'Song of the spirits over the water'.

[7] Mörike: 1st verse of 'Seclusion'.

THE GERMAN MASQUERADE by 'Linke Poot'
Die neue Rundschau (May 1920)

GERHART Hauptmann wrote a play called "The White Saviour". Into a beatifically lovely and decadently weak Mexico there breaks a militarised Christian horde of Spanish origin. The emperor of the Mexicans, expecting the promised White Messiah, experiences disillusion; Christianity is exposed. That's how it seems: exposed. The play ends with curses on the Christian bandit rabble.

The artistry, the ballad-like conception, is not the point here. As in a picture by Rembrandt, all light falls on Montezuma, the emperor. The context is a transparent screen, squirming more or less shadowy in the background.

After reading the script I asked myself: what does it mean, placing the Mexican so much in the light, alone in the light? This play is indictment-literature, no different from other well-known recent examples. Infamy is heaped on the Christian military state. I have some objections. The supposedly polar opposition between Christianity and warriordom after a time makes no impression on me. One can, to one's own satisfaction, describe the Christian military state as a fake; that doesn't do much. Religious concepts and fictions from the start have never served the purposes of science and truth; everyone inherits his treasure of theories and images, builds on it, uses it for his own pretty little purposes. That's all. Falsity never comes into it. Such religious teachings are like a garden rake: if a dog or a cat looks at the rake, it makes absolutely no sense, for in themselves the tines and the handle make no sense; the rake must be observed in conjunction with the gardener using it; then you understand. The Gospels purely as a literary document are irreal; you always have to add in who believes them, when they believed them, how and why. Gospel-believers of different eras and regions can't be compared with one another; the same drops of opium can calm an adult, excite a nervous person to the point of vomiting, kill an infant, have no effect on a drunkard, give a mouse fits, and they're all opium-believers.

It's easy to say Christianity is ill-suited to warlike Spaniards or to us. I find it suits quite well. Convince yourself: count the number of Christians: there's my proof. You can't make much headway with theological nitpicking, moralistic outrage. The matter must be tackled in another way; then indignation abates and you have to get used to something cooler, a temperature unfavourable to tragic pathos.

There's more. The superhuman goodness, the "true Christianity" of Montezuma is worthless against Cortez. Against Spaniards, Europeans and me. I protest against swindling fictions, against false measures and constructs. Brutality is the true face of Montezuma.

I praise the Spaniards, against Montezuma. I praise reality at any time against the dream, and the dream only when it is creative and leads to something. Montezuma, deeply reflective and moving, following his Stations of the Cross – he serves none but the poetry of Gerhart Hauptmann. I say this for no one but myself. Here no justice is

done to the Spaniards, to this cumulating-point of reality. I've never wanted a Messiah, I shouldn't like to be alive if Montezuma were anything more than a character in "The White Saviour". Montezuma is the complement to the whole world, into which it will all turn. And all the sleek horses, steeds groomed and ungroomed, lions with their terrible smell, little flitting butterflies, black beetles, Parliamentary bigmouths, fraudulent millions, assault on a girl and a leap from a window, holes in socks, children's cries, the blue Adriatic, my darling is a weaver, gas stopcock: and Montezuma's supposed to show his face and make it all kaput? That's a bit steep. This emperor is nothing more than an idealised humbug, than the smoke on a European roof. Against him, the stopcock and the weaver darling are victorious. I take you under protection against him, you petty rabble. I take his most disgusting, most uncomfortable and smokiest opposites under protection, bombast, ugliness, banality.

The Mexican persists as a reaction to raging bellicosity. So I keep quiet and offer him a hand. But reaction can't manage enough. Life in all its drives must be penetrated. Banter no longer carries you through. Everything wants to be rummaged over and answered anew.

This is certainly a desperate time for artists with a strong urge to phantasy and the statuesque. Now is the night between two days; there's no world-view you can adopt for domestic use. The Conscience of the Age is at work. But paths must be cleared with force, over which you can drive a car. What lights up now can only be yearnings, and wants. The spiritual look to the East; they'll look in vain; no new wine will be poured into old bottles. They exhume messages of salvation, Jesus, Buddha, Laozi: they'd do better to let the explosive called Spirit, urgent Instinct, play out.

*

The Kapp prank[1] was no Putsch. Rather firstly a fact, secondly an unmasking. This time a real exposure. But only for two minutes. The dance goes on. Free entry for infants, generals and workers. The citizen pays. Music strikes up: *It's how we live, it's how we live our days*. A request goes out to hurl grenades from the balcony. Artillery and munitions available at the kiosk. The honest finder of a republican mood is requested to deliver it to the podium, where it will be auctioned to the highest bidder. Guests with foreign currency welcome. Warnings against Bolshevism, Imperialism, Syndicalism, Monarchism and other bodies of water: drink only Müller Extra and Afrikaner ("Alcohol's no friend of mine, but Afrikaner suits me fine.")

What unmasked itself is the Holy Roman Empire, it took off its heavy republican boots, removed its false parliamentary teeth, placed them in water, and whinged. For one desperate moment it was about to drink up the water and choke on the dentures.

They banged on in a remarkable way for months about the Holy Roman Empire. We've known and revered Democracy for a long while now. In France, America and

[1] From 13 to 17 March 1920, right-wing officers led a Putsch against the Weimar Republic. The army refused to fire on 'brother soldiers'; the civil service was divided; but the Putsch failed, not least because of the huge General Strike in opposition to it.

England it's a shop where you can purchase everything that's humane. When the Holy Roman Empire in the year '18 had outgrown its day roost, it set down in the vicinity of a branch office and began to consume that healthy beverage. They had a belly. They drank. They did more than drink. They drank and drank until they had to lie on the ground. Becoming used to the beverage in a particularly passionate manner were officers, ministers, orators.

When after several spirited months the Germans asked about the new spirit, they discovered it was: work. They discovered via their enthused ministers that the true Democrat and Socialist goes to the factory at 6 o'clock, heads home after eight or ten hours, pays taxes and increases output. They needn't trouble themselves about the rest, for the folk song already sings it so nicely: "Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten, und hoffet auf ihn alle Zeit".[2] Wherein it is left unspecified who is meant by this dear god.

This answer astonished the hesitant and uninitiated, who pointed out they'd already worked like that in the old curse-laden Germany. But just as Christianity in the mouth of a Spaniard is something special, so Socialism as defined by a German: in opposition to monarchy and authoritarian rule it can only mean: more work, stricter order, higher taxes.

A number of workers were dissatisfied with this improvement. They had to express it. Slowly the government, which had drunk foreign gods and spirits to the full, came by the notion of the Minority. Which meant, it seems: flex the biceps. Minorities are there to submit. Minorities must betake themselves to the ground occupied by the majority. Appointed as saint and patron of the new Roman Empire was old Pythagoras, teacher of numbers. But this was only public worship; in secret other things were in train, other prayers being said, and the minorities to left and right could smell it. They had nothing against Pythagoras, only against his priests. In the name of the old Greek the majority drew their short swords and thrashed the minorities. Knocked them all into a heap. Because that's what you do with a minority. And that was the excuse for a state of siege. And those who happened to be standing by made it worse. Finally they unleashed martial law, the minorities knew what time it was. The priests of Pythagoras blew fanfares. At once the minorities in arithmetical terms had to equal zero.

Worshippers of German Pythagorean democracy were horrified at various moments: the whole thing looked like nothing less than dictatorship. But the high priests spoke in benedictory tones: it only looks like that, everything's developing, continuous development is characteristic of Germany, peu à peu we'll arrive at the real and genuine and sole blessed Pythagorean form of government as described in the holy books from England, America, France, word for word; it's inevitable. Everyone must be patient, as soon as the disturbance caused by the godless minorities abates, the affair will sort itself out. And with that the high priests withdrew into their sanctuary. They were in a very strange mood. They didn't like meeting the public. For on one occasion someone had shouted out: "If Number is the ruling idea of the State,

[2] 17th C. hymn. "Who but lets the dear god govern, and for all time places hopes in him."

why don't you divide it up? Why don't you fix it, you big'eads and State bonzes, so that everyone gets as much to eat as everyone else, how come you stuff yourselves and we go hungry?" And that couldn't be right; but where was the man who'd brought the talisman from so far away, the Boniface[3] of the new Mystery?

There was also a Republic there. They'd let the same man bring it to them. They'd no idea what to do with it, since in these parts they understood only rogues, laws and taxes and when you looked more closely a Republic was neither lathe bench nor drilling machine. But they tried to cope with it. Ten men of the government rolled up their sleeves, spat into their palms, set to, put the Republic on its feet. There it was. A marvellous thing. They wondered if they should put a glass house around it, they polished it up nicely, showed it off to all the neighbours, were pleased with it. A few older gentlemen and ladies were entrusted to keep it in good order and watch over it; for there was much stealing in the land.

Five minutes before the thing was set up, the land was still a monarchy. Monarchical to the marrow, so to speak. The marrow in the bones of the very same Pomeranian grenadier[4] with whom Bismarck and his successors played at war. All were agog to see what impression the shiny new Republic would make on them. For them, as a bonus, a Constitution was made. Even in America they marvelled how scrumptious it was. It had to taste good to the Monarchists. In their exuberance they wove a new flag: black-red-gold. It was lovely. I travelled to many towns throughout Germany, from an artistic interest in this new combination of colours. I never saw any. One person I met claimed to have seen it, but the man, who had a strong lisp, proved to be colour-blind. I spoke to a member of the government, who told me: firstly, the German people should not be diverted from their work by fear of a new flag, and then you can't cultivate pleasure in art just yet, until the old stock of flags is used up, those being black-white-red. I saw plenty of these in Berlin in every possible street and on every possible occasion; I marvelled at how systematic and continuous our development was in Germany. With my own eyes I saw the imperial flag and the old Marine war ensign over Berlin Castle. I was deeply astonished, during the March days in Lichtenberg[5] after the uprising had been quelled, to see Republic government troops advancing under the imperial flag, and very well known songs blared from their bugles, it sounded strange and surprising. But you had to praise the flags; the white was immaculate, you could believe it when people said: it's the new flags. They comforted me: gold is hard to come by, where can you find gold these days, those are children, they cling to their flags, let them have their flags. And when I declared: "I too am a child, and I want my flag," they whispered in shock and pulled me into a corner: "Don't joke about it, you'll set the people off." It's one of the Republic's most important tasks not to get on the wrong side of the Monarchists, especially if they're military. For as said, the Republic was brought by a wise man from abroad into the

[3] St Boniface: 8th C. missionary in the Frankish lands.

[4] "The Balkans aren't worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier." Bismarck in late 1880s.

[5] See 'Cannibals'.

Holy Roman Empire; what we were to do with it he never said; it was a Republic with no Instructions for Use. The military could wreck it, and then what would we have?

What the explanation was for this mysterious entity would emerge from lengthier interaction with it. Above all it must "embed" itself. Embed itself. Decrees were enacted : "The Republic must embed itself; consideration must be given to enabling it to do so with consideration and not dis-embed anything. And not annoy anyone. For we are one People!"

And all of them, ministers, parliamentarians, mere vote-fodder, lurked excitedly to see how it would manage it, the Republic, this crazy thing, this cunning devil, and "embed" itself. And every morning devoured the papers for clues. All swore to abide by their oaths, stand fast with the Republic. Stand fast with her. Looking left and right at the next man. Stand fast with her.

In this mysterious situation, pregnant with riddles, curious pranksters were piqued to see through the game. The Monarchists in particular were swollen with curiosity. Day by day they felt more strongly that their wrong side had not been infringed. They stood firm on the ground of actual conditions, raised the black-white-red flag, came together in columns, and consulted. German ministers felt the urgency of the times and the intense public interest; in every office, every leading section of the army, they placed men of the old system, with its passionate interest in the Republic. It was an event that filled everyone who stood by the Republic with a most intimate emotion: like when Old Conservatives to a man declared themselves ready to join the army and stay there. They would not leave the Fatherland in the lurch whenever the danger should come, from Poland. They said nothing about their curiosity. The War Minister himself, offspring of a socialist party, stood up in Cabinet, praised the effect of this so remarkable Republic on these men, and especially on them, and hence none could be as dependable as they. He drew them to his heart. They observed him during this procedure and found that it was easy to break a Republican's neck.

And in spring the Republic had been made secure. Then a number of Germans set themselves formally in motion, equipped with swords and trumpets, with the blessing of representatives of the Republic. They wanted to welcome the Republic in the Temple of Pythagoras and see as well what she would make of an unsuspected blast of trumpets and a decisive attentat. Kapp turned up. It wasn't Kapp, it was Lüttwitz[6] who turned up and said to Kapp: Lindemann,[7] you go first. In the temple, turning up without knocking, they asked left and right: "What would you like?" and resembled two people who don't read and content themselves with knowing all the answers. In a word: High Treason. All of their movements had great hopes of several years in jail, Behind them several thousand people in the stage of puberty, who also could not read or write, but knew how to throw a hand grenade.

[6] General Walter von Lüttwitz, backed by Ludendorff. Kapp was an East Prussian civil servant.

[7] i.e. Lüttwitz mistakes Kapp for someone else.

It's interesting to observe how in Germany at decisive moments youngsters in the pubertal stage always pop up, ready to be commanded by conservative officers. Older age groups meanwhile wait at home to see what the pubertal youths and conservatives do, or go on strike. That's how the German revolution goes.

When Lüttwitz appeared in Berlin with his youngsters and within ten minutes the youngsters had flowers in their buttonholes, the government fled shuddering at such antiquated proceedings and the lack of respect for highly cultivated institutions. Lüttwitz declared that out of a purely mathematical interest he wanted to ascertain who the minorities were, and glared so fiercely at the democratic government, raising his fists as well, that they slipped away via Dresden to Stuttgart. He knew he was in possession of select troops, who undertook immaculate exercises and other things, with whom he could make his calculations. On their armoured cars and steel helmets they'd painted friendly swastikas, and waved the flag of continuous development.

"What's going to happen to me?" was the cry in every Berlin household, and not long after in the whole of North and South Germany.

"Wait, and have a cup of tea," the Nationals said. Officers and senior teachers whinnied like horses to battle-music, but not so loud. Poco piu mosso.[8] Sostenuto alternating with staccato. Order must be restored, can't go on like this, food is no longer affordable, it's the profiteers. Deutschland Deutschland über alles.

In the silence of the March days the moderate citizen looked in his purse; it hadn't shrunk, they decided to go on existing, come what may. And anyway the Putsch was outrageous: the soldiers had been well paid, the black market had bloomed, one can live with taxes and the (tee-hee) works committees; how was that for interfering with the constitutional setup. Elections, God willing, should definitely no longer take place. They went to the window: nice to have a window; called out: "Workers, officials, protect the constitution!"

The workers listened. Grumbled: "Not on your nelly. It'll be a long time before we strike for the likes of you lot." And then suddenly: "We're on strike. But –" and whistled, banged their slippers together, and came out merrily on strike.

"Thank God," the moderate sighed, relieved, when he stepped to the command window and saw his serving maid bringing water from the well. "They're on strike. The poor people will suffer greatly. But it's for the Republic. The wretched Baltic lands." And betook themselves with Madam to the store cupboards, sat on the sofa and said: "So, now the strike can begin. We'll see how well it holds out."

There were lots of incidental effects as water and lights were cut off. It wasn't easy for invalids; gravediggers didn't bury their clients; the medical world urged consideration for the interests of the suffering. The War had lasted four years, in every waiting room there were posters, we must hold on, a little under-nourishment is not harmful, the most learned professors wrote experimentally-based treatises on the

[8] "A little livelier."

value of de-fatting and its excellence for the health. Now the layman learned that a health impairment is not so great when it lasts four years as when it lasts four days. In the days of the strike there were warnings of outbreaks of disease, and of the consequences, already long felt, of the lack of gas and water; clearly tuberculosis, shrewd as it is, makes up in four days what out of patriotism it missed out on over four years. There are secrets in medical science. Maybe a little doctors' strike could paralyse a raging epidemic. Remarkable that the gentlemen haven't thought of it.

In the houses of moderates they looked out daily from their battle-window, happy, now and then shaking the head a little: "They're on strike. Still on strike." Deep in thought they bore these words with them from the front back to base, the sofa. Heavy black suspicion tugged at the heart: "If only they don't strike so very much." Suddenly gunshots sounded in the night. Into the nocturnal silence someone shouted from an upper floor: "They're striking too much! Woe! Woe is us! What can we do? Where's Kapp?" And in bed they tossed and turned: "What do they have against Lüttwitz all of a sudden? When he did such a good job last year.[9] Are we not all Kappitalists."

And one day the dreadful news came: Lüttwitz had disappeared and the strike was continuing. Those who had defended the Republic at the front and back at base, were furious: "Scandal!" The Nationals placed their medals in the black-white-red casket "Farewell", went about the streets in robber-civvies; people exchanged covert melancholy glances with them. And the bolder ones peeked at the flyers: "Are the Majority Socialists in on it? Are the trades unions in on it too? Where is Lüttwitz? Where's the old government?" They moaned: "It's a catastrophe. The whole country will be ruined if there's even one day's strike. The economy's gone. Exchange rate ratta tatta patta ta." Someone heard "Brahmaputra" and wished to be in India. But there's Bolshevism there too, apparently. All that's left is Einstein's Theory of Relativity, wherein everything is somewhere else; how does that come about? No way to ask Einstein, with the telephones blocked.

Troops were marched to Döberitz,[10] not without having practised some dashing manoeuvres with public participation. Eunuchs banished by the strike obtained rest cures in the country to calm their nerves; they had well-founded hopes that nothing would disturb their cure. The so-called old government now returned badly decayed from Stuttgart, under Württembergian military cover. When they'd been carried inside and laid on the bed they said "yes" to everything anyone asked of them. Tearfully they thanked all visitors and bystanders for the loyal service they had rendered. They spoke again of the Köpenickiad[11] they'd endured, it wasn't clear and is now impossible to say if they meant the Kapp Putsch or their own behaviour. They expired gently in the arms of the trade unions.

[9] Lüttwitz had led the suppression of the Spartacist uprising in Berlin in 1919.

[10] Major troop training ground west of Berlin.

[11] In 1906 a confidence trickster impersonating an officer induced a squad of soldiers to occupy the town hall in suburban Köpenick, as immortalised in Carl Zuckmayer's play.

Their successors are said to be strongly mistrustful of the god Pythagoras' miracle powers. People declare they've learned something from the event. Pomerania is re-arming as a precaution; offices are being divided up. The masquerade continues, with shorter pauses likely between dances.

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The Lüttwitz affair was a brief unmasking. In parallel a proletarian movement, namely of soldiers who were supposed to take up position in the streets, refused, and so were prepared to conquer Rome. That idea has worked through history, blithe and droll.

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How funny, I forgot all about the black-red-gold flag in Berlin. It's there. It flutters at the Schlossbrücke on a Spree barge beside a public convenience. In the barge, for a modest entry fee, a rotting whale can be viewed. Smelled. You pride of the Holy Roman Empire.

ADDENDUM: From "General Strike in Berlin" (*Prager Tagblatt* 14/2/22)[12]

I write – from a time before the Flood. Two candles stand before me: they flicker a good while, a strange, not unpleasant light by which I'm able this Sunday evening to inscribe my lovely blank paper. Strike in Berlin since 20 hours ago. Railway workers have been on strike three days already. You go past urban rail stations, main line stations, a deeply moving scene: wide station plazas – empty; no cabs, no cars, gates closed, the entire miles-miles-wide mechanism – rails, locomotives, guard huts, signals, coal depots – the roaring streaking long-distance train, the smoke, the whistles, shunting: silent, all gone. The hand of the human is on the mechanism. At this moment, when the monstrous apparatus stands silent, we recognise its huge anonymous force and, at the same time, how this force can be constrained, lamed, torn apart by human forces. The impression, at the first moment sombre, oppressive, becomes at the second and third moment wonderful! And always powerful. But: for three days no out-of-town newspapers, no letters, food supply disrupted; the government has already commandeered coal supplies in the hands of private merchants. Yesterday evening the apparition came nearer: people were out on the town, in the trams, the urban rail, the underground, and around ten o'clock, eleven o'clock the trams jolted to a halt; tramway officials in the big squares came up to the drivers and conductors, two words exchanged; then: "All out! We're returning to depot." By twelve the last cars were entering the depots. No rebellion: the toy was taken from under your nose. Thousands had headed out in finery and costumes to masked balls; how they got home I don't know. […]

[12] For almost three years (November 1921-September 1924) Döblin wrote theatre reviews and commentaries for this Czech newspaper. The foreign-currency payments, originally a pittance, became a lifesaving source of income during the hyperinflation.

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

[Introductory notes to be added]

THE THIRTY YEARS WAR

EVEN THE extravagant number thirty awakens fantastic notions. There were never thirty years of warfare; it was a series of wars with big pauses in between, and in the end it's a bit of a stretch to see the Peace of Westphalia as a conclusion to the spectacle. The war came to a stop only in Germany; the closely associated events in Scandinavia, the Balkan peninsula, in Hungary needed another ten to twelve years, so the whole complex only ended after around forty years. The pauses often lasted years; peace treaties were signed, partial peaces, long armistices, military action so lethargic it can hardly be termed such. And then arms taken up once more; this or that player disappearing entirely from the scene. For much of the war large regions of the Empire saw nothing of it: Bavaria for example, which was occupied by troops only after the entry of Sweden; eastern German regions; some Austrian ancestral lands; numerous other places experienced nothing more than occasional transits of military units.

But how big was that military? Germany has not grown larger since that time. On the same expanse of land there have appeared at wide intervals "armies" of ten to twenty thousand men. Thirty thousand men, i.e. the strength of two modern army corps, already made a strong army. Albrecht Eusebius von Waldstein now and again at his peak brought it to a hundred thousand, supposedly even a hundred and twenty thousand men. But these were quite sporadic numbers, and perhaps only on paper, for those gentlemen the colonels, officers, generals and intendants lied intensively about the strength on their books, in order to increase cash contributions arbitrarily. The numbers were sporadic also because at all times there was a sporadic reducer of armies: disease.

At that time in the Empire were numerous epidemics of which we can hardly form a picture. Running through the land at around the same time, in addition to syphilis, still as rampant as a plague, were the French sickness, the true plague, bubonic plague, cholera, typhus, black pox, the heavy flux, probably also infectious influenza. But such diseases possessed their own self-destruction mechanisms, for the carriers at that time were soldiers: they lay dead. When in the first half of the war the bold Dane Holk with his Imperial Croats made his second plundering raping and murdering expedition through Saxony, to persuade Prince-Elector Johann Georg, the Beer-king of Merseburg, to stay quiet, Holk himself along with 6,000 Imperials were left dead of the plague outside Leipzig: he, the favourite, scourge of the Imperial Supreme Field-marshal General. The campaign in Hungary against the little hare-lipped lecher the Bastard Mansfeld was essentially ended by the *malattia ungherese* [Hungarian malady]: the bloody flux; whoever survived was the victor; Mansfeld himself died on the run in Bosnia. It was such small rapidly assembled armies that ran and loafed about in the wide Holy Roman Empire.

Slowly but surely the war pulled itself together. At first it was a semi-private war within the Austrian ancestral lands: even at that time Bohemia had no desire for a Habsburg king. (The Czechs celebrate as their national affair the day the Emperor

Ferdinand the Other ordained for the execution of Bohemian rebels in the Old Town Square of Prague, presided over by his governor von Liechtenstein. That day has nothing to do with the Czech people; the rebellion was by the Bohemian nobility; the people had no stake in it, apart from their blood and property, and the Bohemian nobility was no Czech nobility: among the names of the executed were almost equal numbers of old German and Czech men; and to crown it all two men with very typical Czech names had been thrown from a window at Prague Castle at the start of the liberation struggle: Martinič and Slavata.)

Then at the end of the war the accomplices of the Habsburgs demanded payment for their merits, and when the Duke of Bavaria had by this means swept up the Palatinate and its electoral rights, it was no longer a private Habsburg matter. When, on top of this, the Lower Saxon estates became fearful because they too were about to become spoils of war, this time the Emperor's, there was sufficient prospect of several years more war to be enjoyed. Appetites were aroused in many places, and everywhere men were determined to loosen Gordian knots with the sword.

And now the first foreign power intervenes, the elemental war-hardened pirate and bane of German Baltic seafarers, Christian of Denmark. The Dane may have lacked merit, but he had strong arms and long fingers. The affected regions expanded. This man and his hangers-on were given a good thrashing, and there the whole matter might have ended, for no one now was squawking about the lost Palatinate and the former King of Bohemia's electoral rights. In fact the Emperor had so much headwater he risked sending his Generalissimus home.

Then "His Royal Majesty of Sweden" turns up in Germany, in the Holy Roman Empire, on the Pomeranian coast, presenting himself on no other grounds than that Sweden too was there. As everyone knows, you can always find a reason for anything, no need to study law or be a Swede, it's enough for most people to justify their existence by sticking their fingers in here and there. Sweden had the ability to wage war in Germany, and for that very reason it waged war. As Spinoza, who flourished rather later, put it in such naive and delightful terms: "Every capacity is a virtue." Armed with such virtue, and with ships, cannon and the evangelical creed, just as the Thirty Years War seemed already at an end "His Royal Majesty of Sweden" Gustavus Adolphus, ruler of Goths and Vandals, stepped before the Emperor Ferdinand, aroused in astonishment from his glorious slumbers and the hunts and Masses that normally filled his days; violated old Duke Bogeslav of Pomerania, and the Brandenburger Georg Wilhelm, even though (or because) he was his brother in law. Now the war had a very good chance of lasting years, for the Swede was very forceful, and people came to him voluntarily and not so voluntarily, even Saxons. And the events that might result from cutting loose in such an environment were quite simply incalculable. Even at that point people noticed a friendly interested face peeping over the fence from the west into the suddenly so lively German garden: the Most Christian King of France Louis XIII, who felt himself very touched by that Spinozan virtue, all the more so as things in Germany hotted up.

And the Swede roared about him so long that every right-thinking person had to admit: after devastating so many regions and places, after annihilating so many thousands of German lives, he had a claim to some German land. But time was up even for this man and his hangers-on. The Emperor defeated him, the Swedes were so weakened that most of their fellow-travellers fell away or were minded to make a separate peace. Meanwhile France had been sending huge sums into Germany to pay for the war. A critical point came when peace was concluded with Saxony by the Peace of Prague– as critical as death in a human life. Germany – or rather the war – came through the crisis, thanks to France. Sixteen or eighteen years had already gone by. Then and in the years that followed, France loomed monstrously large; it had no such nice little reasons as the Swede, was Catholic like the Emperor, but had political interests to protect against Catholics, against Catholic evangelicals. It knew how to wage war in the Pyrenean peninsula, stir up Catalonia and Portugal against Spain, support the rebel Hungarian Georg Rakoczi against the Emperor, buy a German duke. For years the Swedes and French toiled separately and together in the Empire. They pushed on as far as Vienna. I'll give none of their famous commanders the pleasure of a mention by name; let generals mutter the names among themselves. They toiled so long that in France the finances, ample finances, were totally ruined, the oppressed nobility and the magistrates wanted to give up. While in Sweden, dangerous unrest stirred among those over-burdened peasants still left alive, allied with rebellious cravings against the favoured nobility. They weren't exhausted, they could have fought on another hundred years, but they had to flex their biceps for internal politics. Since the brain had so long been unemployed, for a long while it functioned badly in the search for peace. The brain approached the conclusion of the peace with anaemic absent-mindedness. They pondered a dozen times, riffled through the whole war once more, the whole present situation, waited for the next one; they tried war on the tip of the tongue, the lips, their full cheeks, spat it out, swallowed it again.

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There are many kinds of war. For example, when a people collapses like a sandpile and goes wandering. When the Mohammedans conquer the world between Mecca and Spain. When Genghis Khan comes out of Asia. There's a flavour there, background, perspective. It's much harder to get a grasp on this jostling and rubbing by France, Denmark, Habsburg, Sweden.

I say "France", "Holy Roman Empire", "Denmark". We know that usage from Shakespeare: such and such a one possesses Gloucester and is called Gloucester. And he identifies with it, and now it's not so funny. He doesn't wage war *for* Gloucester, but directly *as* Gloucester, himself. France: but who was France? Germany: a member of the House of Habsburg, Ferdinand II, elected Roman Emperor, in Germany, Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Carniola, Slovenia, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, Steiermark, Carinthia, Württemberg, in Upper and Lower Silesia, Margrave of Moravia, in Upper and Lower Lausitz, Duke of Habsburg, Tirol, Gorizia. He had it all, this was he, all twenty lands. He had it inclusive of people and livestock, inclusive

of faiths and beliefs, for *cuius regio eius religio.*[1] And all of them identified themselves most energetically and palpably with their countries. That is, they arranged the relationships of their countries, and lived like princes from them. In Sweden during the war you had to pass through many a parish before you found an able-bodied man; the whole of Sweden at the time had only one and a half million people, the king embarked on a dreadful debasement of the coinage, he grabbed the salt, grain and copper monopolies to himself, in East and West Gotland people fed on tree bark and acorns. But this was nothing compared with what happened in Bohemia under the protectorate of German Ferdinand. There we have the absolutely outrageous episode where the Emperor plays a leading role in mortgaging the Mint to a consortium of usurers, which abused the mortgaged object to a hitherto unheard of degree. They produced the so-called "long money", which eventually lost all its purchasing power, the state became bankrupt, the highest Bohemian nobility, including the imperial governor, and the Emperor with them, had won. But within a few years the paymasters in the imperial household were receiving invoices for 150,000 guilders for kitchen expenses, 114,000 for wine cellar services, 10,000 for court fodder services, 8000 for candles. And on one occasion when the court travelled to a consultative convention in Regensburg, the estates of Lower Austria had to pay 60,000 guilders, the archbishop of Salzburg had to provide a loan of 100,000 thalers, the town of Regensburg, which at first had argued strenuously against the convention, 30,000 guilders, and an advance of 15,000 guilders was taken against the deficit in the Bohemian treasury. Where else was the Emperor to find such large sums? From "contributions" during the war; for this purpose the imperial army had to penetrate deeply into the Empire, out of Bohemia and the ancestral lands, for this purpose the question of the so-called Restitution, the recovery of formerly Catholic foundations and regions, had to be tackled theologically and juristically. And the generals provided an example with their soldiers hanging and extorting. Waldstein [i.e Wallenstein] always worked hand in hand with the court, which he bribed assiduously all the way up to the empress. At his death this man left an unbelievable sum for those times of many millions; no doubt one of the motivations for his assassination.

Normally such extortions were not to the taste of the landed nobility, for they used such methods themselves and came up short, hence the catastrophically aggravated collisions during this war between the militarily powerful Emperor and the electoral princes, the competitive conflicts directed by the Bavarian and cunningly exploited for the private purposes of his own House of Wittelsbach.

Dreadful peasant uprisings flared up, protesting against this identification of prince and people, in the Harz, in Upper Austria, Bohemia; the terrible Count Pappenheim outstandingly proved his worth in suppressing one such uprising; for long afterwards the peasants sang a song of "the poltroon Pappenheim" that ended: "No one will quibble, he's the personified Devil". But they no longer had their old strength, they

[1] The subject's religion is that of the ruler.

succumbed again to an inescapable heavy serfdom, the evangelical-communist manifesto of 1525 was forgotten, the Bundschuh[2] movement brutally clubbed down.

And it is in this way that the people were also participants in the war, which was more of a private matter between dynasties, belonging in the genealogical calendar. Contemporary circumstances led to the ill will among dynasties, causing several hundred thousand deaths. People at the time felt it was reasonable; we who set the democratic principle above all else shouldn't criticise them for that. Tsar Peter, the one they called "the Great", is said, some time after the age in question, to have asked naively for a demonstration of the guillotine: would one of the Dutchmen standing around please lay his head under the blade. In Russia no one would have dared point out that the man would then be dead. It was great conquerors and their militarily powerful descendants who at that time carried on their business as described. The firm of Habsburg came into the mix, someone wanted to take Bohemia from them, and we shall certainly spare ourselves a description of all the dealings with all the procurists and commissioners, the field commanders and politicians, that our poor children strangely even today have to learn by heart (I really can't say why, it must have something to do with tradition.)

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But the big concerns should not be the only ones held guilty for this bundle of wars. If we furrow our brow, roll our tongue, stretch the larynx to achieve the great word: human history was in play, this war unleashed religious tensions, profound anxieties came pouring out.

Similar things have been said loudly, eagerly and often of the great actors in these thirty years. Gustavus Adolphus was the chief rowdy, the Jesuits not far behind. We don't doubt that people believe this. When something is said often enough, it's believed; repetition replaces proof, serves as proof. The converse is also true: people may say it because they believe it, but only under certain circumstances, not without further ado. The masters of this period were told it so often by others, by their court theologians, father confessors, diplomats, by their opponents, that eventually they said it themselves, and maybe even believed it – what people mean by believe: that they were waging a religious war. To fight a couple of battles, conquer a strip of land, of course no religious excuse is needed; any robust robber band can do just as well with no supporting apparatus.

Let us agree: rowdiness, quarrelsomeness, a thieving disposition, softened with phrases and crazy ideas. In other words: the old song.

No doubt it's better to do the rulers of the 17th century an injustice in this direction than in another. We must now confirm that at that time an interesting change was taking place in what people call faith, religiosity. The long-dead Luther started it, then it went over to the other side and in the end flourished mightily on all fronts. It was a mimicry of religion: because the time and its people were berserker-savage, religion

[2] Peasant movement of 1493 - 1517 in SW Germany, which led to the Peasant Wars of 1524-26.

too became so. St Francis loved his fellow men, saw the water as his sister, the wind his brother, the sun his sister. And how long ago was it that the rabbi Yehoshua of Nazareth spoke tender parables to the poor and peaceable, and summoned children to him. In the Crusades thousands of children set off for Jerusalem, Crusaders at the time sang: "We go in God's name, we ask God's grace, may the strength of God now help us and the holy grave in which God himself lay, kyrie eleison". Now there was another uproar. Religion had come to palpable dogmas, which people used to box others' ears until they rang, with which they would embitter even the little bit of life left in Hell. They were subjected to the things they used. The Jesuit authority Orlandini said of Luther: "That betrayer of the Catholic faith, fugitive from the monastery and originator of every heresy, that depraved booby despised by God and man, in the 28th year of his falling away, having become excessively intoxicated and lost his usual wits, was in the night taken by a sudden illness and swept away. His cursed soul flew out, a tasty morsel for Satan, whose belly is sated on such nourishment." The Catholics themselves fought for the glory of God and Christ's rose-coloured blood. On the other side people cursed the "stinking Jesuit goats"; the pope sat on the "throne of pestilence"; here the saying was: "If they're going to hang the pope and all the priests, I'll give all I have to make the ropes." The one thing that united them was the fear of Satan and the burning of witches.

This religion was to a great degree considered credible by every lady and gentleman. It mattered not what side you were on; any side could turn anything into a matter of religiosity. In this respect Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran all stood firm. Thanks to the elasticity of so-called Christianity, you could buckle on your article of faith like a sword belt, and set about you with a dogma as with a war-hammer. Who could ask more of a religion. And so it came to pass that Gustavus Adolphus was awaited as a Messiah, he, the lion from midnight, he'd show those papists; and then he declared persuasively: between Catholic and Protestant there's no compromising; one must be defeated. This rigid obstinacy and determination that looked neither right nor left hurled fire on the great wealthy city of Magdeburg; the Protestants would rather destroy it than hand it over to Catholics.

The Saxon court theologian Hoe von Hoenegg had a most dazzling conception of his profession: to provide theological justifications for whatever his masters intended to do. At the Leipzig convention he preached from the words of the prophet Asaph: "Oh God make them as a wheel, as stubble before the wind." He preached mightily for a victorious peace. And the Jesuits, the fathers of the Company of Jesus, comforted: no need to love God, it's enough not to hate him. What's more, the Catholics had a great store of mercies in Heaven over which the pope could dispose; in certain cases each rosary bead secured a hundred days of indulgence; telling the rosary took a quarter of an hour, in all you could obtain 6,000 days' indulgence every day. And finally there was another privilege for members of the Company of Jesus: they had a share in all unknown indulgences. When some decades earlier Mary Stuart began plotting the murder of the wicked Protestant Elizabeth, the Spanish Cardinal Mendoza was greatly

uplifted by this "very Christian and just intention, so useful to the holy Catholic faith as well as to the service of Her Majesty." The worthy gentleman did not know how un-Christian one could be even in his holy faith, for Gilbert Gifford, recruited by Mary to her plot, was himself a Catholic priest and a secret agent of Walsingham, Elizabeth's adviser. The completely mechanical faith of the German Emperor Ferdinand II, who directed the first phase of the war, is characterised in his saying: "When I encounter a priest and an angel, I bow first to the priest." And by the way, we know the cunning way in which the famous general von Waldstein, Duke of Friedland, also admiral of the oceanic sea, was set aside. Since the Emperor in Regensburg had no idea how he should act, he turned to Lamormaini, his Jesuit father confessor, who asked the general of his Order and the pope, who was an ally of the French; but the discussion was of Franco-German affairs. You can imagine what answer fell out from the question: should the Emperor remain over-mighty with his general, or –

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We can set the devoutness of the actors of the time on a scale. The Swede Gustavus Adolphus would occupy the most prominent place. He was a monstrous heap of devotion. After his victory at Breitenfeld he swore: God has become Lutheran. He took his uncompromising Protestantism in a politically authoritative direction: he wanted dominion in the Baltic. As he declared to his Council of Eight in Uppsala, the Emperor is now right under our noses in Mecklenburg; we either wait for him in Calmar or face him in Stralsund. So, a preventive war. The rest can be seen from the implementation.

Bavarian Max must be set alongside him – one of the most interesting and strongest figures of the war, and the only one of the great actors who lived through the whole thing from start to finish and who so tenaciously insisted on his booty, the Upper Palatinate and the electoral rights. He was an affiliate, i.e. a secret member of the Jesuit order, a greedy man, whose cunning diplomacy enraged the Swede in particular. In almost every phase, now clandestinely, now openly he conducted a war against the Emperor; but his faith put a brake on him; he was and remained chieftain of the Catholic party, their leader throughout the war. His field-marshal was Count Tilly, who called the Virgin Mary his commander in chief.

Father Joseph, François Leclerc du Tremblay, a Capuchin, was Cardinal Richelieu's right hand, and perhaps his eminence grise. He founded a particular female order in Paris, which practised a wonderful ascetic mysticism with asceticism; he studied the steps by which the soul becomes united with God, its immersion, its splashing into God. When the Swede appeared in Germany he concluded an offensive alliance with him against Habsburg, using this Protestant as a French shock absorber in Germany. At Regensburg he succeeded in obtaining a treaty that left the Emperor defenceless, and then on top of that breached the treaty when that seemed more advantageous. He conducted the most questionable politics; in Paris he taught that Love should guide the intellect.

Even better the Duke of Friedland [i.e. Wallenstein], a convert. He conjured up dreadful anger in the Jesuit party in Vienna, under whose thumb he lay, by declaring

that he was already in league with the Protestant German prince-electors, and that he would turn this blunt political necessity against them and the Emperor.

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Anyone looking into those times must ask: where was this Christianity that was so often called in aid? It had been driven out by – Theology. It had slipped away secretly between the dialectic and the bone-relics, waiting perhaps Buddha-like for its rebirth. Where did Humanism hide itself? A hundred years earlier Luther had stood astonished before the heathen creature in Rome. Faith, a fat goggle-eyed shaggy thing, had pounced on Humanism and laid it out. A long time of waiting had begun. It took more than a century before Winckelmann[3] appeared, before Goethe parted from Lilly and wandered over the Alps.[4]

This hot-blooded period, teeming with individuals, which had dissolved the warm deeply sentimental 16th century and which framed its violent passionate overflowing style in the Baroque – but the rulers, the most visible class, were hot-blooded and violent – from its soil brought forth spirits of another kind. They would make their impact only slowly, not like dynamite, but the explosion would be no less certain. Descartes, born in the Touraine, lived in Germany during the war years; he sifted through the gloomy mechanical dogmas and found his way to the *natural light* within, in self-consciousness: "I think, I am conscious, and only insofar do I exist." Spinoza of Amsterdam was the clearest most rigorous spirit; in the end he stumbled into a mystical intellectual love of God, but before that he found that truly human activity flows only from an intellect freed of affect; he even found the phrase, the royal phrase, amid all this waste of dogmas and myths: "Reality and completeness are one and the same." Grotius, during the wars between states large and small, conceived of the law of nations as the general law encompassing the various national laws. Galileo, who by observations of Jupiter's moons and the phases of Venus established the incredible fact of the heliocentric hypothesis, disturbed this age no more than a gentle breath.

And the result was not merely, as Hegel asserts, political. Theology had been left lying; it had lost its psychic recruiting force. And as imperial power waned and local princes became sovereign, there bloomed in a thousand places little dynasties and tyrannies in poor, poor Germany, which thereby became the loser of the war. The burgher estate in decline, the peasantry long done for, despots on the rise, proliferating! Theology recruited no more spirits, not even theology – a win – but servility expanded, overshadowed the great once free land – once the paragon of freedom. Subservience was imposed on the Germans with a cruel slow-acting stamp; subservience that later made all thoughts, poetry, discoveries weak and worthless, because actions remained shabby and wretched. This subservience, against which they strove in vain through all the conquests, advances and achievements.

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[3] Johann J Winckelmann (1717-68): archaeologist, art historian, librarian, founder of German Classicism.

[4] In 1786-88.

Humanity has a lot of time. Since the days of the Neanderthals already several hundred thousand years have passed; meanwhile, everything was happening in the greatest calm, expansiveness and elaboration; people had the concept "progress", they were there only to live, assert themselves, defend themselves from death. Meanwhile they filled out the epoch between two ice ages. What are a few years of war, say thirty or fifty, which in such a vast sweep of time can be discerned only under the microscope. What more, perhaps, than a tiny reminiscence of those cosy millennia when mammoths were hunted, cave bears, tigers and hyenas fought and devoured each other. Cats won't leave a mouse alone; we are approaching a gentle, tame mental climate. As human beings throng together, the inclination grows to be free of those atavistic pleasures. Even this war that lasted thirty years was a means to that end. At bottom it served among the European populations, principally in Germany, to discredit Theology, the systematic persecutions of the Church. Within a few decades, in the broken-down lands there was no more business to be done with dogmas. A time would come when even the most dangerous puppet-masters, the fathers of the Company of Jesus, would be checkmated; the Church itself wanted nothing more to do with them. There would be another king in Egypt. Voices that sounded as a barely audible chirping in the grass of the age of wars would grow louder and more perceptible, the horde of crickets that they tried to exterminate or lock up grew to monstrous proportions; a century after the toper Georg Wilhelm in Brandenburg, an atheist king sat in Berlin. Biceps that craved action could find healthier tasks. "La liberté" was on the march.

ADDENDUM: Origin and meaning of my book *Wallenstein* (1930)

I wrote the two-decker *Wallenstein* during the War, in 1916-18, the final part not until I was back home in 1919. At first I worked as a doctor in a military hospital for infectious diseases in Lorraine, living in a small town, and kept myself busy in a strange way. Afternoons and evenings I was able to write – disturbed of course by official duties – under threat from air raids. My room was on the upper floor of the building. When I went back up I spread my manuscript material out again, and when I was ready, took it downstairs for safety. Many bombs fell in the neighbourhood, but nothing happened to me or the manuscript. It came with me on the long repatriation transport in November 1918 across the whole of Germany, and lay on my desk in Berlin through the bad revolutionary winter of 1918-19. Maybe there's something in it of the dreadful atmosphere in which the book was composed: war, revolution, sickness and death.

My idea was anyway, during the War, to depict "war", even if not this one. No, depict is the wrong word, better: set it out in an epic process, letting it become seen, felt, experienced. Later, of course, especially recently, others have depicted war, and this War in particular more precisely. I confess to never having found any of them satisfactory. War is many, many things in one. Above all, unbounded demonism and unleashing, chaos; the world before the word of God came into it; - alongside this, war

is resistance against the terrible demon, the assertion of human superiority (ah, now it's inferiority!) – alongside this an economic process gone mad, - alongside this political agitation and games of intrigue. A dreadful thing, war; no one should wish it; it's a test, a temptation that the human, this insecure animal species, has failed.

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How did I come to choose the Thirty Years War and Bohemia and Wallenstein as my stage and my characters? At first it was only the great similarity between 1914-18 and back then: a European war. I rummaged around for books. The university library in Strasbourg gave me what it had of French and German books on that time. The monstrous fate of Bohemia drew me in, and this Wallenstein, whom I saw thus: a Bohemian renegade, not at all a Schillerian "hero", a modern captain of industry, depraved profiteer of inflation, genius of economics and - in a crazy sense – of strategy, a figure whose only possible parallel is Napoleon I. Alongside him was a Habsburg Emperor, Ferdinand II. According to the documents he was an appalling nincompoop. Maybe it would have been no worse to present such a character simply as a representative of the power system of the time. I didn't want to. I wanted no Naturalism. This should be no cheap imitation of history, no reproduction. It should actually – despite all and sundry historical details – not be a "historical novel". And for sure that genre does not at all suit the over-lifesize events and characters given here. So I had no use for a nincompoop as counterpart to the gigantic machine that was Wallenstein.

So what did Ferdinand II become? The other character besides Wallenstein. No, the real leading human character of the novel! Which is drawn bit by bit into the terrible game, and then becomes active, and – goes away. This Ferdinand deserts throne and empire and finally – the world. But the war goes on. And the chaos has already devoured even the monstrous nobleman who engendered it: Wallenstein. (What I've just described was my attitude at the time regarding the relationship between war and humanity; later I became much more active and decisive; you don't find me then or now on the side of war, but now I feel genuine disgust and self-assertion against mad autonomous war-making, and know what debt we owe to human dignity.)

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This *Wallenstein* is the epic song of a great shattering war, of the violent forces that set it up, of its monstrous people and events – and of the humanity that wanders through the war and will, I think, before long overthrow it. Admittedly, in this book we see humanity weeping and lamenting and, in the end, creeping away.

THE SPIRIT OF A NATURALISTIC AGE
Die neue Rundschau (Dec. 1924)

AMONG OUR most vapid concepts is the opposition: Culture vs. Civilisation. You come across it everywhere. Behind it lies a presumptuous sentimentality, ever sighing for a lost past. The past is the perfect malleable object for nostalgic writing. It comes easily: you see the present as details, the past as a big lump in which you can make out only the crudest most general features. You don't see the humdrum odds and ends that made life in those days quite similar to ours today. Now is seen through a microscope, the past through a telescope: and you think to compare the results. There was never an age that did not lament its own failings and glorify an earlier time. You shouldn't let insipid feelings of inferiority confuse you, even when they step forth as History.

The misconception – today Civilisation, back then Culture – arises mainly from the inability of sentimental historians to grasp the present. We know that every piece of historical writing, even when dressed in the most abstract theories and wonderful philosophies, is influenced by some simple basic attitudes. Those in the know can quickly spot what stable you're from. At present it's our scholastic-humanistic school education that places the strongest blinkers on any western head. Only a very few who have enjoyed that experience manage to escape it. Plato, Sophocles, Classicism are a chronic malady, not curable by Salvarsan; it fails to see what's all around, like a paranoiac who relates everything to himself, his complexes, and can no longer see it as itself. Scholastic-humanism is just such a complex, falsifying the present. 'Civilisation' is ruined by the heritage of the past, killed by self-regard. I intend to show what this epoch is, from outside the humanistic bubble.

For a long time people and lives in Europe were conditioned by the image of a real and extremely potent Next World. The potency of this Next World was revealed by the fact that it belonged to a god, the only god of this period. There was no *belief* in a Next World such as we see today: rather it was concretely *known*. The science of that time was the science of the Next World, i.e. Theology. The mundane world, known by other means, could be ignored by scientists, and even by practical people. Life itself was lived only for the Next World. What connected this world to God and the Next, how it developed out of the Next, was never seriously investigated, and in view of the many more pressing issues did not merit serious investigation. The world was created from the Next World, from the God who dwelled there, 'created', as people said using a figurative and quite indeterminate word. The How remained in the dark, the only answers came from ethics: what for, and why.

That the centre of gravity of all worldly existence lay in the Next World was a concept of the deepest humility. And the productive elemental sense of this metaphysical age could only be a sense of inferiority, a sense of one's own nullity. From another angle it was a naively arrogant age, the most arrogant. For its Next World and its god was a god just for these people. The Next World was of no relevance

to other beings, or even to physical Nature. And here was an unparalleled luxury: an entire Next World, and a god, for the faithful of Europe. Humility and arrogance, all at once. But metaphysical pride tipped the balance. Moreover this was a supremely practical age. The science of the Next World, Theology, was there only to provide a basis for the practical, place it on a secure footing.

The change came from the observer's corner. Observers were those who withdrew from commerce and so, unconcerned for their destiny, were able to turn their gaze on their own neglected jerry-built Cinderella-world. This inclination to observe the insignificant mundane world was indecent, and soon more than indecent: it became dangerous. But it gained ground. Then came a long transitional period of struggles between the practical and the decent against the observers, struggles of individuals and of masses. It rages on into our own present. For centuries the struggle has raged between the slowly weakening metaphysical power, and the new power that at first lay only with the observers. A new impulse was developing.

The young victorious power that superseded transcendental knowledge and its praxis is the naturalistic spirit, which, please note, is not the spirit of 'practical men' in the old sense. This is what's at work now in the Euro-American world. With the arrival of Technology in the mid-19th century, this spirit has risen to the surface. We stand at the inception of the naturalistic age. From the start, Technology has made its stamp on this period. For the time being it's a confusion, two epochs shoving at each other. Ruins, raw materials, old and new energy are all there together. The picture can only be one of barbarism, insecurity, pessimism – not a very pleasant sight. But the living should know where the journey is taking them.

I speak of a new 'power', as others do too, of a humanistic 'spirit', of the monkish, the naturalistic. What is this, from a biological point of view?

It is nothing more than a particular positioning of human groups under the influence of the urge to associate. The urge to associate is what small groups, such as formed in earlier times and among lower levels, used as material to form ever larger groups. Families, tribes are such ancient fixed groups, necessary groups, for they are concerned with the most vital matters. The drive to form such fixed groups is now so strong that it presents as instinct. Here the urge to associate has done its work well. Larger groups, however, encompassing many smaller groups, are always at risk of collapsing. But the urge to associate is incredibly lively, its cleverness is evident in zoology, it has made material impacts on the animal species Homo; and on it goes, rampant. It creates huge new ever-changing groups and their spirit: peoples and cultures. Biologically it is the attempt to make variants, form new human types. The animal species Homo will not stand still. 'Cultures' are quasi-emotional, certainly highly unstable attempts by the collective being to produce variants. Biologically you don't think so highly of a particular 'culture', however rich. Its richness only shows the greatness and the power of Nature, even on a small scale. But that's just microscopy. What are humanism, metaphysical ages, naturalism in the history of humanity? Five hundred or a thousand years against three hundred thousand. They are instabilities

within the type, such as occurred unobserved a thousand times in prehistory and vanished without trace. But we observe these tiny slivers because their timescale is ours, and because we are determined by them.

How does it come to such a 'culture', how does the collective being, the group-creature, vary? When and why does it have in any particular case the urge or the pressure to vary? We observe that some cultures develop lopsided organ systems, expand certain parts of the brain and neglect others. When their possibilities are exhausted, energies transfer from one region to another. In the life of a group-creature as in an individual life, atavisms may occur, throwbacks to an earlier time. For development, for changes in culture, for the drive to new variations, unusually powerful individuals are decisive. These are the ones in whom a variation takes effect first and most clearly. The epoch – its variant – is urged on, as we see in history.

This is one bridge from the natural sciences into history.

The present age can only be characterised by a sense of insignificance, stemming from knowledge of our vanished central position in the world, and knowledge of the irrelevance of the individual animal-human. Along with this there is a sense of freedom and independence, stemming from the certainty that one does not live for a Next World, that one must achieve everything by one's own efforts. Allied to the sense of freedom, and arising directly from it, is the drive to the most strenuous activity. There is absolutely no sense of despair at the disappearance of the belief in a Next World. Here's where we are: above me the starry heavens, below me the railway track.

The first thrust of the naturalistic impulse is technological. More precisely: it brings technology to the surface. Spirituality, ours of today, is undeveloped, i.e. materialistic, or aridly mystical, or a relic from some other time or place.

Why does the first breakthrough of the naturalistic impulse occur as Technology? It's a reaction to earlier ages that cultivated only a small specialised part of human energies and let the rest atrophy, go to seed. Physiologically, in the new age other organ systems and brain components are put to work. The tired old components take a rest. Now muscles, eyes, ears and their neuro-psychological extensions step to the fore. You want to move on, to see, hear. Earlier, people only now and then released their energy in war; now we are technological and it's war forever, permanent conquest of the world, which is, after all, boundless.

In contrast to the earlier dominant passive and receptive feelings, now masculine active feelings come to the fore. I shall make a rough sketch of the extent and essence of the technological spirit, how this spirit precipitates – not in cultures, monuments, forms of religion, poetry, works of art, but now in inventions, fields of activity.

Some assert that what we are talking of here is actually no particular spirit, no formative power, but simply know-how, decked out with science. What they don't see is that technology is already a thing, even if only a symptom of some other thing, and that it is still incipient. They look to the past and see a loss of soul, and not the slow

difficult process of soul-transformation. They say we're clever, but a handful of patents don't make a new epoch. An age is always blind to a paltry-seeming New. It's weird but understandable that even functionaries of the new spirit consider it materialistic. They have a bad conscience. You know the fantastic reverence accorded the old education, which is held up as 'real' education. You find very capable fathers who are embarrassed by their piano-playing daughters. Three bars of Schumann and they blush. The verdict 'materialistic' comes from the old culturally flourishing monkish and humanistic world, it's aggression by the old spirit, as aggressive as a swear-word. Of course this old high education still survives with its classics, and is nurtured. But most of it has clearly gone askew, and no longer rings true. It's nurtured still, this importance accorded to people from the 12th to the 18th centuries. Should I not jeer that the old, the only real, education is a dried vegetable past its best? The dominant tone is that this is the only, still the only education, and the new naturalistic impulse will surely never find its spirit without help from the old. The old education fills a vacuum, delivers material to construct a new education. Of course it's already nonsense to worship a statue of Phidias and call the underground railway nothing but a transport system. Technology is not a higher form of cabinetmaking, but the blood of this epoch. Technology and the natural sciences, each in its own way, rule the world, through radiant powerful people. There's none of the old piety in their momentum. These people actually say not God, but cotton. But to them cotton is as little to be laughed at as God was to those earlier people. Archaeologists and their friends, calibrated only in mummies, won't understand.

What drives the people of today, the big cities, what inspires them, what is the goal of their inspiration? Someone from an earlier age might ask: what do today's people do, what have they done, with the things that the humanists worked at, what has come from the questions and problems of a philosophical, religious, aesthetic kind that they posed? The answer: the people of today have solved all problems in the simplest way: they've left them lying. New problems have arisen. People respectfully acknowledge the extent and importance of the old problems, then occupy themselves with the production of toothpaste.

I'll select some random examples.

Chemistry and Technology. One chapter covers Alloys. Their production from metals by compression of metallic powders, by cementation, in kilns. Production of special steels. People study ferric silicate, ferrovanadium, nickel, molybdenum, chromomolybdenum, the finishing of alloys. The particular study of the ternary and quaternary steels.

Dyestuffs: a continent in itself. Organic dyes, Xanton, Flavon, Indol. Nitro- and azo-dyes. Earth colours, mineral dyes.

Tanning: once of interest only to shoemakers. Now there's almost a theology around it, which trials and tests the preparation of leather, the drying and flexing of skins, depilation. Everything is done with a quite special attention, with a quite

characteristic intensity. Before, such matters weren't tackled at all. Now they are mastered.

Production of **artificial silks**. Of course we already have enough silk, but no one makes such excuses. We must be able to do it, and shall do it. Methods have been found to dissolve cellulose, expel the fluid under pressure, whereupon it solidifies. Then we differentiate and observe, how to spin wet, spin dry, ply the fibres, harden them with formaldehyde.

The extensive **fermentation** industry. The pure breeding of yeast, the use of moulds. Production of soap, of spirits. Every process, every assembly is the result of the work of many very patient and specialised people. And is never the final result. **Conservation** of foodstuffs. Then **textile** chemistry and yarns. **Glass**, we see it in every window; the raw materials must be considered, special studies made. Blast furnaces are built, day-baths; people observe the subtle production of glass rollers, special glasses. There's **photography**. People find light-sensitive films, developers, reducers, intensifiers. Fixatives, toning preparations. It glides from hand to hand and only so does its spirit blaze forth, its quite special spirit. Something else: the **gaslight**, the basic idea, to some extent the inner Gas Light. Then work on the details: the study of mantles, how to weave them, impregnate them with the substances osmium, tantalum, zircon, wolfram. Secondary inventions: pumping, delivery of the gas.

The exploitation of **hydropower**. Waterfalls no longer exist for themselves. It goes against those of today to leave waterfalls to themselves. People have to some extent become custodians-general of every natural object. People hurl themselves at Nature, seem to have a hunger for it.

The gigantic capital deployed for **electricity**, power transmission, dynamos. Telephony. The **construction** industries, reinforced-concrete buildings, railway installations with their super- and sub-structures, their signalling, bridgeworks. The erection and demolition of buildings, diving apparatus, motor boats, motor cars. All won and ever more won from the collaboration and specialisation of many, of very many people. Enormous and particular expressions, outcomes of communal effort. Cologne cathedral is without doubt the expression of a strong particular spirit. Let the dynamo take it up with Cologne cathedral. The specific energy, the unusual intuition that led Emil Fischer to synthesise dextrose are in the balance with the strongest products of humanism.

How did the New arise; better: how was it set in motion? Naturalistic impulses run nameless and suppressed for centuries alongside their dominant adversaries, are as much available as those. They first gain strength because the opposing direction loses energy. But then it comes to technical discoveries, emerging from observations of Nature. This initiates a technical torrent. It accumulates invisibly, this and that discovery, observation little by little becomes subordinate to practical goals, the technical offshoot makes itself autonomous, so now we have Technique, praxis with naturalistic wings, a vigorous active drive that bothers not at all with the old hostile

adversary. It seems the spiritual is now taking a rest. But in the background Technique, this offshoot of the naturalistic impulse, takes spirituality forward, fights the old but without making contact. The products of Technique have this effect. Railways, dynamos, seemingly merely external things, have enormous spiritual consequences.

The spiritual character of these new powers reveals itself in their extent, their fecundity; the numbers of technicians, the people who participate. An earlier epoch had as its organisational principle, as the pillar of its structure: prayer and the church. This Catholicism strove to encompass all humanity, but did not dig too deeply into the everyday, had to leave a great deal private. In this private reserve, smaller powers of order separated out: state, army, family. But all of that lay outside the focal point; the intensity to build it up was lacking. The naturalistic spirit, this new impulse of the social drive towards variations in the human type, first breeds other people and then enormously many more. You can convince yourself on any day by observing the masses setting off in the morning for factory work, to offices and businesses. Here a very extensive technical-industrial collective is being formed.

The old towns and cities are step by step being transformed by the new power, and homogenised. The new spirit uses towns as its body and instrument. Towns, especially big cities, thus become objects of romantic distaste. Town and country have long confronted one another, with odium heaped upon the town. This passes down the generations and forms the encapsulated kernel of many a philosophy and story. In reality villages, towns and cities are variant forms of human settlement. They cannot be evaluated one against the other. They arise from natural adaptation to specific relationships. Towns stand in the same class as caves, the combs of a beehive, termite mounds. Since when was the wasp spider, which weaves alone, better than the herring that swarms in schools, or apes that live in packs. Towns are very clear expressions of the human social drive, an elementary power, a primal instinct of today's variety of human, and one which, when you look at the Bushman, is already fully developed among savage tribes. Humans had to live together in prehistoric times, so were able to live together, and wanted to live together.

Towns, even big cities, do not always remain one and the same. In the course of time they serve as centres and organs for various things. They can serve for defence, cluster around castles, have ramparts and walls. They can cluster around royal palaces, be palaces. Then the church at the centre. And all by chance, passing circumstances, accumulation. But the same place can experience a change of function. It remains the same town, but serves other purposes. A change of function, such as for example our lungs have undergone, turning a hydrostatic apparatus in a fish into a breathing organ. Just so, the organs of a town under a new power that falls upon them become something different. Now the new naturalistic technical power has seized the towns, transformed their organs, formed new organs.

Why – for the moment – is the new naturalistic spirit so closely linked to towns, more closely than the spirit of an earlier age? Because in towns it can create an adequate body. The technical impulse demands for its implementation big collective

beings, masses. Towns, especially big cities, are sites of technical work. They at once reveal the characteristics of the age: monotony, uniformity, the specific rationalisation of the age. [Every age has its rationalisation.] The town of another age was always a particular object that grew organically in and from itself. Towns were all different, not interchangeable. It was quite natural for every town to have its own saint or town god. In Germany there was Frankfurt am Main with such and such a history, such and such a face, with a particular variety of human, there was Berlin, Munich. Today we no longer have Frankfurt am Main, or Berlin, or even Paris, London or Rome. Today we have only technical towns, the big city. It has a locally varied and tempered population. Just as technology standardises the light bulb socket, so cities become standardised. Today's active spirit shapes towns, landscapes, the western populated earth with the same force that ancient Rome applied when it built castles, arenas and aqueducts in Campagna, Carthage, on the Rhine, in Syria.

General comments on towns and big cities. The same natural imperatives and drives that summon forth or maintain the persistence of the pelts and antlers of animals – these same imperatives lead among humans to clothing, weapons, or ornamentation. They also lead to dwellings, to particular kinds of dwelling, chosen according to landscape and climate, to huts with chimneys, to the hearth. These things are separate from humans, but the connection remains. The pelt and antlers to which animals are habituated arise only from cohabitation in an environment; just so do huts, weapons, clothing arise from the cohabitation of humans with particular environments. They are extensions of the human.

But the drive to associate brings forth more settlements, villages, towns, metropolises. Until we have castles for defence, walls, storehouses for foodstuffs, factories for mass production. The collective being Human, the group Human is set in motion, reacts and produces in many respects like an enormous individual person. But in one important particular the collective being Human, the human group, is special: it is – intrinsically – the way to a new, more powerful and more refined animal being. Here is the way to a new animal organisation. This is the biological meaning of state-formation, as it already was for the forming of the smallest groups. Irresistible, this drive, for humans as for numerous other species. The human group, differentiating within itself, seeks to reduce each individual member to a special function. Everywhere there is conflict between the whole individual and the drive of the group to make him the wielder of one specific function.

The collective entity Human represents in its entirety the superordinate species Human. It would be incautious to say that this mighty power – the drive to associate – that formed this collective entity, was initially a need. We only see that this drive was available, and is incomparably strong.

Cities are the main places and seats of the group Human. They're the coral colony of the collective entity Human. Does it make any sense to put city and country in opposition? In cities you find much that is weak or dangerous, amid the conflicting drives that operate in cities you can pick sides. But you can't reject or even evaluate

the cities as such, the focal point of the drive to associate. Natural forces of this kind and their expressions can only be noted.

The techno-naturalistic force has developed Industry and Trade just as the Middle Ages had the *ecclesia militans*. Industry should not be misunderstood: it's facile to assert that it's there to 'serve'. The point is: to what purpose. It happens that Capital is piled up, providing fodder for Industry's insatiable drive to expand. Here functionaries of the spirit toil, bent on improving the natural world, coercing and subduing it. People also speak of Progress. Here we may speak of the Will to Power; but the Will to Power goes without saying. The point is: what kind of will, or whose will. And this, here, is the defining characteristic of the naturalistic age.

Further expressions of the new impulse. How is the countryside doing, what is the attitude of the farmers? As Industry with its propaganda brings technical products into the countryside, it increasingly blurs the line between town and country. In the technical-industrial age few topics are less talked about than farmers. When newspapers, the telegraph, power transmission lines, special apparatus, motor cars wander into the countryside, the countryside succumbs to this frontal assault as the Peruvians did to the Spanish.

The political angle: undermining of the old state-formation. Those states, as they stand, were created by other forces. Now the new impulse, already with its first harvest of Technology, brings a strong spiritual task to completion. It does so without spreading books about and stirring people up, simply by laying railway lines. The new impulse is neutral in the face of the closed human groups, nations, that it encounters, it stands over and above the nation. The forces of Technology have the same effect on all borders, work like an eraser on the lines, make them disappear. This drive takes us into the boundless. You see here that the new impulse is a power unto itself: it does not negate, but changes; does not destroy, but alters the soul.

Imperialism, at least at this stage, carries the new impulse with it. The drive for extension, for expansion, is an expression of the naturalistic spirit; it leads its bearers and functionaries to take control over all natural objects. The drive for extension is documented at the same time as the laying of endless railway tracks, telephone wires. These are newly awakened sense organs that know no boundaries.

I take the opportunity imperialism offers to point to something characteristic of this initial period. Technology is springing up in many places. To grow, it needs local materials. And so we have not one imperialism of the techno-naturalistic spirit, but many local imperialisms. Defeated, the earlier force, the older territorial cell, becomes under Technology more imperialistic than it was to begin with. To its own quite specific imperialism the territorial adds the colossal boundless imperialism of the technological impulse. Then something strange, in practice very dangerous, happens. Technology erases borders, and tied to territory strengthens them, against its nature. The functionaries of technology, men of their country, appear at this time in the most curious double light: the levers of local power force them to be national and warlike,

the technological impulse forces them to be warlike in another way, in the normal sense of peaceable and supra-national. All in all in such circumstances, it is inevitable in the age of the young naturalistic-technological spirit that major wars erupt.

In Soviet Russia the technical impulse has made itself felt very strongly and concretely. The spirit of technology and natural science has taken over the old state formed in a previous age; the previous organs have been partly destroyed, partly assigned new functions, and some new organs have been created. Of course here we see only servants of the technical impulse, and nothing of employers and workers. Furthermore: just as in the French Revolution Reason became God, so in the Russian Revolution the technical, rationalistic spirit. And not just figuratively, but in fact. People familiar with this Russia depict the cult of machinery that is practised there. Technology colours music, theatrical scenery and even the ballet. But the borders of one country, the clinging to an old pre-naturalistic form, is even here found bitter, even dangerous. The technical impulse wants to spread across every country, every old statehood. All that's left to this important New Russia is to feel itself the new Messiah-nation and hope for world revolution. But this world revolution, as is already discernible but need not at all be hoped for, since it is already in full swing, is the initial stage of the techno-naturalistic spirit. The revolutionary impulse is being driven forward to the strongest degree by the so-called bourgeoisie, entrepreneurs, industrialists and their methods. The true enemy of the revolution is not the bourgeoisie. Capitalists and the Soviets have a common enemy: the anti-naturalist, anti-technologist, the humanist: Tolstoy.

The influence of an earlier epoch's social pattern: the family. The old patriarchal concepts are disappearing; they belong to a territorially-fixed, locally limited period. The sense of male superiority has been shattered. For the generally dominant male sense of work, technology and science is streaming all at once towards the women of this period. But the main contribution to this shattering comes equally from the toils of both genders; gender hardly means anything in the new kinds of work. Male and female workers experience themselves at work as beings of the same species, and functionaries in the same groups with the same urge to group-formation. This also finds external expression, and the type-forming, variant-creating power of such an impulse becomes clear: secondary male and female characteristics change, and some seemingly fixed male and fixed female characteristics become exposed as transient reproductive properties. Properties switch from one gender to the other. The genders become more similar.

Moral values and, linked to these, much about the spiritual condition were formed by the earlier powers, especially those that had their effect in the close circle of the family. It is not clear and not yet apparent what will happen under the influence of the new impulse. The great historical perspectives of Nietzsche, inspired by naturalism, are a symptom of the movement that penetrates even here. But there's no danger at present. As with the spiritual in general, the inclination to conserve is dominant in

morality. Morality finds itself under the protection of especially deep-rooted forces, older, but working more slowly and firmly.

Human variation under the impact of the technological spirit. Inventors, entrepreneurs, dealers and workers are created. The segmentation of earlier epochs, hierarchy, the landed nobility, cannot hold. The new society seeks its centre, and organises itself. Here social problems arise: the struggle of workers, degraded to work-animals, against degradation. This stratifying is not fixed, society is in the process of formation. Furthermore, however bitter the struggle between owners and proletariat, no one thinks of changing or putting aside the technological impulse; no one goes against the centre. Both sides feel themselves as always organs of the new spirit and are ready to bring it to fruition. It is certain that at the moment of proletarian dominion this spirit will attain an unprecedented dominance; understandably so, since no thwarting by older or other impulses will prevail over this class.

The impact on art and literature. Here, alongside religions, is the real seat of the old spirituality. Artists are among the hardest creatures to move. It's in the nature of intellectuals to observe little, take little in, and only to knead and work through and digest old things and older things and very little of the new. The intellectualising of real events is an uncommonly hard and slow affair. I would say that the most essential task of the intellectual is to conserve. They don't live in the same era as their practical contemporaries. This, their special task, is important, but it leads to strange phenomena. We have to say that as matters stand, intellectuals are in no position to impose prescriptions of any kind on practical people. Sometimes they boast, artists especially, of creating something from the most ancient sources. But they easily forget the obverse. The view that something like a spirit of the times expresses itself uniformly in all creatures of an age is back to front. Always several different epochs, zeitgeists, live alongside each other. Even mixed up in the same individual. There are layers among peoples and in the individual, images of faded actions of the drive to associate. A majority of artists and the friends of art, it's clear, even today write 1600 or 1800. Probably 1900 will appear around 2100.

You need a certain inner dullness (meaning deadening) to produce a work of art. Only thus can it be understood how, when Germany around 1890 became a strongly industrial country, the artists – painters and literati – still lingered by sunrises and gooseherds. Then in literature some people were moved, they knew not how. Imported into Germany strongly from outside, partly not from life but from diversions through foreign literature, came the Naturalistic Wave. Now people looked about them. Before, they took care not to look about them. From Homer poets inherited their blindness, at least. The poetical for a whole period consisted in painting nicely and writing nicely; but there was nothing there to nourish the spirit. All they did was preserve, and call themselves educated. Being spiritually lifeless, they were raw. Education undoubtedly meant Raphael, the smooth, simplicity, noble rank, or, even more honourable, patriotism with shiny cuirassier boots. German literature and painting could at first do nothing to confront Naturalism except spray it vigorously

with manure. And since noble thoughts were closely linked to entitlement to a pension, Naturalism was opposed to those who had pension rights. It's untrue that this technological period as such can't produce artists or art because, say, this age puts its main energies into technology. In such incipient epochs, all intellectuality faces an enormous task. But as we have said, the intellect takes a long time to cook. After the naturalistic period, literature flowed somewhat faster. Silly iambics, the noble style, were eventually found repellent: vehemence, freshness, even dialect speech loosened up artistic language. Some literati knocked even syntax to bits, on the not incorrect surmise that such elements of form encapsulated the old, and impeded movement. Since the old words were over for them, they made new words. How hard it was to escape from earlier times was shown by some extremists: they praised in the liberated forms such ancient things as the moon, canaries and nightingales.

In painting, Liebermann.[1] Later, Futurism, on which technology left clear traces. Hymns to the automobile, the aeroplane, expansion, speed. The abstract painters were too proud to imitate anything. This looks like Anti-naturalism, or A-naturalism. But the emphasis is on the dependence: they want to be independent; to be of this world, answerable to themselves, almost newly religious; they shape their elementary particles, hence Cubism. Constructivism sees beauty only in cables, machine parts, geometrical shapes. Parallels in music: dissolution of the old syntax and grammar, formulae and tonality. The breach shows most clearly in Schönberg. The age of pastorals or rurally heroic old-fashioned music is over.

This the mighty current of the time, the techno-naturalistic that builds great cities, turns whole states into a city, differentiates the life within it in a special way.

Alongside this current, others flow.

Any age is always a confusion of various epochs, in large areas the yeast has not worked, it's badly baked, bears in it relics of other forces and germs of the new. Is a symbiosis of many minds; the foremost seek to incorporate the others. Only now do we see the force that has really been unleashed, the expression of the final effect of the drive to associate: highly developed Humanism, Monkism. And the local. I said before how the humanistic and monkish, thanks to their lofty spirituality, fill the vacuum of this period. The barbarism of the age has a double source: the incongruence of spirit and practice, and then the unspiritual nature of the new technological urge itself. There is still the much older force that comes from the local – or as we say today, the national. The local grew up from a different ancient germ cell of the group under the urge to associate. The technological impulse, now running through the group, touches the local, tries to drive it out, or at least overshadow it. But the local, like the humanistic and the monkish, has enormous force: the force of the grown-up, the elder, the survivor, the heavy force of tradition. In certain respects it is beyond reach of the new impulse, for the local moves and lives in a separate sphere of the group-creature. The power of the local (now called national) impulse is clear to all: even in the very up

[1] Max Liebermann (1847-1935): leading German Impressionist, depicted the life and labour of the poor.

to date USA the Ku-Klux-Klan is still active. We see movements arising from the local and moving towards it: racism, Zionism. The very ancient words 'race' and 'blood' keep the big cities busy. These are of course different things from a soap factory and a locomotive, but they have their own life, contribute to variation within the group-creature, and characterise that layer within it where no fermentation has taken place.

The new impulse itself stirs up a counter-current. The cognitive sciences push the darkness of our ignorance constantly ahead of them, but the darkness is still there and steps out more strongly as the attack moves in. Mysticism is always there; now, mystical means whatever natural science stubs itself against. Mysticism is the boundary concept of the natural sciences. Fritz Mauthner, the language critic, confesses to a godless mysticism: 'I fled from the realm of reason into the last entity where there is no longer any difference between my Ego and the rest of Nature, in which a dewdrop, a fir tree, an animal and my Ego have equal rights to feeling.' Thus says a critic to whom the insights of research have been vouchsafed.

Against the pretend-materialism of the technological age, a religious current has long struggled which was not at all of the old faiths. Added to it is an actual mystical urge, to the occult, which takes its arguments directly from the natural sciences. In current European painting, clearly Chagall is the mystic. Gustav Mahler's music is mystical and old-religious.

The present situation in centres of shifting and reshaping. Big cities are a remarkable and powerful apparatus. In their streets you feel almost physically the whirl of impulses and tensions carried in these people, it streams from them and possesses them. Observations of birds show that these creatures prefer to fly together, because the consensual motion of the wings of neighbouring birds provides mutual support and makes flying easier. From this, people have extracted a particular machine-principle. The observation provides an explanation for other things: it points to the simulacrum of an economic goal: to save labour. It explains the human tendency to imitate, the tendency of masses to move consensually. And so, in this way, people in the big city are prompted uniformly to adopt the tempo of the big city.

The big city at once reveals how the old state stands in relation to technology and its products. From the standpoint of the old power and mindset, there is nothing to compare with the challenge and naïve brazenness of big city shops, show windows, department stores. Every private citizen can, unimpeded, open a shop, a whole department store, and set out his wares. These suffer no such censorship as do the much less dangerous (because conservative) intellectuals of literature and art. The invisible tradesman can lay out his wares, light them, arrange them suggestively. One glimpse suffices to show what is being done here: needs are satisfied, and new needs nurtured. Here we see intensive practical work being done on the human being. The technological spirit goes down the streets, stirring up and shaping. Not far away stand the old schools, churches and theatres. The old state now lets it all happen. It protects what it very tamely calls 'the economy', and is itself threatened by this economy.

A note on ethics. Could the naturalistic age be anything other than indifferent and negative regarding ethics? The early technological period is clearly extraordinarily raw and driven monomaniacally by its impulse; the impulse does not become more profound or inspirited. But ethical indifference and negativity do not reflect the essence of this age. One thing is clear when we look ahead: the people of this epoch feel their collective character, their collective nature, in a new way. They are in the process of growing together in a novel way. More than in earlier times, everyone's activity today is socialised. The togetherness and the homogeneity are felt. This in itself is an ethical fact. People sense a primal bond, going beyond contracts. Many things emerge from this. People will penetrate ever more, and more deeply, into Nature, whose time has now arrived. And this period, known to no God reigning here on Earth, will see that the entity that is this world and which expresses itself in this world is – much more strongly than people once believed when they were still humanistic – grandiosely social and friendly. This period will probably notice what until now has seldom been seen: the fact that the world is building a social entity. People can understand, can sense what that means.

Spiritually important consequences can be deduced from the naturalistic epoch. The natural sciences of today do not yet deduce them, and cannot deduce them, since everything is very much at its beginning. The past must still be struggled with. The world cannot right away be sensed anew. Earlier, the world turned around an abstract point, around God; what will it become if it revolves around the sun? This is now the overall question. The spiritual consequences of Copernicus have not yet played out. Nature in the first segment of this period is just unknown, and passionately sought; later it will become a secret. To sense this secret and express it in its own terms is the great spiritual task of this period.

GERMAN CONDITIONS – JEWISH RESPONSE[1]
1924

You ask me, Mr Editor: "How have your views on the Jewish problem changed in the course of years and events? What was the triggering process or triggering realisation? How do you construe the Jewish problem and what concrete goals do you see for it?" You also write that a great mass of Jews have a direct interest in such utterances. Please understand me correctly, Mr Editor: I have no doubt that there is interest in such private autobiographical remarks – for who does not listen eagerly to gossip about those around them – but I fear that the matters in question here are being pulled down to a rather petty mean level, namely that of private experience. What use is Psychology to us in these times? I understand you quite clearly when you assume that a private experience, namely mine, is characteristic of a period and that publicising it will promote development. So in this sense I shall speak to the point.

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In the course of decades – I was born in Germany, in Stettin, and my parents and grandparents were Prussians – there can hardly be said to have been any real "change" or revolution in my relationship to Jewishness and Judaism. But at several points there was a change of emphasis. At home I had a father and mother, and knew and saw that they considered themselves Jews and that I too was a Jew; I hardly noticed anything more than this. On the one hand I never attended classes of Protestant religious instruction, on the other, for two or three years (but very irregularly) I attended a kind of Jewish religious instruction, but this was not compulsory so mostly I did not go. The lessons were boring, and I would often do my maths homework there. But then I enjoyed half a year of monstrous preparations for Bar Mitzvah. If instruction in school was a farce, then this "preparation" was a scandal. The "teacher" was a rabbi of a small synagogue, of course a good and pious man. We were given the necessary Hebrew sentences written out in Roman script along with a translation, and learned these by heart, and then, the main point, we were given the text of a Bar Mitzvah speech, a dinner speech that we were to deliver at the ceremonial meal at home. This speech took up a good five pages of typescript, its contents a supposedly pious, highly moral florid nonsense decked out with quotations, a unparalleled piece of stilted rhetorical sermonising that we had to spout to our guests – who were brought in for the purpose. We had to learn this rubbish from beginning to end, and this was the main activity and the centrepiece of the preparations for Bar Mitzvah. Thus was one accepted into the community of Israel.

My interest in this "community of Israel", minimal from early on, faded even more over time. Any normal person will understand this. It was due to a spiritual weakness that I did not rebel at this point, went now and then to this or that synagogue in Berlin. The singing and organ music were nice – but the behaviour of the people, the so-called

[1] Unpublished MS, probably written late 1924 in connection with Döblin's travels in Poland; final section adapted and incorporated in *Destiny's Journey*.

supplicants who, switching with frightful rapidity from declamation to whispers, murmured texts from books that they held before them, all the while swivelling their backsides, was beyond my understanding or sympathy. I could not, could not love or even come close to these people, who chatted to their neighbours during these supposed prayers, and even scolded anyone who chided them, before calmly resuming the lesson. The reason was that I had a different conception of praying – if in fact you wanted to pray. But this whole prayer thing provided no enlightenment. Neither the manipulation nor the one to whom it was directed was clear to me. I rejected the whole business of community and synagogue, and I still recall from my schooldays being taken by a rich uncle one morning at Rosh Hashanah to the Oranienburger-strasse synagogue (we proles could not, even if we wanted to, attend any of the expensive synagogues on feast days, and there they all sat in the best clothes, the men below and the women upstairs, looking so well-fed and rich, and I was filled with the same repugnance I always felt at the sight of rich people wearing their good fortune so smugly.) And as we left, we went with an acquaintance of my uncle to his apartment, close to the upper Friedrichstrasse, the man was a bachelor, his housekeeper had already prepared breakfast and put more out for us guests, and calmly, with self-conscious irony, the gentlemen ate ham on rye and drank red wine. They even joked about it. But I was never able to laugh at such things, I did not understand this kind of humour and even later, in Jewish cabarets, I rejected and heartily despised it.

So from then on I never felt or accepted that I was Jewish. This supposed Jewish community, a familiar community of kin in which I could find mutual help but nothing of radicality, no spiritual resoluteness (rather the opposite, namely tepidity, complacency and bourgeois fustiness), this community was not mine. But from a young age I experienced from outside the negative of this: that I was "a Jew". All I learned – and accepted – was the obverse of being Jewish, the disparagement, contempt, the evil poisonous hatred of the persecutor.

I always accepted the hate as a challenge from opponents, so little, so nugatory was the Jewishness, the Judaism I was acquainted with. This, I knew well, was no idiosyncrasy, but the stance of most decent men I came across, whose bonds with Judaism were just as slender. It is superfluous to relate how in a Berlin school one was enveloped in anti-Semitism, covert in some teachers but more open in others, and even among one's fellow students.

That *you* are a Christian and *you* are a Jew hung unspoken over every relationship, however friendly, and it did not establish an ethnic difference, rather it declared: "I am a proper person. There's something not quite right about you, but we won't talk about it." I knew this, but it left me cold, it failed to produce in me even for a second a sense of inferiority or self-hatred. Very early on – it came along with our circumstances – I staked out my position in an irksome world. It was all the same to me what afflictions the world might throw at me, they only made me harder. It's also unnecessary to relate how the finest outward friendships came to an end at the end of the school year (1901). Because of anti-semitism we were not in a position to put on a unified harmonious

graduation ceremony. Obviously hatred of Jews flourished wonderfully at Berlin University, where I went next; and afterwards when I was a doctor in Berlin there were both Jew-free and mixed medical associations. In the mental asylum we doctors who were Jews stood together, we knew where the front lay. And the same in the casino of the hospital.

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"What was the triggering event or triggering insight?"

In 1923 (I think it was then), an actual pogrom erupted in Berlin in the Alexanderplatz district – Dragonerstrasse and Grenadierstrasse are favourite streets for Eastern Jews, first generation or transient. The police, slack against the attackers, arrested Jewish self-defence organisations. It was a breathtaking scene. Whatever excuses were made, it was undoubtedly an outbreak of ancient Jew-hatred, now massively stoked-up. "Breathtaking" alone would not have taken me much farther. But in the district there was a clever legally established organisation [*i.e. the NSDAP – Tr.*] which had the good instinct to exploit the situation to ambush the capital's Jewish intelligentsia. One day, in the week following the pogrom – while alone and with others I was still cursing the disgraceful police, the pathetic police – I received an invitation to a private house on Belle-Alliance Square, where there would be a presentation on the current situation. Around forty writers, journalists etc. were there, most of them known to me, Jews. I remember little of the presentation and really only two things: the lovely cakes that were handed out, and my agitation and unease. They summarised the event, and asked what we, like the victims Jews, wanted to do. A fatal, but justified, question. I spoke twice, I could not keep quiet: first I protested that we were being enticed to adopt a quasi pure-Jewish existence in a homeland and community outside Germany; the pogrom was unambiguous and horrible, and we must put our pens to work to denounce the infamy, we must speak openly as Jews; but nevertheless and in the end here, and only here, is our home, Goethe, Kant, Nietzsche, Heine, Beethoven: these and only these are our stepfathers. What the gentlemen here are planning will end in an intolerable quaking of the ground beneath our feet. Most of those present liked this. Only – I did not. I sat there agitated and was not yet done with myself. The discussion continued, I paid little attention, I knew only that I had to intervene once more. And I did speak again and tried to make out I was amplifying what I had said before but in fact it was in palpable opposition to it. It was the old theme: whether one felt closer to the Eastern Jews there in the Grenadierstrasse than to the Germans next door, and I had to, yes had to say right out that I felt that these Eastern Jews were my people and I acknowledge solidarity with them. This second speech was surely very confused. Yet I was happy to have spoken out. People said afterwards that they weren't exactly sure what I had actually meant. I felt the same.

I recall that in the following weeks I pursued this theme with all and sundry, not so much to clarify my mind as to conceal my uncertainty and weaken my sense of unease. I often went to the street of the pogrom, sat there in the little Café Krakauer, observed the people, spoke with this or that one. Finally it became clearer to me what I had to

do and wanted to do: ascertain once and for all who they are, the Jews. I was sure my Berlin Jews were no Jews but a sort of smudgy bourgeois mishmash, the Eastern Jews were something else, I wasn't clear what.

In one novel I had journeyed in spirit to China, in another to the Thirty Years War, in a third to Greenland in a Utopian age. Now I wanted to make an actual journey to the land of my fathers.

To follow up that evening, representatives of the Zionist organisation came to me, they invited me to become a Zionist, perhaps I'd like to take a look at Palestine. But my plan was already firm: I was not yet ready to look at Palestine. First I just wanted to see some Jews. And I drafted a travel plan, presented it to my publisher and also the *Vossische Zeitung*, they quickly provided funds, I would be able to spend some months in Poland, Ukraine, maybe Lithuania.

What I found there and how it all went afterwards I shall report at some other time.

ADDENDUM: from 'Revue' by ‚Linke Poot', *Die neue Rundschau* (Feb. 1919):

The western Jew is another story. A curiosity that he's still around; probably it has more to do with the host peoples than with him. The peoples of Europe seem to have kept the Jew as a spittoon, he certainly plays an important role in the housekeeping of these people. I read once that the Jew as an extinct race makes a spooky impression, and arouses a fear of demons; hatred of Jews goes deeper to the culture-historical demonopathies that line up with and have the same spiritual dimensions as the fear of ghosts and belief in witches. It's tightly enchained and woven into these things and so can't be set aside. It justifies itself according to the age on grounds of physiology, or racial biology, or morality. The true basis for this demonopathy is given by history: the simultaneous flooding of Jews amongst the peoples of Europe and the degradation and stigmatising of existing religions by Christianity, together with naïve disgust for Jesus-killers in a context of continued scepticism by these Jews against the new religion.

CATASTROPHE ON A LEFT TURN
Das Tage-Buch 11/18 (3 May 1930)

*'*Die LInkskurve' (Left Turn*), edited by Johannes Becher[1] et al. for the Union of Proletarian-revolutionary Writers, ran from 1929 to 1932. In the December 1929 issue, Klaus Neukrantz reviewed* Berlin Alexanderplatz, *stating: "In this book, Döblin gives unconcealed expression to his hostility to the organised proletarian class struggle. Insofar as he deals with politicising workers, these do not speak the language of class-conscious workers, but a tavern-jargon. Döblin consciously sets out cynically to mock and ridicule the archetypal worker of our time who has been shaped by the political and economic contradictions of capital into a sharply delineated figure. Against this mass-type, the representative of the political and cultural problems of the modern age, he sets the invented, mystical, unenlightened figure of Franz Biberkopf, the 'good man', and deliberately insulates him from the proletarian class struggle. A clever mask conceals a reactionary and counter-revolutionary assault on the thesis of organised class struggle. It is no accident that in a book about Alexanderplatz, Döblin says not a word about the bloody altercations with the police. Police HQ has 'supervised' Döblin. The book strengthens our conviction that 'left-leaning' bourgeois writers constitute a political danger to the proletariat, against which we must be on our strictest guard."*[2]

This thing I'm going to talk about is called *Linkskurve (Left Turn)*, costs 30 pfennigs an issue, octavo format, printed by 'Peuvag'. It emerges from the darkness on the first of every month. It's not worth talking about, it's an authentic, i.e. also inauthentic, literary magazine behind which stands a clique of people who blow each other's trumpets and are possessed of infallibility. But we should say something about *Links-kurve*, because it's the official literary organ of the German Communist Party (KPD).

I got to know this thing when it turned its attention on me. When someone gave me this issue, I was so delighted I bought some back numbers. I read through them all, some parts were fun, some gruesome. I'll say something about this recently-created apparatus. For this thing is an apparatus. It produces mechanically-normed criticism, judgements are delivered on a conveyor belt, any child can operate it. It's an automaton with controls to protect against independent thought, especially adapted to the needs of the blind and the juvenile. On the outside, this thing is painted red. Inside, it's noticeably paler, and you know why when you see the names of the editors: Johannes R Becher, Andor Gabor, Kurt Kläber, Erich Weinert, Ludwig Renn[3].

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[1] **Becher** (1891-1958): Expressionist poet, after exile in Moscow became Minister of Culture in the GDR.

[2] *SPG*, endnote on p. 488.

[3] **Gabor** (1884-1953): Hungarian, worked for *Pravda* in USSR 1934-45. **Kläber** (1897-1959), a.k.a. Kurt Held: labourer/writer, fled to Switzerland, broke with the Party in 1938 over Stalin. **Weinert** (1890-1953): satirist, in USSR worked for Radio Moscow, took part in purges. Served with International Brigades in Spain; 1943 President of National Committee for Free Germany. **Renn** (1889-1979): scion of Saxon nobility, jailed 1934-36, fled to Switzerland. Commanded an International Brigade in Spain, then exile in Mexico. 1947 returned to GDR.

Karl Marx once said: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world." If we substitute 'principle' for 'religion', we have identified the role of Belief among Party authors. Conceptual vacuity, defects, are papered over. The evil heartless world must not intrude. But it does, a little.

For sure one is nothing, but one is no bourgeois. For sure one can't write, but what one writes is not bourgeois. For sure one cannot think, but one thinks in approved ways. If I were an artist and had to paint the five editors of *Left Turn*, I would paint them in their incubator, there they perch side by side, pitiable to the marrow, knife in the mouth, they make big goggle eyes and want to instil fear.

The first issue of year 2 has a leader by Johannes R. Becher. It's essential reading. I recommend everyone with an eye for humour and the grotesque to read this article; you can still buy the issue, only 30 pfennigs. It's the literary flagbearer of the German Communist Party. One often wonders how it is that the Party flails about so, and fluffs its opportunities. Here you see why. "The central task of the League of Proletarian-revolutionary Writers is the development of an indigenous proletarian-revolutionary literature." So the prophet. They'll sit in Kielblockstrasse in Lichtenberg and "develop" an indigenous literature: Herr Becher, who produces prose and smoky hymns in a porridge of unswervingly Expressionistic language; Herr Ludwig Renn, freshly-baked comrade, author of a moderately good war novel praised by the bourgeois press, whereupon he thought himself famous; Herr Andor Gabor, who he? Herr Kurt Kläber, O God, the *Passengers*,[4] once he tried to do something, and couldn't; Herr Erich Weinert, who "develops" cabaret sketches. This quintet will manage it.

We're informed that: "Our proletarian-revolutionary writing has made enormous progress in the past two years." What's wrong with me? I never noticed! It must have happened, unremarked, in Kielblockstrasse! That's so far away. Drat! Why didn't they phone? It's amazing that a secret literature can blossom in our midst. But then what I see is: our proletarian writing has just "made enormous progress", but now we learn that "we are a first stammering word, a beginning, and must strive ever higher." Something's not right. How the "stammering" fits with the "enormous progress" is not obvious to the bourgeois who merely thinks with his head. Clearly the Communists, or their literati, scarily enough also have at their disposal secret organs that they don't show us. However will we cope. Maybe the appalling contradiction of "stammering" and "enormous progress" has something to do with Marxist dialectic? But that's such a hard topic, whole courses are devoted to it. This might be an exemplary dialectic: "enormous progress" and "stammering". (We bourgeois, among ourselves, who think only with the head, call it nonsense. You see how rotten we are.)

Now, since disharmony has clearly emerged in the Communist secret literature of enormous progress, Johannes R Becher has hit upon his next handy idea: dictatorship over literature. Whoever won't listen must feel. Why does a writer need to think at all, think independently, when the residents of Kielblockstrasse can think for him, – I

[4] *Passagiere der dritten Klasse (Third Class Passengers),* 1927 novel by Kläber. Can be found online.

mean, they don't think there either, rather the thinking is done at [Party HQ in] Bülowplatz, – I mean, they don't think there either, they think, I don't really know, I don't understand the infinitesimal calculus, maybe some astronomer knows it? "So we demand that our literature be placed under the same control and accountability as every kind of political work." In other words, whatever displeases Kielblockstrasse will make no enormous progress, or, as the case may be, will be no first stammering word. Who better, I admit, to serve as Dictator in this drunken muddle than Johannes R Becher, since he's already proved himself dictator over logic and the German language.

Curious as to the secret literature of enormous progress, I encounter the sentence: "Our works are not noble or polished to crystal clarity, they have a hard edge, for they are born and grow in the breeze that wafts from History." Now I've missed the turn. Where for the thousandth time are these works with a hard edge? The prose and lyrics of Johannes R Becher? That literary cottage-cheese? Where's the breeze that wafts from History? Not in German books, those are horribly noble and polished to crystal clarity, as shiny as one of Anton von Werner's riding boots.[5] But in the *Linkskurve* itself you can find new proletarian poetry. Here's a taste, a poem by Hanns Vogt[s]:[6]

> Red dog! Red rabble!
> O you!
> Radiant, wonderful!
> Glowing, believer!
> Today and tomorrow and the next day
> And always you are there.

Enough? No word needed. This is the hard edge, grown up in the breeze that wafts from History! (Less harshly: from an early number of *Der Sturm.*) German Communist literature!

Finally, Johannes R Becher can't hold back: he has to say how it is with this new proletarian literature, he must avow what is, and he says (don't hold your breath): it is Rosegger.[7] This emerges from Becher at the point where he has a book of mine in front of him. The former transport worker (Becher omits the 'former': a good bourgeois tradition, that, I swoon), who according to Becher is no longer a 'former' transport worker in one of my books, is an "artificially extruded laboratory product". Accusations levelled against the writer include: that he collects endless details and piles them up, that he is a mere stenographer of Berlin dialect, that the streetcar numbers he cites are accurate, that the book is ultra-realistic. If you'd like to know how it should really be, you find out: "Our works will acquire the naturally simple speech of the proletariat, the smell and colour that truly belong to the proletariat." Now let's ask, as a professional and a layman, how we get there. The author is not allowed to be realistic, the details he gives mustn't be accurate, there should be no

[5] Werner (1843-1915) painted historical topics in photographic detail.

[6] Vogts (1900-1976): writer/dramatist, stayed in Nazi Germany, Communist Party member 1945-50.

[7] Peter Rosegger (1843-1918): Austrian regional-nationalist writer.

authentic Berlin dialect: what then? Clearly: Rosegger! Regional stories, the smell of nature, the famous 'clod of soil'. Alas I don't mean either Rosegger or Ganghofer![8] I've had enough of natural proletarian speech from the poem cited above; and the cottage-cheese paeans of Johannes R Becher, a.k.a. the hard edge, likewise fail to sharpen my appetite. I kept to the simple Berlin dialect, which I didn't copy down stenographically, because I don't know how to be a stenographer. And if the details in my novel prove accurate, I beg Herr Becher's pardon, I'm such a goof: – when I mean Alexanderplatz I say Alexanderplatz, and when I mean cottage-cheesehead, I say Becher. And if I gather endless details, I promise that next time I'll do no gathering but pluck poetry straight out of the air: "O you radiant, wonderful, glowing, believer." Didn't it cross my mind just then that Herr Becher once attempted a novel using unsuitable means, and that novel was alas confiscated – everyone should have read it – and didn't he find himself then a mere appendix – a one-page literary directory? Oh pish, Herr Comrade, how can you. These after all are details, that's how you go on, and you want to be Rosegger?

What these gentlemen want, the goal of their foetal trains of thought, no, not their goal, is clear. There's a picture book, you know it, *The Face of the Ruling Class.*[9] Showing the face of the ruling class is absolutely a necessary act – but it would admit reality, and pipsqueaks and cowards find that scary and distressing. To show reality as it is, demonstrate the true needs of the masses and make theory from those and for those – that would be Marxist. Excuse my boldness in quoting the unknown Marx again: "Theory is realised among the people only to the extent that it is a realisation of their needs." And again: "One must depict the petrified conditions of German society and thereby force them to dance so that one can sing to it its own melody. One must bring the people to be shocked at themselves in order to give them courage." Compare these truly hard sentences with the weak porridge of Communist chiefling Becher's phrases. Compare the closeness to reality of these quotes with the lyricist's fear of details. Compare the authenticity of these sentences with *Linkskurve*'s stammering. "Face to the workplace," sings Becher.[10] Nah, my son. In reality he writes with his face to *Der Sturm*. They hate reality. These sober historical materialists daren't approach reality. They believe it's enough just to wave your little red flag over reality.

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[8] Ludwig Ganghofer (1855-1920): Bavarian writer, promoted young writers including Rilke; friend of the Kaiser.

[9] Book of political drawings by George Grosz, 1921.

[10] In the cited article, Becher writes: "Face to the workplace – this turn is for us the vital question. If we complete this turn, we shall be best able to evade all dangers that arise from the workplace of literature. Our own face, turned to the workplace, will be changed: our works will acquire the natural simple speech of the proletariat, the smell and colour that truly belong to the proletariat, there will be a mass of material there, the most valuable and comprehensive we could hope to find, - and our writers, if they write a novel called *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, will certainly not find it necessary to adopt methods which despite their ultra-realism are quite unrealistic, merely in order to mask a crazy unviable construct: the transport worker in our novel will be a class person, will be a transport worker and not an artificially extruded laboratory product like Döblin's "transport worker" who seeks to prove his existence by gabbling a stenographed Berlin dialect, and suspiciously enough takes note of the number of every tram that crosses the Alex. Whoever allows himself to be so endlessly atomised, to dissolve in details and believe that the details sum up to make a whole – he does not create a new art form, as bourgeois critics assert in their need to glorify everything; all he does is affirm, though very much against his will, that bourgeois literature is at an end." – SPG, endnote on p. 490.

Listen to what a literary leader of the Party writes to introduce a new year's issue of the official organ of the KPD: "We are not such idealists as to idealise *what is* [a hard enough task, for they don't know what is]; we are not complacent, we do not claim to be satisfied: we tug and pound the drum. We incite, so that the revolt will come sooner. That is our literature, we must proclaim it like a gospel. It rips through brain and heart." To which I say, without stenography: "Calm down, lad, for goodness sake." Here we have the ridiculous wretched literary representatives of the KPD: little red flags waving over a reality that no one knows, that they all step aside from with cant phrases. Who wonders any more where the politics are?

PROMETHEUS AND THE PRIMITIVE[1]
Mass und Wert, vol. 1/3 (Jan/Feb 1938)

What is Nature?

She presents herself as Nature writ large, in the myriad starry worlds. On our Earth she brings forth crystals, animals, plants, people. She shows herself in the changing seasons, she is thunderstorms, heat, cold. We experience her in the simplicity of slow silent fecundity, in gentle never-ending growth, in the transience of life with its youth and age and in great catastrophes, in earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions.

She does not dwell in any single presence, finds no sufficiency in any one of her creations. She surges through Time, ever developing and thereby swiftly or slowly subverting herself. Time is her element *par excellence*, she is inconceivable without Time and without the change inherent in it, the constant unfurling and discarding, dissolving and reconstructing.

Does this have a purpose? It is very human to ask such a question. Clearly it is replete with meaning, rather: meanings.

She possesses multifariousness, innumerable facets, and at the same time boundless monotony. What appears to us as death and fills us with gloomy fears is for her a matter of course. She brings forth colour, music, beauty. At every stage she is excitable, strews charms about, from which answers and actions ensue.

This makes her accessible to numbers, so accessible that she seems always to be calculating, soaked to the very core in numbers. But on the other hand this seems no different than when you make a poem and structure it according to the meter as an Alexandrine, a tercet, a sonnet, or when you group flowers according to their stamens.

She seems mercilessly hard, consistency and logic are among her defining features. She pursues the sins of the fathers unto the third and fourth generations, only then to vary on a whim, to play and make anything possible. She does not deny causality, but this betrays little about her.

Does she not stand there like a solid inapproachable statue of stone? But nothing about her, to the attentive mind, lies beyond the inkling of a feeling. And exhilaration and ecstasy break out among animals and men.

It is one of the most curious acts of Nature, from which she never shrinks: the creation of entities that separate from her and place themselves in opposition to her. In particular Man, who whether he will or no must acknowledge himself an entity of Nature, falls into a tormented ambiguity. He experiences himself with a body, an organism that links him to the animals, undergoes the changes common to all natural bodies, is afflicted with birth, growth and metabolism and faces the prospect of certain death–but at the same time Man regards this entity, which heaps so many pains and

[1] This translation was first published on *The Brooklyn Rail*'s InTranslation website in September 2014.

joys upon him, with a mistrustful and alienated eye. He cannot and will not identify himself entirely with this entity of Nature. He experiences himself as a solitary being. He believes himself, at least in part, to be free from Nature, he confronts her, and considers this the true human species.

And so a foundational fact is experienced, with which all philosophy occupies itself and for which it has developed various formulations. The intimation of bereavement–separation, dissolution, elimination–dwells deep within every living thing. This feeling is always mingled to some degree with an existential sense of well-being. The closer the individual to the general forces of Nature–in the realm of crystals or plants–the weaker this feeling is likely to be. But we slide from a passive and questioning acquiescence in our isolation into an active relationship with it. The notorious confrontation of Man against Nature arises, the poor questioner has in the end concealed his face behind a ruler's pride. But in the depths, unaltered, that primal feeling still lurks. Of course when unease now arises, it serves only as an irritant.

Now we gain an insight into the meaning and nature of technology. No doubt: a man and his group want to defend themselves. But technology is more than utility. And then, what is utility? Useful for whom, at whose service? It is at the service of a profound necessity, of the isolation into which we have stepped and its overcoming. Objectively, in our feeding and our breathing, our so-called metabolism, we return always to the "Earth" into which we shall sink in the end; corresponding to this is an inner attitude: that we live weighed down by a primal isolation and individuation, and are driven to overcome it (spiritual metabolism, spiritual respiration).

Technology is not just a battle against Nature, it also *bridges the way out of individuation.*

We may say: Nature, which has fragmented itself into these individuals, creative Nature, seeks to merge itself again with the fragmented world. And this is *the innermost meaning of technology: not to subdue Nature, but to draw near to her again.* It is not outrageous to assert: whatever Man can designate as creative Nature (primal being) has given to each of her progeny a whiff of a notion of this origin and at the same time an urge to turn back. The will to this kind of return is no foreign body in Man, but an urge out of his isolation, which is fragmentation, into wholeness.

Inward technology and outward technology

And now for the first time we utter the word "primitive." There are two paths. From earliest times, two technologies and stances have set themselves up in opposition, arising from the ground we have just described: one is the stance and technology that drove the discovery of firemaking, tools, weapons; the other is what we call "religion."

The historical continuum to which the technology and stance of fire-making, tools, and weapons led, we shall call the Promethean, or the continuum of outward technology. The historical continuum which, using other methods, concerns itself

with primal existence and the primal condition, we call the Primitive, or the continuum of inward technology. “Primitive” denotes the mystical continuum pure and simple because of its orientation towards the primal condition that preceded individuation. The practices and measures we call religion seek to connect the individual with primal existence and the primal condition–the firemaker’s technology has nothing to do with it.

The firemaker is Prometheus. It is he who aggressively and wilfully rends and treads down and circumvents the questioning and suffering primal sense of the individual. He acts. He spreads himself powerfully out through Nature, senses the mysterious underworld but lets it be. For him it must end in hubris and tragedy. Thereafter those on whom the spirit of Prometheus falls no longer grant to the mystical stance the character of a serious autonomous praxis and technology, they no longer recognise any primal being or primal condition, they deal only in discrete objects as isolated as themselves, with which they establish external correspondences and which they value according to their utility.

But “primitive” mystical persons do not circumvent and suppress this primal sense. The primal sense is the fire, the flame that lights them. Consciousness of the primal situation remains alive in them. They do not relinquish a connection with the variously named and even personified powers of Nature and primal being. It remains the centre of their thoughts, the actual object of their dealings. They develop practices to strengthen this connection and, at least temporarily and under specific circumstances, to re-establish it. They acknowledge their dependence on this side formally and at all times, and expect guidance from it.

So we find in human history two movements which start from the crisis of individuation and develop practices to overcome it: the older, still familiar one, which later weakened to “religion”; and the newer one that strides along the road of discovery, constructs mighty edifices, and drives human isolation on towards a total confrontation with Nature.

The first to utter the word “primitive” with an undertone of sympathetic rejection and defiance was Prometheus. “Primitive” was what he called the being who knew not the making of fire. Primitive is the abandoned origin. When the twirling and rubbing of two sticks or the fire-saw first produces a flame at the hands of a human pursuing his innate urge to build and seek, then a flame is lit in his brain as well, surprise and pride are there, and it is a beginning and has a voracious character. There are ages in which the explorer merely exploits and safeguards his spoils, but curiosity urges him on. Nature, in which up to this point he was part of a continuum, he sees now for the first time as she shrinks back before him. When a human with a growing consciousness and an enquiring technical urge hastens after her, he is really chasing a fugitive spirit. But for a long time yet he does not sense this, for in his pride of discovery, in his curiosity and fever of exploration, the main elements of the Promethean have entered his blood. Humans in general will follow this path, they will become significant, and distance themselves ever farther from the exit that then

becomes “Nature”–apparently distance themselves, for Nature is incalculable, and plays games. Driven by the Promethean spirit, the early nomads, gatherers and hunters, farmers and herders will come ever more strongly to rely upon themselves alone, to live from products they themselves have fashioned, to reshape the Earth to their requirements. They will exterminate unfriendly beasts, screen themselves from the elements, cling together ever more closely in social groups, and at last succeed in introducing biological changes in themselves and their groups which may one day break through the boundaries of our species. Then the Promethean urge will be consummated, and yet this achievement will not, as some fear, cause the Earth to perish. For Prometheus is not alone, after a while he will be summoned yet again to the system, to the great system.

We live in the age of Promethean hegemony. We have retreated, hemmed ourselves in, to a technical utilitarian way of living, feeling, and thinking. Our thoughts and concepts are now merely hammer and tongs or entire machines. But it remains a fact that the Promethean urge does not make world history all by itself, but against and with–with what? With the whole other multidimensional Nature. If History were nothing more than the onward march of a Promethean spirit it would be a straight line, transparent and easily described. But it is not. Our encapsulation in the Promethean urge, in the tyrannical dominion it exercises especially over the white race, has led to us calling the little torch that flickers there “Light,” while the vast expansive brightness for which every laudatory word is too feeble we call “Darkness.”

Western civilisation is replete with the savage, we may say often barbaric, progress of the Promethean urge–it is the path of civilisation–and with other movements countering, harmonising, interlacing with it.

Prometheus in the Bible

Out of earliest occidental history emerged the powerful work that is even today read everywhere, that exerts effects by which we recognise that it contains things that still speak to us. This is the Bible.

Its very first page announces the Promethean claim in a programmatic way. From nothing less than his God will Mankind accept dominion over Nature. The whole inventory of his inheritance is listed, the fish of the sea, birds of the air, cattle, the Earth and every creeping thing upon it. But what is demanded of the warden of such a grandly bestowed dominion is not, you notice, very agreeable to Man, and at first he makes no attempt to take it on. Man is relocated – why only after this prelude? – to a pleasant spot: he lives in a wonderful garden where he’s on first-name terms with God, he lives amicably and not at all domineeringly together with all the animals. (Here, moreover, is where Mankind becomes Man and Woman, where they live together in innocence and are not ashamed in each other’s eyes.) Dramatically, tragically, this blessed primal condition, the very model of a primitive existence closed in on itself,

suffers dissolution. A "sin" is laid between the later and the earlier condition. Through "sin" Mankind is driven suddenly into the quite undesirable condition of a Prometheus.

(The story is obviously the product of a male mind: in the beginning Man is created, he is Mankind, the Woman merely a piece of him; unlike every other creature she certainly does not come directly from the Creator's hand. And it is fitting that already we hear the familiar ascetic note: the Woman is stigmatised as seductress, on whom is pinned the blame for every evil. Let us concede: they are strange, these Prometheus figures from the beginning of the Bible. And the sense of bitterness so predominates that we do not even notice what is being said: that everything, in all its immensity, is represented as the outcome of folly instigated by female wiles!)

Later this scene appears again, sketched more boldly. There is mention of giants, of the children of God who came unto the daughters of men, and here, really, a "new, world-dominating species" is named: they are called tyrants, mighty of the earth, men of renown. Now we see what's what.

And then, the third time–you can't escape it–we learn fully what these mighty men actually achieve, a tower in Babel, and see who it is before our eyes. They were, we are told, one people, with one language, the Lord himself was curious and came down to see this tower being built by men, his creations, and again God is allowed to decide on annihilation, because he rightly sees: they will never desist from anything they set their hands to. Then they must stop building the city, become scattered across many lands and speak many languages. Quite clearly, though devoid of amorous adventures, this is the third Original Sin. Until today they have never stopped building. For after the threefold report the actual history of a single people begins, and you see constant detailed accounts of the same thing we have just looked at in summary, and it all looks like evidence for it. Prometheus, who feels uneasy in his skin. (We shall see that this ancient people, the Hebrews, had another powerful "mythical" back story and pursued Prometheanism only weakly, but they understood humanity and placed the report of Creation and Original Sin as a warning at the start of their history.)

And so at the very moment of leaving the primitive primal home, we have the whole calamity of our permanent condition and the West: forced to work, and condemned to die. Now there is no more talk of Man's descent from God. The cold, shattering word is: Thou art dust, and to dust shalt thou return. This is a turnaround. From its first appearance in the Bible, Promethean pride speaks of itself in a depressed and troubled tone, and mourns a primitive primal condition represented as "Paradise." Here is the old, old feeling of separation that we spoke of. Despite his pride, he knows how things stand with him and what Paradise is, but in the end shrugs his shoulders and lets Cherubim with fiery swords set up camp at its gate.

There is no lack of clarity here as to the goal of human desire. Man wants the Last Thing: not to die, and wants to know Good and Evil. But Man lets his God speak scornfully and dismissively: "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life…"

And so White Western Man draws himself up in a sorrowful yearning posture. Will he strive to regain the primitive state full of mysteries? No. It is enough for him to dream of it, as of Paradise. He remains fully occupied in fighting, oppressing, and gathering riches. All he does in respect of the murky sense of suffering and sin that he still feels is to make a compromise with his God, who promises him much if he will obey the commandments, pray, and sacrifice in the prescribed manner.

As it began with the backwards look (meaning: into the depths beneath him), so it goes on; Man relapses into primitivity, the Primitive appears as Baal, Astarte, golden calf, local deity, something else, and moral deviations appear too. These early Western people, as the document regretfully confirms, succumb to the temptations of animal and vegetable deities, give themselves to cults where grieving about individuation is almost unknown. People plunge into deeper historical strata, immerse themselves through these deities once more in a certain primitive condition, at least temporarily.

Those peoples who practised cults in and beyond the domestic hearth were interestingly, in a strictly craftsmanlike sense, the superiors of the ancient Hebrews, but nonetheless not so conscious of the Promethean, that is to say the technical will. The ancient Hebrews are the first Western people, in that they consciously developed and formulated the Promethean will. They project this will onto the primal power itself: “God” is unique, an agglomeration of powers, a monarch, and his priests and prophets viciously persecute whole generations who deviate into idol-worship.

But despite this they neither practised the Promethean will nor made it their spiritual centre. The ancient Hebrews held fast to, and were held fast by, the primeval, magical ritual of prayer and offerings, and so had the second technology and stance and the door leading to the primal condition. They tended knowledge and preserved practices by which helpless isolated beings concern themselves with the great primal One. Thus this young Western people has a double face. And this is somewhat typical: even where Prometheanism thrusts ahead with full force, it drags remnants of its mirror-image along with it.

Hellas-Rome and the shift to inward technology

A look at the Greeks, another people of the White race, a very this-worldly tribe. The Prometheus myth arose among this luminous people. No gloomy sublime reports, celebrated in bitter earnest, of a primal creator and original sin. There is a world of gods, but this heaven mirrors an autonomous human aristocracy. How accessible to joyfulness, even irony, it all is. The Hellenes, builders of strong city-states, ruling over huge numbers of slaves, are not inclined to ponder overmuch on the terrible and tragic human condition–although they know it well, although pessimism and laments are threaded throughout their culture. There is talk of a dark past, of battles with giants, the horrific Atrides, the dismal Fates who sit over the gods are there, the figure of the Sphinx–but these are distant and remain dark, and there is no yearning for it, or for a primitive dreamland. Here Prometheus is completely victorious, and when Zeus,

the chief god, seizes him and chains him to a rock, he has to use force and violence to fetter the primal monsters.

After the Bible, with its glorious foregrounded figure of Man the Master and the yearning that breaks through for the primitivity of Paradise and the earth-deities–after the proud Hellenes, poised in a tragic stance, making only a timid dismissive gesture towards the other world, and reflecting their own magnificence in a heaven full of gods–after these come the Romans, of whom some, including Horace and Tacitus and the Bucolics, sigh for simple and primal conditions. But we will not speak of such literary yearnings, rather of the vehement, catastrophic eruption that led to the birth of Christianity.

How mightily did the Promethean spirit reveal itself in Roman state-building, in the army, in law, general civilisation, organisation, and endless political expansion. And precisely now the serious fallback, the counter-movement, Christianity, induced by the radicality with which the Roman principle was pursued. Christianity appears as if pressed from one of the many subjugated and soon landless peoples. At first it drifted like a little cloud from nowhere across a couple of Roman towns. People fled from the almost seamless consolidation of the state into the individual, the private, and yearned for a "primitive" condition. This was the truest, most genuine mystical movement. Roman soldiers and citizens saw themselves confronted by an utterly abhorrent phenomenon, by a will to escape from their civilisation into a primal condition. The individual, robbed of his former means of existence, was in these provinces all alone, thrown back on himself, driven into himself. In helplessness he "came to himself," and he produced the slogan–a fantastic assertion in the Roman Imperium: the individual is the child of God. Here is the birth of the individual out of a bankrupt politics. This "Christianity" was obviously not "of this world." It was unpolitical, anti-political. In the eyes of the victorious humanity of this age, the Roman, on whom all custom, peace and order rested, it was mere chaos and anarchy.

Christianity was premised on the unbearability of the general human situation, fixed and trapped in its Promethean rut. In an over-large society with all its civilised trimmings, whole masses of people found no place and no satisfaction. In this crisis they sought a region where the rough Roman soldier could not follow: their inwardness. Nietzsche's story of a simple slave uprising is not false, but foregrounded, without depth. Since a horizontal attachment to society was not achieved, and in the long run was not possible, masses of people sank vertically into "religions." This is the refreshing and completion of Mankind by the re-emerging "religious side."

In its "paradisiacally" simple, peacefully happy ground state, early Christianity reveals its primitivity. The adherents are poor. Their thoughts constantly reveal the impact of the primitive; it's all about the beginning and the end of the world, the millennial kingdom. It is only natural that, in opposition to Rome, religions in Asia Minor and North Africa, autonomously developed and from the same continuum, should attach themselves to it. You are in a state of purest primitivity, awaiting Paradise. But quite soon, because Paradise does not come, other tones blend in. The

individual again senses suffering, ever more as time goes on, but is now also sinful, guilty. It begins with ascetic practices, and slides into a particular kind of religious technology. The ascetic impulse presses on until–it doesn't take long–one's own flesh and the whole of Nature is viewed as sinful and anti-human.

And here we are, sailing in the finest Promethean current! Man against Nature! (This development was already prefigured and prepared: the awaited Paradise would not be found in the Garden of Eden, but in the Hereafter.) Through its hostility to Nature, the whole of later Christianity landed up in a remarkable, ever-changing, playful proximity, a dangerous proximity, to its old enemy Prometheanism, whose Roman form it had sought to destroy. Each side has a canny understanding of the other. Compromises follow, on the basis of "hostility to Nature." Now, moreover, you can rule, take part in politics. This is the Christian settlement seen from the Promethean side. Thus did Christians gain access to working in the mortal world.

Of course, developments on the other side lie much nearer to Christianity, on the side that appeared with the assimilation of cults from Asia Minor. Here you work with, not against, Nature. You accommodate to "heathenism." Christianity, as it becomes Catholicism, seeks accommodation also in a direction that corresponds to its essence. It draws closer to its origins. It gathers a mass of primitivities about it.

Onset of a new Prometheanism

Hellas-Rome succumbed to the aggressive primitivism of young Christianity, the West lay to this side for a thousand years, but the battle was not over, the position reached was not stable.

Christianity, come to offer the individual a mysterious access to Primal Being, had as Catholicism given in too readily to its dual inclination and was crumbling: its inclination to hostility towards Nature and to politics and the governance of this world, and its inclination towards local myths, ancient magic. The reins hung loose. People grew stale. They no longer represented the urge towards the Primal World from which they came.

In the first half of the second millennium after Christ's birth, a Promethean wave of enormous breadth and impact set itself in motion. This is the age of the discoverers of the Earth and the heavens; but "discover" also means "conquer" and "subjugate." The West that we see and live in today emerged at this time. Early on (to provide a test of how close we are to that time), Leonardo da Vinci employed exact quantitative methods, he studied music and physics, occupied himself with problems of flight and ballistics. He is heir to the great discoverer of fire, his true son. He builds machines with the aid of algebra and geometry, and at the end of the 15th century demands the experiment. He is the source of the saying: "The earth is a machine and so is Man." Descartes, the originator of French thought, agrees with Leonardo. He says: "The body of a living man differs from that of a dead man to the same extent that a watch or other automaton (i.e. a machine that moves of itself) does when it is wound up and

possesses the physical principle for the motion for which it was constructed." The English chime boldly in, and Hobbes imagines the state and society as "a single great machine whose nature can only be understood when the state is dismembered conceptually into its elements, which spring from human nature." Hobbes too uses the example of the watch or complex machine.

After the Renaissance and Luther, the age of secularization. The religious continuum driven to the wall. Remnants stand like islands in the flood.

The continual force of a great, ubiquitous spiritual-material current. From time to time it appears to recede, then regains its vigour and there come whirlpools and underminings. The French Revolution, after the Enlightenment's preparatory work, draws a line in October 1793 between it and earlier ages, it breaks with the Christian calendar, time is reckoned from the autumnal equinox, human reason is installed on the now vacant throne of God, and festivals are instituted for secular "virtues," work, revolution.

Now the scenery is dominated by interweavings, of which there are many examples. The movement that now rules absorbs for its technical practical progress images and motives from the other continuum, it "secularises" them. And this means: the accommodation reached by the Church and especially by Catholicism is lured into a secular, Promethean framework outside the Church. "Human rights" now step forward as political ideals, quite differently from their original conception. Mysticism is not left on the shelf, rather efforts are made to incorporate it practically. This modern inclination plans a kind of church outside the Church.

Here is the reason for the irresistible social movements of recent centuries, which appear to revolve around self-evident and necessary changes in relations between rulers and ruled, as if on the one side we have property and satiation, and on the other side hunger and envy. The fury of the actual struggle, however, is fuelled from elsewhere.

An optimistic mood reigns over the path of progress. No trace can be detected of the great sorrow that accompanied the first Promethean steps. No one looks into the dark abyss in which the human ego lies, stretching out its arms, lamenting. The slogan of the age seems to be "Hope and Blindness."

Where do we stand now?

We saw how various were the heads on the bodies that formed the Promethean impulse among the Hebrews, Greeks and Romans. But when this impulse re-awoke at the end of the Middle Ages, what had it become? What did it get up to now?

This time it extends its victory march to north and west, reaches from the Mediterranean into the interior of Europe. And now it assumes a strange, de-sensed character, even though it busies itself only with visible, palpable, and ponderable Nature. And see: it sets out to master the multiplicity and manifold nature of these

phenomena, and allows their tactility, visibility, audibility to disappear. You cannot argue without further ado that this comes with the times, it's a Prometheanism arising from a Christian camp in a Christianising age. All by itself, lacking contact with any ascetic power, this tremendous urge for mastery assumes features that appear ascetic (the counterpart to the Christian inclination to appear Promethean and engage in politics); all by itself, from its own being, the urge for mastery over Nature develops its own asceticism, a denial of the world. It dissolves all qualities into quantities. Abstract numbers rule. It leads to mere forces, relations, dynamisms. How clear it is that what is at work here is not the whole man, but a monomaniacal brain and the urge to mastery. He makes the world "manageable." He wants to hold it in his fist. So a fantastical image arises. As in a Buddhist meditation, colour, tone, and form disappear trait by trait, you sink into ever profounder deafness, blindness. The person who manifests here is a pure action-being, and the Promethean impulse–enormous paradox–brings forth amid the riches of a world grown wide a skeletal, even shadowy, nihilistically frozen person. (What a contrast between this modern Prometheanism and the joyous world-acceptance of the Greeks.)

And now to the deformities of humans and societies that this being has wrought.

The construction of a sense of mastery belongs to the essence of modern Promethean power, directed not only over elements, plants, and animals, but especially over people, and all under the same sign. This power works against Nature in that it ignores and destroys the inborn urge of people to form a society. Ever and again in these times, new groups and individuals spring up to enjoy the lust for power over people. This subjugation and slavery, and not the subjugation of Nature, is the main point. The breeding, specialisation, and objectification of humans is pursued proudly and deliberately. It is not "man" or "the human race," humankind as a whole that is led in this way towards the noble magnificent Promethean flame, only small closed groups of aristocrats and despots; larger groups are forced towards the fire to serve it; whole populations are sacrificed in war and serfdom and thrown into the fire to fuel it with their lives.

Societies led in this manner may be great and admirable in their organisation, in the clarity of their statehood. They may provide welfare for their people, because they want to shape them to the ruling will. But there is welfare and welfare, human relations and human relations. And you can guess the kind of human relations that underlie these societies and with what means they are produced: outward relations in the service of the will to mastery, and the regulation of such relations through decrees and laws, control by armies and police.

The absolutist state and mysticism

So it comes to the dismantling of natural Humanity, and its replacement. The main form of human connectedness then becomes "collectivism," i.e. the agglomeration of masses, by chance or intention, into organisations. What is desired is human

anonymity and anaesthesia; what is pursued is repression, trivialisation, and contempt for the person, for the I, for the inward, for thinking. (You do not notice that you are trying to magic away a primal phenomenon–the one we spoke of at the start, our primal individuation which no act of state can touch.)

So you begin to make human relationships harder, on the premise that the only thing that matters is "the public." In the great ages of mysticism the only thing that matters is in fact the mystical "public"–God, the primal condition–because from this there follows a self-evidently experienced, deeply satisfying, and uplifting regulation of individual life. This imitates the Promethean power; the ape of religion believes he can make similar prescriptions. But policemen masked in religiosity are still around. The natural exchange of views is hampered, silence is demanded, with cynical disregard for what one "thinks." (The mystical age valued "thinking" differently, recognising it as *the* fundamental power.)

State authority grown "absolute" ushers in an age of stunted humanity. Other, likewise Promethean, images of the state in periods of civilization merely wanted to regulate and govern natural relationships; the "absolute" state must abhor and suppress these relationships just as its absolute science drives out colour and sounds in favour of quantities. But what happens to mankind now? The image of power, because it cannot permit the honest and free association of people, but rather must encourage suspicion, places society in a condition of true suffering, in a kind of war-footing of all against all, and this is the opposite of the "paradisiacal" life of the mystical continuum.

The preferred approach is to treat the masses like an army, a battle-ready instrumental mass. People are enormously dependent and at the same time impoverished, more so than in the time of the Caesars because the public is now so much more extensive. Such societies are under powerful inward stresses, they incline either to collapse or to war.

Now something emerges that is of particular interest to us, because it touches on the mystical continuum: some space is left for other human concerns. The colossus of such a collective organisation feels that he has feet of clay and needs support. He does not give up his principle, but makes use of another as well. The colossus strives to achieve cohesion among his coerced fragments through inward stimuli and anaesthesia. So as surrogates of spiritual connectedness we have mass rallies, uniforms, fireworks, games. They both dazzle and intimidate the disintegration-prone fragments. Feelings of power are excited in the fragments, and this is the start of a particular form of human crippling: attention is diverted away from a person's nature and his lamentable condition to make him what for other reasons he is already inclined to become–a being of violence in the image of this apparatus, just as the degenerative mystical continuum lets him become an animal or plant. Hordes of petty tyrants run about, miserable people in the toga of a Caesar, a repulsive masked ball. Now they only catch glimpses of their selves, no longer have access to their inward resources, to

their actual scope. It externalises and coarsens. Here we see the barbarism resulting from a degenerate Promethean impulse.

Statehood does not stand still now. It tries to seize actual ideas. To external coercion and dazzlement it adds inward coercion. It breaks in on the mystical continuum.

Two things stand against the absolute state. Firstly, in the Promethean space there always exists a generalised, free-floating mysticism seeking a point of attachment, and secondly, in the West one finds a particular kind of pseudo-mysticism, a glorification of secularism. You speak (we use a German example, but what we describe goes beyond Germany) of a special Indo-Germanic piety, you declare yourselves a holy nation, you oppress alien or recalcitrant elements. What a fantasy you offer, to help the neo-Promethean image hiding in this stadium full of ecstasy and uproar to attain glory and majesty. What a mass of cajoling speculations, exploiting of literature, plundering of fables, myths. Magnificent proud Promethean power parading in a tawdry burlesque. The smell of the times sweats from the pores of these fantasies and speculations, they mirror the dreariness, confusion, and urge to expansion of this age, they lead to no primal ground, no yearning and no feeling leads them there, they look to no future, they stand firmly anchored in their time.

Did Nietzsche partake of the fantasies that parade around now, the fanaticism of "blood," nation, and race? He offered many sacrifices to the Prometheus of these days, especially in his doctrine of the Will to Power and the Superman. But he always kept in view the picture of a great, creative, and magical Nature. He who thought of higher human beings had no shadow of a notion to serve today's technical-industrial, outwardly pompous, inwardly ruinous coercive state, with its degenerate, excessively Promethean impulse lacking any regulating balance.

This mass of brain-flowers with its mythic posturing. Everything brought forth in icy coldness, revealing the cold, ascetic will to power. How can mysticism arise out of this artificially attenuated, dessicated humanity? The ground for this, in such an age, can exist only where the technical and expansionist urge has not been able to rage excessively, where it can still arouse protest: among its sacrificial victims, the suffering, the oppressed, the denigrated and displaced, who for a long time seek via Socialism an entryway to the old rubble-filled shaft.

Let us look more closely at the kind of "mysticism" that serves the coercive state in our time, that it sets before its subjects in order to provide itself with a security it can never attain; this mysticism is an expansive scientism, stemming from Darwin. You are presented with a zoological nationalism. Degenerate mysticism and degenerate Prometheanism touch and encounter each other here, to their astonishment; neither knows anything of the primal ground and the tragic primal human urge to go "back!"– but both throw themselves at this singular view of Nature, at blood and beast, the mystic for ecstasy, the heirs of Prometheus only because they need legitimation. The claim to divine right, the elite claim of a modern "people" and the same claim of

ancient mystical peoples resemble one another, but only outwardly. Today's states base the claim solely on an overweening growth of the Will to Power; boundlessness is the essence of the Promethean impulse. This pseudo-mysticism bears no relation to primitivity, and especially not to authenticity, you don't even believe in it yourself, it's all cleverly concocted and written-down fantasies promulgated by paid hacks and interested parties. These bloodless learned scribblings rave, their bombastic rhetoric especially loves the word "blood." An agitator says for example: "The Christianity and humanism now vanishing into the ether ignore the stream of blood-red real life that courses through the veins of every genuine people and every culture." The barriers to thought appear clearly in the following sentence by the same author: "The conflict between blood and environment, blood and blood, is the final epiphany accessible to us." They have made a very great stride into self-awareness recently, those who proclaim that the classical German materialists, Voigt, Moleschott, Büchner, latterly even Ernst Häckel, belong to their camp.

There is no way at all to create a mystical foundation out of the images, healthy or sick, created by Prometheanism, but the inclination to do so reveals a weakening and degeneration of its power.

And it is so. And now we close these fragmentary remarks. Two things remain for the future: to reset this power whose grasp is now awry, whose pivot is the domination of Nature by Man; and to accommodate to the mystical realm. But a sudden reversal could also occur in the other continuum.

THE GERMAN UTOPIA OF 1933 AND LITERATURE[1]
Das golden Tor 1/ 2 and 1 /3 (1946)

1.

[...] When considering the character of the power that since 1933 set itself against the entire material and spiritual life of the country, one does well to acquire a clear understanding of what is a Utopia. For this movement, this power, possessed a Utopian core; many even saw this as the core of its power; and for sure this core had a formative, shaping effect on the development of this power-body.

So what is a Utopia? It is a human plan to interrupt history, in order to jump free of history and achieve a stable perfection. The impetus may come from fatigue, and may also come from an enormous high-tension human willpower. People notice and observe for a time the course of their historical existence, they see states being formed, states being dissolved, the formation of new groups and constellations, and while this all seems to them colourful and full of novelty, it is, on the other hand and in the long run, monotonous. It as if from to time people develop history fatigue. They push politics away and allow themselves to be governed by professionals. Their own interest strays away from the imponderable uncontrollable processes of history, and flings itself at something that promises to last, that really is relevant and heart-soothing. And now into the eternally changeable world a dream-vision is conjured up, which is meant to triumph over confused historical reality. A situation is constructed which is meant to form the culmination, the flowering, the conclusion of the historical process.

[...]

Note particularly the difference between Utopia and religion. It seems that the definition of Utopia could encompass religions, both as regards its initial impetus and the end result: a conclusion, the culmination and coming into flower of the all too wearying historical process. But in one point religions diverge from Utopias. Religion leaves the earthly plane. The Utopian demand for power is directed at the Earth; the world is to be not overcome, but conclusively and radically altered. The consequence is supposed to be the opposite of a Deluge; but the renewal should break like a new Deluge over the whole of the past.

Behind Utopias and religions lie different fundamental concepts. A Utopia believes it knows – rather, does believe – that humanity can attain a lasting state of perfection, but only after radical alterations to their social arrangements. Religion takes a more realistic view: that given human nature as it actually is, a lasting state of perfection and happiness is impossible.

And so, at least in relation to earthly happiness, it is the Utopia that has faith and religion that lacks faith.

[1] This essay is a post-World War 2 revisiting of the 1938 essay 'German literature (abroad since 1933)' – also translated in this volume. The first three sections translated here are a useful preface to that essay.

Utopians present themselves as the greatest effective realists, and for them religion is an ineffectual dream. But religion is the great question mark even during the lifetime of the Utopia, and the great sad clear-up operation afterwards must always be dealt with.

*

So with a Utopia we have the image of a state of historical perfection which, although historical and a product of history, steps forth claiming the right and the ability to make a conclusive end to history. Suchlike curious plans have popped up several times in history. Naturally they are linked to the names of thinkers, of philosophers and poets, even of complete phantasists. At first they are merely literary, paper images, and find themselves in a certain state of innocence, but rapidly change their nature and show their teeth when they end up in political hands. For they strive from the start, as one understands it, to become political (for at bottom they are political, political ideas and action programmes in statu nascendi[2]). They have actually chosen the wrong profession if all they do is gather literary dust. Every inventor of a Utopia twitches a little at the thought of becoming a Prometheus, kneading humanity and bringing humanity into conformity with his desired image. A famous historical case tells us how that goes: Plato the philosopher-king, with the plan for his republic of Syracuse under the protection of his friend the tyrant. It didn't go well, Plato made no progress. But later he could hide behind the excuse of not having had enough power. His plan, he could assert, had never been tested and had not been refuted.

Others cannot wiggle out of it like that.

Several Utopists in the last hundred years, however, have found themselves in a (for them) fortunate situation. Twice in the course of a hundred years specific social Utopias have been able to flourish. They had the possibility of growing into reality and making impacts until suddenly their time came and now they could show their nature truly and fully and jump catastrophically into time and history. The two eschatological images I speak of are the economic Communist-Marxist one, and the biological one that was to be realised in Germany after 1933.

The long gestation of the Communist-Marxist idea, presenting itself as proletarian Messianism, is well known. For around a century this Utopia wandered the Earth, aroused, agitated, and planted seeds, until towards the end of the First World War in a place where people had least expected it, in Russia, an explosive power unfolded in the hands of a man and had the impact of both a Deluge and a transformative new beginning. This idea, emerging early in the Industrial Age, wants to do away with class tensions and promises, through the installation of a Communist commonality whereby even the state is supposed to wither away, to attain the desired degree of perfection. Implementation of this gigantic experiment is still ongoing. There is no possibility at present of giving a reliable history of the struggle playing out here

[2] In a state of being born.

between Utopia and human reality, or of the results so far, the transformation of the Utopia, the regression to a ferment.

But what concerns us here is not this one, but rather the totally different one that grew up at the same time in the same countries: the biological Utopia, which a short while ago tried to realise itself in Germany. In contrast to the a priori activist socio-economic thesis that was quickly taken up by political parties and pushed into social life, the biological idea for decades led a shadowy existence. The new biological theories, Darwinism, notions of development with the part-notions of selective breeding, survival of the fittest, were themes of Enlightenment, of popular philosophy. Fine-minded literature could cope with these. But already by 1870 a philosopher gripped by the time and gifted with imagination, Frederick Nietzsche, recognised the possible or, as instantly became clear to him, the *necessary* consequence of Darwinism, namely the Superman, the higher species of animal. His brain was filled with this image, and he made himself into the prophet of this species of human that he had dreamed up and coloured in. As behoves a Utopist, he was at once belligerent against religion, and all the more so as au fond he knew very well what religion is – and slandered and misinterpreted religion that cheats people of this world with the same determination as his Utopian colleague from the social line, Karl Marx.

The two lines of force, the socialist and the biological, that ran through the century of the natural sciences, were very quickly taken up differently by different classes. Workers adopted the economic Marxist-Communist strand, the bourgeoisie the biological. Each class sketched out its Utopia: the proletarians the classless state, the bourgeoisie more slowly and less confidently the ideal of the Master Race.

Now began the struggle and the competition between the Utopias.

2.

Consider how the biological Utopia developed. The biological line of force was for a long time the axis for a number of others that were around at the time. In art and in literature there were well-tended motifs from Germanic myths that formed part of the treasure-house of German consciousness; think of the Nibelung saga in which Hamerling and Hebbel[3] dabbled, as, with a colossal and striking apparatus, did Richard Wagner. This was already not just Literature. It had a streak of political idealism, clearly seen in Wagner. Interestingly, it was Nietzsche himself who denounced the bad neo-German, Great Man seeking character of this literature. At that time the actual political circles – Prussianism, the military – distanced themselves from the new upstart ideas. Only now did notions of Siegfried, the national hero, merge with those of the Master Race.

What was lacking in order to lift the biological notion of the future to the rank of a historically practicable Utopia was an encounter with a Power. What body of power

[3] **Robert Hamerling** (1830-89): popular Austrian writer of epics; **Friedrich Hebbel** (1813-63): dramatist.

will take over – we won't say: take pity on – this as yet free-floating idealistic force, and will it allow itself to be used as a motor? The simplest case, as we mentioned, was that of Plato: a poet-philosopher who conceived a notion of the state which he was allowed to put into practice. The case of the two 19th/20th century ideas of the future we have considered lies elsewhere, both in the origin of the idea and its realisation: the idea grows slowly and bundles itself with parallel ideas, for quite a while it fuels daily struggles and thereby runs the risk of losing its true character. But then the historic moment arrives, and after so much straying and preparation and distortion it is granted to the Utopia at last to reveal its pure – or we have to say: terrible – face and take the salto mortale[4] into history and to begin by emerging out of history.

How much of the real true Utopia is still there, when at last it falls into the hands of its executor? In our case, that of the biological Utopia, Nietzsche's purely biological idea (of the Superman who is to be created) was very soon cast aside in favour of the idea of the White Aryan human, the Master Race. This was a weakening and the first degeneration of the Utopia. But worse was to come for the idea, when after the First World War it celebrated a marriage with the nationalist idea of revenge. That eagle was well plucked. All that was left was the practical idea, easy to popularise, of the Aryan or German world ruler, to whom the future would belong. The original biological idea of the future, anyway a secular human notion, now served to infuse new blood into revanchism and Pan-Germanism.

Some hesitate to bestow on the 1933 ideology of state power the name of a Utopia. They consider it a purely propagandistic fake. And really, the originating idea had been strongly altered through contacts and mergers with others. It degenerated, became constrained. It is certainly not possible, in terms of the clarity and precision of the Nazi initiative, to speak of it in the same breath as the Marxist movement. The crippling, and one might say prostituting, of the guiding idea by the Nazis is obvious. And what can one say when all that is left of the entire plan to elevate humanity, to supersede humanity with a higher species, is the extermination of various neighbouring peoples declared to be of inferior worth and to be ransacked and driven from their land, and other things that are cosily explained as coming from a crudely unleashed militarism?

Nevertheless the Utopian contribution is not to be denied, and the whole historical picture of this movement that began as an apparent revolution, stormed ahead unambiguously and ended in catastrophe, cannot be understood without attaching to it the label "Utopia". This characteristic receded as it spread throughout the state and came into contact with the naïve, natural and unalterable realities of life, but it persisted in active circles, albeit deformed and disputed in some way or other.

The "religious" quality that was perceived in this movement while it stayed fresh came from this Utopian core.

[4] Fatal leap.

3.

We are now in 1933. The power-body that has seized control of the Utopia – of which they had their own conception – is there. It had formed from a post-war party whose strength came from two sources: negatively from the fierce anger of the defeated warrior bent on revenge and rehabilitation, and positively from ancient Pan-Germanism, now propped up and decked out in Utopian feathers.

It has the peculiar élan that comes even from a Utopia in degenerate form, about which the French Academician Gillet[5] once remarked: the power-body that has set itself in motion across the Rhine has about it something of a new Islamism. So here we have the power that flung itself over the land physically and spiritually, and meant to sweep away in a Deluge a past that was no longer consistent with it. The assault touched all spheres, and not least (you could say: first of all) literature.

It's understandable; Utopian systems always take intellectual things very seriously. For one's self is an exclusively intellectual construct, and because one wants a 100% new future, one can't tolerate any co-existence. One doesn't want the possibilities of a democratic state, one is not a state and doesn't want a state, rather one is an endlessly growing dynamic kernel that has broken through to the broad life-sphere of humanity in order, if it can manage it, to swallow it all down. It didn't, and never could.

The broad, human, natural and supernatural reality of human beings has the upper hand, and the human being, the "perfect human", either overcomes the greedy Utopia, defiled and lacerated and cursing turns his back on it, or he submits, takes from it only what suits him, and instead of a Utopia it has become manure for his field.

In the centuries before this date of 1933, German literature in its stately fashion had grown in all its variety, without ever having been called before a high tribunal to state its name and species. Every generation sang their songs as best they could, told their stories and let heroes and jesters strut the stage to act out scary, exciting, funny scenes. Anything could be said, printed and performed, the only boundaries set by convention, morality and natural tact. Excesses and deviancies were self-correcting. Literature had always to renew itself, for firstly, old works become used up, and then the circumstances of human society change, especially under the impact of technology, and finally people change along with society and wanted art and literature to keep pace and remain contemporaries of these other living changeable things. This was self-evident to artists, poets and writers; they had sensitive antennae, and if the feelings of their contemporaries changed, so much the more did theirs. They sniffed around everywhere and always what was new, of the future. Often they ran ahead of their age, and we should not forget that from their circles there often came those tender dreamers and creators of the later so dreadful Utopias.

Now it happened in 1933 that these artists and literati were re-designated from their status as isolated dreamers, inventors, players, entertainers (pathfinders and

[5] Louis Gillet (1876-1943): literary historian, elected to Académie française in 1935.

prophets as well) to become collaborators on the basis that it was not about collaborating with a particular "state", or even a particular empire, but a huge adventure of humanity, a voyage such as had never been, a breakthrough to the goal of all human goals.

To appreciate the particularity of the situation one must know and not lose sight of the fact that if artists, poets, writers are "private" persons, in Germany that is especially so and in a quite special way. You could say they are so private that they are already no longer private (meaning: less than that). They are private, because they lack something of the original sense of that word: namely, a normal relationship with state and society. They are – as a consequence of our well-known German development – exactly like every other German citizen in a state, but only *in* a state, not in *their* state. They live in Germany, but they are not Germany. "Germany" is perhaps their dynast, their lord and master and official apparatus – thus it was for centuries – and after the dynast has fallen the citizen remains in that position. For one or two decades maybe nothing will change, especially if no decisive correction is made, no educative effort. It's hard enough for the simple citizen, the worker, artisan, businessman to undertake all by himself an alteration in his stance towards state and society and to take the state into his possession and regard it as his own; but it's especially hard for the majority of intellectuals and especially the artists, poets and writers. Excluded like everyone else from the public sphere of state and politics, from the reality that is "state and politics", they had in their own way separated themselves from everything to do with the state and officialdom and created for themselves a parallel half-unreal space, their realm, their domain where they could pretend to be free and in charge. You know this remote, becalmed, unworldly territory of German poetry; from these works you can learn little about real life. A fraction of these artists and authors actually revel in the role of magicians and medicine-men.

So the Utopian power that claimed to know the future flung itself too against this scattered band of isolated artists and scribblers. It sieved and forbade and commanded. Without further ado they summarily annulled two fundamental attributes of people from these groups: their private character, and the spontaneity of their production.

What happened?

Let us first see: who is, who was, this German literature around 1933?[6]

[6] 'German Literature (abroad since 1933)' in Part 4 continues the argument more concisely than the remainder of this essay.

LIFE

[Introductory notes to be completed]

DOCTOR DÖBLIN: AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Written 1917/18

THESE ARE no trivial matters, the shocks and excitements under which I embark on this account of my life; which impel me to this beginning. There's an unnatural physical fire, a heat, which I must confront with self-observation, a revisiting of the past. Bromide is no help, I can't sleep, my appetite seems to have disappeared. I must ponder, relieve the pressure in my breast, the restless unease that drives me through streets and squares and back again to my room, to fling myself down, lie there without a word. I walk and hardly notice anyone, I become lost because I pay no attention to street names; I'm in torment, haunted. I hope: haunted by myself.

I'm approaching forty. Many grey hairs at the temples, much that once I found enticing now means nothing to me. I walk down streets, see proud automobiles drive by – and am jealous; I'd like to be calm, free of the cares that encroach constantly. Pretty girls, proud young ladies with their smiling beaux: it's nothing to me, has no connection to me, it's dull tepid water; I've been too severely burned and scorched; why should my organism not be just as sensitive and find a little bit of feeling for this, waste a little energy on it. I don't hide from these females; I have something akin to sympathy for them and a distant, barely outlined painful memory, a wan *tristesse* on which I can smile. Yes, this is progress: they no longer call out to me: you're alone, solitary, utterly abandoned – my throat was sewn up, I crawled back to my room, hid away, shut the window so as to hear no footsteps, no laughter, no plinking strings, no passers-by strolling home.

Those horrible evenings and half-nights in Freiburg [in 1904-5] are etched in my memory, when for days, days I spoke not a syllable, often hummed to myself and sang just to hear my voice again, as comforting as a stranger's voice; I'd speak to children in the street, my voice was my only friend. I didn't seek out this solitude, I never sought it out; I went about freely, remained in solitude! What use to me are hills, glorious sunny weather, hills and forests and lakes? For years and even now I nursed a hatred of them, an antipathy; they offered anguish; it was as if you enter a big place of entertainment and no one's there, all the tables empty: who could enjoy it. Bitterness: that's the word; that's how I feel often enough even now about forests. When I'm not enamoured of them in a melancholy way, I sit down ripe, gentle, tender, as acquiescent as a filial son, on a root, gaze up at the leafy canopy and think myself in my grave – in a lovely space away from the world. The little creatures around me, the beetles: all dumb, coffining, and yet calling to me, so that I lie down, stretch out.

I'll tell no untruths in these lines, I want to help myself. But I'm not yet calm, not by a long chalk.

Is there such a thing as a father you can look up to? It must be such a lovely cocooning feeling. It's hard on someone like me, who for hours at a time, days, even months, is haunted and no one offers shelter. A god – such a nice concept, it's proud

and wise in the ways of humans, this concept – it says: there is no human being you can turn to, God alone can help; this god produced by mistrustful humans.

The strange thing is, I often have the urge to write an autobiography. I resist: I'm still young enough, I have other things to do than look back; but my earlier deeply-cherished conviction that "I still have time" has quite faded now. Sometimes it seems I no longer have this wide Russian expanse in the sense of my life; the force has somehow become blocked, all my old proud cold feelings are now mere thoughts: certainty has vanished; I have the feeling: life is not so expansive, I don't have so much time; not now. Sometimes it breathes down my neck: I ought to do some literary work, it badgers me, I mustn't be idle. And once upon a time it was my most precious thought: "It's all right to be idle, to just stroll along." This, and next to it the deeply-cherished certainty: *rocher de bronce*.[1]: "Nothing can happen to me. The worst is dying, the biggest life-change that life offers, and what has death to do with me? It is my fate, I remain, abide within it, my bed is bigger now, I can stretch out." And then at certain times I feel so close to the forest, so friendly to animals, truly brotherly, and to the air, thunder, iron, stone: I'm as unconsciously silent and secure within myself as they; I thunder and it's gone, but anyway it was an untimely move; so untouchably proud is all this that is dead, unconscious and yet existing.

Death for me has no sting, we know one another, it snuggles deep within me, is the core of my being: that's how it was earlier, that's how I felt. And now still to some extent. But I'm often overcome with an existential fear, it suffocates me, I forget myself, I'm a poor harried creature to whom Death is just a saviour, a rescuer to whom he flees like a refugee – we are no longer drinking companions stretching our legs under the same table. How changed, worn down, agitated I am now. And more so almost year by year. How ignominious my death will be. How much of it will be unworthy of me.

It's no help to write and write. It doesn't calm me. It just becomes written stuff. Let them not speak of me, but of Doctor Döblin.

This rather small lively man of obviously Jewish profile with a long cranium, grey eyes behind a very shrewd gold-rimmed pince-nez, lower jaw notably receding to reveal protruding upper teeth when smiling, pale face long and narrow, quite gaunt, sharply outlined on a weedy restless body: this person has not led the kind of colourful external life that lends itself to the depiction of adventures or unusual situations. He has lived in only two cities, Stettin and Berlin, really only in Berlin from the age of ten, an ephemeral half-year as a boy in Hamburg, spent his last two semesters as a 26-year-old student in Freiburg, then spent about a year as a medical doctor in a lunatic asylum near Regensburg, a further two years at the asylum of Buch near Berlin, then, still only an Assistant Doctor despite being in his thirties, at a hospital in Berlin. Married three years later, doctor of internal medicine in Berlin. Once made an excursion to Basel while returning from Freiburg as a young doctor, once made a two-

[1] Cliff of bronze – Wilhelm I's phrase for absolute royal power.

week trip to the World Exposition taking in Brussels Antwerp Ostend, once spent a few days in Munich. He's a Berliner, with hazy knowledge of other places and regions.

Stettin – in his memory a miserable decaying provincial town with a noisy annual fair in the Paradeplatz, the steeply descending steps of the Town Hall affording a playground – he left Stettin behind as a ten year old boy with his family under difficult circumstances: his father was the cause. He was a – well, let's say it: a superior kind of master tailor or maker of ready-to-wear clothing; he employed a number of tailors and cutters, as well as seamstresses and sewing girls; they occupied one or more work rooms in or near our house: long cutting tables on which cloth was cut with huge shears; there were gigantic cupboards full of bolts of cloth. The work was done under contract to various foreign firms; he often recalls hearing the name of one such supposedly grand Hamburg firm spoken with respect, deep respect. His family lived in Wilhelmstrasse, then in Friedrichstrasse on the corner of Unter den Linden – anyway in Stettin; there was a view of the tree-lined avenue; once, as he recalls, old Kaiser Wilhelm came by on his way to the Paradeplatz; Prince Bismarck was there, had a wrinkled little yellow head under an enormous shiny cuirassier's helmet; the procession puzzled rather than impressed him, he was especially disappointed by the oft-praised Bismarck. The old Kaiser died; he learned of this in the Friedrich-Wilhelm Practical Gymnasium, where he was in his first year of secondary school making a complete hash of Latin and Arithmetic. After the announcement he went home, handkerchief in hand; it seemed to him that now and again he dried a tear; he thought it fitting, but he wasn't sad in the least, merely uncertain how to comport himself after the class teacher's lugubrious grandiose oratory. Not long afterwards, flags again flew at half-mast when the Kaiser's son died; he often gazed at the flags from the corner window; he had no idea how to react to these events and would wander the streets to see what others, the adults, were doing.

The aged mother of his father had recently come to live in his parents' house; her room was long and narrow. There they found her one morning dead in her bed. At the funeral he ran along behind the hearse for a bit as an unofficial participant; then he came upon a crowd outside a house and let the hearse go on, asked what was happening in the hall; a man said, "A man's given birth to a baby." Which gave the boy pause for thought. The incomprehensible words – he didn't recognise them as a jest – remain engraved in his memory even now.

He was a gentle, very strange boy, his father's pet. Because of his big head he acquired among his siblings the nickname "Fathead" – they were four brothers and a sister, he was the second youngest. He made poor progress in primary school, the first year of secondary school was already hard for him; he sat way at the back. But at home he read and read whatever came into his hands. While his siblings played with whip and spinning top out in the street, at the Town Hall, he was reading. He was already short-sighted, had inherited this bad trait from his father. The spectacles prescribed by the optician were refused by his father; so for many subjects he had to sit right at the front near the blackboard. He had blonde, very pale blonde hair down to his shoulders;

at that time he was considered a pretty child. He was often out in the streets by himself; once he strolled through the annual fair, a booth displayed a horrible, luridly coloured canvas picture of a murder; the boy ran home distraught, couldn't put the picture out of his mind, it terrified him; long years later the awful impression it made, the torment which he tried to escape, remained with him.

Matters of sex made their sinister prelude between the ages of nine and ten. He often noted with astonishment the occasional swelling of his sexual organ, once as he climbed out of the bath he remarked to one of his brothers how annoying it was, he felt no shame at being in that state, nor that someone saw him; he had no idea what it was; it was simply a nuisance. On another occasion he sat with some other children, who were no more than eight or nine years old, on the steps of a cellar, he didn't know what they meant to do there or why they'd brought him along. A little girl of the same age, or perhaps younger, was lying there on her face, and they were touching her in her secret places; he too, without anything more than an obscure sense of something indecent of which one must not speak. It had no effect on him, even years later he had no conception of the peculiarities and functions of the female organism. Indeed, as a 23-year-old in his first year of medical studies, he still had no clear idea, and on his first stroll through the Anatomy Hall in Berlin was puzzled by the female corpses, which seemed to have a cut below the pubic ridge; he wanted to ask one of his fellow students but didn't, out of shame – he'd have kicked himself to the end of his days. For you had to behave as if you knew it all – then and much earlier too; you had to.

He often went to the synagogue, where his father sang in the choir. His father was very musical, played both violin and piano to an average standard, taught the older children the basics. He tended to lash out, beatings were not infrequent. He also sketched little pictures, which he coloured in.

But what the many-sided gifted flighty shiftless man did best was something else. His wife had good reason to be jealous. Finally one of his seamstresses came on to him. The word at home was that he had assignations in parks with this young and very pretty creature. Father was anyway not often at home, there was little family life to speak of; now he spent many nights away as well. Once he was discovered by Mother in some public park in Stettin, and screaming at the woman she wrecked her parasol. Later Father hit his wife in the corridor, I believe with a yardstick, after a scene. One day Father announced he had to make a trip to Mainz, said goodbye as calm as you like, the boy helped him on with his travelling boots, retrieved just in time from the cobblers. But one early morning Mother came weeping and wailing into the room where we slept; a telegram or letter from Father had arrived: he wrote from Hamburg, he was on his way to America, "I shall offer you mountains of gold."

Thus was the family destroyed. Up till then we were becoming comfortably off. At once everything had to be liquidated; representatives from Hamburg came to collect the stock. Later, on one occasion, the boy went with his mother along the Linden, peered all around to see if anyone was looking, he was ashamed of their notoriety: the whole town knew his father had absconded to America with his seamstress.

He was at once removed from school, began dismal sessions of private tuition. The woman was called Sauter, she lived somewhere high up, her room was very light, mostly she taught girls. You sat in the morning at a table, she made you write and write and write; you called out: “Miss Sauter, two sides!” Then she wrote a new sentence on the first line of a new sheet – you had to copy it exactly twenty times. So education was just calligraphy. The girls learned French poems too: “France adorée, douce contrée!”

This wretched intermezzo didn’t last long. My mother, initially completely at her wits’ end, was brought to Berlin by her well-off brothers. An endless train journey in third class. Finally, as they approached Berlin, the boy could no longer suppress a minor natural need, which he daren’t mention while his mother kept chatting with the other passengers about her Berlin relations. When they stopped at Schlesische station, the boy pushed his way desperately to the door and a thin never-ending stream betrayed his action and his release; at the Janowitz Bridge, their destination, he darted away like a thief. On the way he learned that they were to live in Blumenstrasse [Flower Street]; a gentleman said it was in the middle of the city, very smoky.

The apartment was small. They were in real poverty. The father sent nothing, the mother owned hardly anything, her brothers kept our heads above water; the eldest son, in the ninth grade in Stettin, had to take an apprenticeship with the great firm of N. Israel in Spandauer Strasse. This was apparently a colossal event, the boss was spoken of like a king, the smallest details of the business were topics of conversation. They lived packed together in a few little rooms on the ground floor; on the first morning the boy saw his first sign of Berlin the metropolis: a notice-board diagonally across to the right on the house of the writing teacher Rackow. He often stood by this board, marvelling at the wonderfully curly confident letters; he thought it impossible that anyone could write like that; but this was Berlin. He was enrolled in a nearby parochial school. The school was in a rear courtyard. He was in the third class. He hadn’t the slightest sense of having come down in the world, only during the course of the year was it impressed on him, especially in interactions with the supportive-unsupportive rich uncles, that he belonged to a poor family. He was a success in this school. Once he even won a prize, an atlas; the fact that this atlas had a sticker in the front stating that it came from such-and-such a “Bookshop and Antiquariat” made him especially proud, since he did not know that “Antiquariat” meant “second hand”. And he told his aunt that he’d been given an antiquarian book, and when she explained to him his shame was bottomless and he had no idea how to extricate himself.

There was a physical education teacher at the school whose passion was long distance running. They hardly ever did gymnastics, seldom marched, he set them to running. Five minutes, ten minutes, twenty minutes; more and more of them fell back, hit their limit. The boy from Stettin kept up mostly; pride sustained him.

Then came a pleasant half-year: things hadn’t gone at all well for the father in America, nothing he tried succeeded, everything was so expensive in Dollarland – it was all just an extended trip with his companion. The mother allowed herself to be

persuaded, for of course the woman too was oppressed by poverty, busy morn till night cooking, washing, she rented out a room, housekept for the man for a few pfennigs, at New Year the family moved to Hamburg. The father had obtained a position in the firm with which he'd previously been associated. The apartment was much better than in Berlin, on the third floor, a field or fenced grassy training ground lay square and wide before it, a barracks behind. He went to a state primary school. It was hard to adjust to the new schooling situation. When it was found that he and the brother who sat beside him were Jews, there in front of the class they had to chant a little Jewish prayer that they knew. Another time the teacher took him up and down stairs, a female teacher was sitting in a room, he had to perform for her a spring song that he knew, he sang without embarrassment. He saw little of Hamburg, now and then helped his mother carry shopping back from the Altona market. He never saw the Elbe, only once or twice the Alster. Because they didn't stay there long on the third floor opposite the training ground. Marital bliss soon darkened again. There was talk of anonymous letters. It soon emerged that the infamous seamstress, of unblessed memory in Stettin and America, had been lodged by her lord and master in Hamburg where he was leading a sort of double life; he was an amphibian, but with the family he was on dry land. The mother had a strong suspicion that he'd married again in America; the word "bigamy" was often uttered, but the mother discussed it only with the eldest siblings. A closed group formed against the father, whom they seldom saw. Father and seamstress were also thought to have a child; disturbing assertions of this kind leapt from the anonymous letters.

And when the presence of the young lady in the neighbourhood was attested through observation, the family moved – back to Berlin. It had been a nice summer holiday. All that the boy, the later Doctor Döblin, progenitor of multiple children, books and aimless activities, could rescue from the place was some memory or other. At that school he was viewed as something refined, genteel, he had company walking home, they pressed themselves on him; he was still remarkably mild and compliant. In the big latrines or by garden fences they sometimes marvelled at his organ as it went about its watery business, and the Gentiles admired then what they'd later recall with invective. Once he had to buy something; he had put the purchases in his bag, wanted to throw a stone with his left hand over the fence into the training ground; but look, he changed his mind, threw with his right hand – which had held the change wrapped in paper! What a to-do. He climbed over the fence; it took him ages to gather it all up again. Once he came home covered in blood: they'd been shooting with bows made from corset stays, an arrow had hit him; the father laid a complaint against the boy and his father, a detective inspected the wound, he read about it proudly in the newspaper. It was not the pain that made him cry, but it seemed the thing to do when blood flowed and because it attracted attention and annoyed the other boy…

[The MS , found in the posthumous papers, ends abruptly here.]

DOCTOR AND WRITER
THE REMARKABLE CAREER OF AN AUTHOR
Die literarische Welt 3/43 (1927)

I'M ALSO a medical man, and it's no secondary profession. My career so far, about which you have enquired, esteemed gentlemen, is on the inside always very calm and steady, from the outside has become very quiet, not to say dreary. I was born quite a long time ago in Stettin, and am not yet dead. But it would be wrong to assume that I am really here, and that that is really my very quiet but not at all dreary career.

I was driven many years ago, still young, to Berlin, where I have lived ever since in the most peculiar way. It's true. At first I was fed by my eldest brother, may his name be on God's lips. And I studied, Medicine; - Medicine because I was already writing while at school, but I despised literature and even more those who produced it. Even towards my own writings I felt roughly what a man with a chronic cold feels about his sniffles. Once I was done with my medical studies I was in my mid-twenties, and nothing to me was more urgent than to escape the struggle with so-called existence. I went as Assistant to various lunatic asylums. I always felt good among these patients. I realised then that there are only two categories of people I can stand, alongside plants, animals and stones: namely children and the mad. These I have always loved, really. And if someone asks what nation I belong to, I shall say: neither to the Germans nor to the Jews, but to children and the mad.

I pottered around for years in lunatic asylums, and wrote a few things about my patients. And it occurs to me that from the asylum at Buch I wrote once of a case of hysteria with drowsiness – that was in 1906-07, twenty years ago – which I analysed and traced back to changes in the mental dynamics and energetics: I have to say that Freud did not bring anything marvellous to me personally. Then I had to leave the asylums, which had become very dear and homelike to me. I wanted to help lighten the darkness in the patients. Psycho-analysis, I felt, could not do this. You have to go into the physical, but not into the brain, maybe into the glands, metabolism. And so I gave myself up for several years to internal medicine.

In the country I now entered, they knew nothing of Joseph their new king. They had tuberculosis, bad hearts, diabetes, and these ailments befell people who were friendly or fierce, thoughtful or thoughtless. I plodded year after year through wards and especially laboratories. Mice, guinea-pigs, dogs encountered me there in the labs; up front in the main building we tried to heal people, and at the back, to kill animals. The life was fresher, more active than in the asylum, there was a constant flow of patients. In addition there was a huge insuperable mass of observations and data in books and journals, and everything wonderfully exact, communicable, verifiable. I stayed in the biological labs deep into the night, and on the way home passed through the Emergency Room where the fevered and the poisoned came in; what a life that was. I had already forgotten my time in the asylums, and why I had come here. I was 33 years old, and then – I left that life. Not willingly. I'd married, so wasn't allowed to stay.

And in this way I had cunningly managed to avoid for many years the so-called struggle for existence – and now had to plunge right in. I'd sunk my teeth deep into Medicine, and now must let it go. It was in this crisis, this sense of loss, that I took up writing again; after a few stories a fat Chinese novel. I was now a general practitioner at the Halleschen Tor in Berlin, served a lot of shifts in ambulances, day and night, every morning for months went to a private hospital, substituted here and there. I wrote on steps, in empty waiting rooms, could write walking or standing. And thought endlessly often back to the laboratories, the patients in their beds. Then, or somewhat later, I took a job at the Charité, doing biological follow-up work. This – just before the war – was a final flickering. I moved to Lichtenberg; independent practice showed its advantages – and I began from outside to observe science with scepticism. I no longer wanted to be boxed up in hospitals for my existence. Science: I still followed what the newspapers reported, heard what colleagues were working on. But slowly it took on another face. I could use very little of what I'd learned over so many long years. And I forgot more and more of it. It really was not usable. It was erudition, but no real knowledge. I saw how little one has from it. And then, lots of diagnosing. Well, what had I learned during those years in asylums and hospitals? How ailments progressed, what they were - and if it really was these that the people were suffering from. It flattered my thought processes – those of my chiefs too – to know how everything progressed. We knew, and that was that. Treatment, effects, we learned on the side. No, we didn't learn, we just peeped over each other's shoulders. So how did it go, outside? They didn't know as much as I did, many colleagues I came among; – but the life was strange. The patients were strange. They ran in their thousands to quack healers, magnetopaths and the like. And – regained their health. I couldn't say how many funny things I came across in my consulting room – any doctor will tell you. Various means hit the nail on the head, but others –. For months an elderly man came to my clinic, every time pulled a little bottle and a pouch from his pocket and placed them before me; I was supposed to write a prescription. He had old-age complaints; the drops were blue water, the pills contained iron, Blaud's Pills, anaemic girls take them. I sometimes asked him at the beginning what they were for. Well, he always takes them, and they're good. Later it emerged that his sister, who was already dead, had also taken these things. What's more, the man clearly did not see me; I lived in a building previously occupied by a doctor who had prescribed the drops and pills to him or his sister, and now he automatically came to this building and put the things on the table. Once he broke through his reticence, and mentioned as he left that his haemorrhoids were better. Another time he mentioned the pills were for passing water. It seems he's dead now, or in an infirmary.

– Humans are wonderful society, you can only be nice to them, embarrassed by your arrogance. I found my patients lying in their wretched rooms; they brought their rooms with them to my clinic. I saw their condition, their milieu; everything went over into the social, ethics, and politics. I often asked myself if I had made a bad choice when I abandoned the clinical charts and the guinea-pigs. It seemed to me: no.

My Chinese book (oh, literature!) wandered from publisher to publisher, from city to city throughout our great Germany. When S. Fischer took it, the war came, and – it was again left lying. I was making no economic progress as a doctor, and writing also led nowhere. And to give the business even more oomph I had a child, and a second on the way. But Heaven always had a kind thought for me. –

For example now, as I sat at the zero point: war broke out, I had to leave, and as a doctor I did not fall into ruin and neither did my wife and children. After the war, now with three youngsters, the water soon rose to my neck. It's not easy to set up your own practice, lacking any money while you wait. I'd dashed off three novels already, as well as two collections of stories and two plays, which admittedly borders on suicide. Then down from Heaven came the inflation. It ruined many, but put me back on my feet: a short while before I'd been hired as the Berlin critic for a Prague newspaper, which at first was nothing, but now –. When even this manna ceased to fall in the desert, I had in my heart's blindness written another novel, a Utopian one. I travelled to Poland, but that too was nothing. Then I hit on the notion of writing an Indian book, and borrowing extensively, almost tropically, from my publisher, who so cheerfully printed my books. I was still full of the Utopian perspectives I would set before him from my previous book, which now turned out to be a practice-run for this step. The step succeeded. My fourth son was born. And I lived on advances.

Now I run an insurance-backed neurological-psychiatric practice in Berlin. But I have to confess that the most interesting object of my psychological musings is my publisher. He keeps lending me money. I'd love to know what's going on in the man's head. I wouldn't like to be in his shoes. To put it plainly and relatively seriously, after oodles of medical preparation, after decades of literary work, I am incapable of existence either as a doctor or a literary man. You ask why? Gentlemen, it's easy to work out. You should try an insurance-backed practice and know what the prospects are if you don't toil like a beast from morning till late at night. For me, though recently I've kept a few noontime hours free (not for snoozing), nothing can come of it. And literature? Oh, my poor publisher. My heart breaks when I think of him, for I have all I need. From all my books up until now I have had a real annual income of not even two thousand Mark. That's less than a minor employee earns, a very minor one. A better stenographer with a clue has more than 150 Mark a month; from all those books, including the one just published, I still have only as much as a full-time stenographer with a clue. Perhaps I would have done better to become a stenographer, with or without a clue? Rather than write books? No, no.

And now I must utter a big word, that has been a truth in me ever since I began to write and practice medicine. It's truly a fabulous, even if comical, arrangement that when I sit myself down, phantasise and write, someone is ready to pay me for it! When I visit a sick patient and have passed a reflective quarter of an hour with him, feel perhaps that I have done him some good, then – should I also allow myself to be paid for it? As an assistant doctor I often felt a remarkable sense of shame when I received my salary: every day I can go through these wards, see and experience so much – and I

am paid for it. When you have a family, six of us, you have to think about money. But something does not fit. And I can only laugh when theoreticians speak of economy and economy and see nothing else –.

Finally, since I'm supposed to speak about my medical profession, a word about medical science, and a word about practice. At the end of this year you will be able, if you have the desire, to read a book of mine with observations and thoughts about Nature. In it I say nothing of illness and health. I feel no compulsion to do so. But I have a suspicion. Please allow me, though, to keep quiet about it. And practice, as I think about it: it's work, activity, and a great deal of content. There are private clinics, and insurance–backed clinics. The insurance-backed practice – let me say this – is the natural one best suited to the doctor, because it places doctor and patient anonymously face to face and leaves financial matters out of it. The current manner of this activity is not good for much, but in principle it's more right, more natural than private practice. I see only one good point about the higher fees: the fees are an offering, an active contribution by the patient that obliges him to do more: to gear himself up for recovery.

I assure you, greatly esteemed gentlemen, who have asked me about the profession that runs alongside my writing: if circumstances should force me to it, I would rather, quite honestly, in this spiritually refractory age of hacks give up literature in favour of the meaningful, respectable (even if very poor) profession of doctor.

TWO SOULS IN A SINGLE BREAST
Berliner Volkszeitung, 8 April 1928

Dr Döblin, neurologist, on Döblin the writer

AS A DOCTOR I am only vaguely aware of the writer of the same name. To tell the truth, I don't know him at all. I work in the east end of Berlin in a medium-sized medical practice, really not a big one at all, I am a neurologist and this activity takes up virtually my whole day. I have no great leanings towards literature, find books quite boring, and as for books by the man who, you tell me, bears the same name as me, I have sometimes come across them by chance at the homes of acquaintances; but dipping into them I was left completely cold and uninterested. This gentleman seems to have a good imagination, but I cannot follow him down that road. On my income I cannot afford trips to China and India, so I have no way to check up on what he writes. And anyway, for this kind of thing I prefer original reports, i.e. first-person travelogues, of which I am a keen reader. And another thing: I cannot get to grips at all with the style of this man, the author who bears the same name as me. It is just too difficult, why should anyone tired out after a hard day's work be asked to wade through such stuff of his own accord. And allow me, please, a general remark, which may come across as a bit political or ethical. More so than his books, I am familiar with this writer's occasional effusions as delivered to me by the newspaper, which of course I read. I must confess I cannot make head or tail of the man, from a political angle or in general. My appetite for knowing him better is not in the least improved by these effusions. Sometimes he seems to stand squarely on the Left, even the extreme Left, maybe Left squared, and then he says something that is either not thought through, which is unacceptable in a man of his years, or makes out that he is above the parties – absurd authorial arrogance. In short: it was you, Editor, who asked for my opinion of this writer, the man with the red nose; the coincidence of names led you to do so, I myself would never have bothered with him, any more than with any other young author, and I say again: the gentleman is almost a complete stranger to me, he is of no interest to me, I am not related to him by blood or marriage, and I could not care less about his verdict on me, which you tell me you are soliciting from him. Whatever apparently mischievous assertions he may cast will not touch me.

The writer Döblin on the neurologist Döblin

Even though it is Easter, and as you can imagine I am buried under piles of work, questionnaires and so on, I am most grateful to you, Editor, for setting me this remarkable task and in a certain sense enriching my circle of acquaintances. I am currently working on a Berlin novel, I mean an epic work in everyday language, the action of which takes place in the east end of Berlin, around Alexanderplatz and the Rosenthaler Gate. So your request for my comments on the neurologist of the same name was an interesting lead. Maybe this can be another source of material, I thought, along with the Salvation Army, the slaughterhouse and the crime files. So I went over

there and now report back. The man is spritely, and makes not too bad an impression. I attended his clinic and sat in his waiting room. A waiting room is the most remarkable milieu you can imagine. And when I introduced myself to the gentleman and we had a good laugh about the coincidence – God knows our origins could not be more different – he told me lots of things which with his permission I noted down there and then. These general practitioners are not to be envied. I saw the peculiarly stressful work that kept him busy, and this mostly with the strangest kind of patients. I am sure that he is no untypical example of this specialism, but the very fact of his toiling here anonymously endeared him to me. He is my exact opposite,[1] I realised as he busied himself with practical tasks, spoke, observed: I the perpetual solo dancer, prima donna as my publisher once called me, he a grey soldier in a silent army. I am sure I made no great impression on my namesake. Sometimes I grew rather nervous when he gazed at me in a psychotherapeutic way. I have a few defects in that area, complexes probably, and his experienced nose no doubt sniffed them out. Please do not be angry when I confess that for this reason I did not pursue any deeper acquaintance with him. To tell the truth, I did not feel very comfortable sitting across from him; too many unpleasantnesses come to mind in such a situation. But I retain a good memory of the small, slender man with the doctor's pince-nez, and I would be delighted to know, if you can betray the secret, what this anonymous man had to say about me, whom he certainly saw not as a writer but merely as a human being.

[1] Döblin is referring not to himself alone. In a 1924 review of a play by G K Chesterton he had noted that "[he] is the Antipodes of Shaw; England thinks dialectically in both, bipolar. Against the apostles of sobriety, the fanatics of passionlessness, the Positivists, Empiricists now comes Chesterton the dark figure. … Chesterton reveals the poverty of that understanding of which the Positivists are so proud. He caricatures the Positivists. … But it's more than rivalry between two playwrights. … In these two, Shaw and Chesterton, we see revealed what is at work in all of us." *Kerl*, p. 241.

A FIRST LOOK BACK (1928)[1]

Dialogue in the Münzstrasse

THE FAMILY CATASTROPHE
- Arrival in Berlin
- Bracing for a coming catastrophe
- The tale is retold
- A third time!
- …and he had a sister

FAMILY MATTERS
- Respect to those who deserve it
- On the fate of an uprooted family
- My mother's life ends
- Mother and daughter
- Report on a member of the family
  - Handwriting analysis
  - Palm-reading

SCHOOLDAYS
- Introduction
- School-leaving report
- **GHOST SONATA**
- Adding water to lye

THE LIFE OF JACK, THE BELLY-RIPPER

Dialogue in the Münzstrasse[2]

It's midday. I'm sitting in a little café on Alexanderplatz, and it occurs to me: here in this district, in the east of Berlin, I've sat ever since I arrived in Berlin forty years ago. Here I went to school, a few gaps came – university[3], internship[4], war[5], but always a

[1] This text is taken from *SLW*, pp.108-78, which includes a previously unpublished MS draft 'Mother and Daughter'. First published in the 50th birthday tribute *Alfred Döblin Im Buch-Zu Hause-Auf der Strass*e (AD in books, at home, in the street; ed. AD and Oskar Loerke 1928). Several sections appeared in newspapers in July 1928. For this translation I have added a contents list and a few more headings as a navigation aid. - CDG

[2] Münzstrasse runs from Alexanderplatz towards the (Jewish) Scheunenviertel ('Warehouse Quarter').

[3] 1904/5 at Freiburg im Breisgau.

[4] Nov. 1905 – Aug. 1906 as Assistant Doctor at the municipal asylum in Regensburg.

[5] Jan 1915 – Nov. 1918 only short leaves in Berlin, while living as military doctor in Saargemünd and Haguenau.

return to the space between Alexanderplatz and Jannowitzbrücke[6], later even farther east, out towards Lichtenberg[7]. It occurs to me: I'd like to go away from here sometimes, to the west. Where there are trees, the Zoo's there, the Aquarium and the Botanical Gardens with the steamy hothouses, - ah, those are fine things.

Good day, Doctor.

Good day.

How's it going? In a café, in broad daylight?

It's my usual time. *(If only I knew who this fellow is.)*

How's the practice going?

Thanks for asking, one year much like another. We muddle along.

And the children? You know, you have to get away from here, this is really no place for you. You must go west, mix with people.

Hm, and how?

I should tell you, Doctor, I've often seen you here, but I was busy, well, I could have told you what you needed, but you don't want it.

Goodness, whyever not?

No, no, don't be miffed. You don't want it. I can tell just by looking at you. It's not the practice or anything like that.

Now you really do have my attention.

Be my guest. *(Sits at my table, keeps his hat on – that's usual here)*. A doctor told me, colleague of yours, it's other things entirely. Yes. Look here, have you ever heard of it, sexual humiliation by a woman? *(I'm flabbergasted, shocked, for heaven's sake what's going on.)* Well, it's all linked. Lots of people don't want, really don't want, what they ought to, even if they could. You'd never think it. Doctor told me, straight off the bat. It's not impotence, the opposite. First you say: what a wimp, no guts, then out it comes: he just doesn't want to. Humiliates himself. For pleasure, playing games. Funny, eh? Such goings on.

For Heaven's sake. *(It's the Freud brotherhood, this is what they peddle.)*

So, what do you think?

First I'll finish my coffee. There. Now tell me, what sort of pleasure is that supposed to bring with it?

(He whispers in my ear, pushes his hat back, grins.) Sadism! Against himself!

(I'd expected this, burst out laughing, can't stop. The café falls apart.) Amazing, what you encounter in the Münzstrasse.

[6] Railway bridge over the Spree, a short way southeast of Alexanderplatz.

[7] Döblin moved to this eastern district in 1919, after setting up his practice in the Frankfurter Allee.

(He beams.) So, what say you, my little doctor? *(He says 'little doctor', soon we'll be dividing up our assets.)*

I'll just light a cigarette. You too? Well then, as I said, that's really something! Hang on a moment, I must have another laugh, a few bits in there still. There, it must all be out now, this time it reached all the way to the Reichstag.

So what about what I said, my little doctor?

Excellent. But it's just that I can't do any business with it.

(The fellow frowns.) That's what they all say.

Take a look out the window, past the maitre d'. See the people, lots of grey simple people, walking past, doing something. That's us working people, proletariat. Take a look at them, and then at me.

Done. I'll take the difference in Prussian bonds, please!

Pay attention, now it's the Bible: This is my heart, and this is my blood, something of the sort. In the New Testament. These people here and this street, that's the blood. And the heart's sitting here. These people, that's the air, and I'm the lungs. And then: there's the army, and here a soldier sits.

(He sniffs, gives me a suspicious look, scratches his chin.) I don't understand.

If you wanted to know my life, I mean my whole life, earlier, you'd understand soon enough. With no sadism at all. How it all hangs together, what they call life. When you look back, there's a clear logic to it, a meaning. You were talking of Freud, his humiliation guff, or Adler. According to them the whole world is made of defects. First there's a hole, and then something develops around it. But as for me, in principle there's nothing to be done with it! Defects – I have some, like any respectable person. And anyway, it's written: this is my home, and I get along fine here, I get along wonderfully. *(Though sometimes I'd like to be among green, see a tree for once, or a little lake.)* I'm a toad and I croak happily around the district. Without any sadism. Or masochism. Those I deliver only in novels. I'm a working man and a proletarian. And anyway, if you were to take me to Kurfürstendamm I'd croak around there just the same. There's no way I'll be intimidated. I was created by the dear Lord God and he fashioned me from a great lump of clay. Some other gentlemen, I name no names, he put together in error, they slipped away from him on Shabbes, or at dessert – *(The fellow sniffs, and makes himself scarce.)*

THE FAMILY CATASTROPHE

Arrival in Berlin

Could I ask you, Doctor, instead of this dialogue – which of course may well be dreadfully interesting – to tell us rather something about yourself?

Well, I came to Berlin forty years ago, having already been born.

I came to Berlin in a condition not so different from my birth, ten years earlier, in Stettin. It was to some extent an after-birth. But no one noticed anything. (Really, in Stettin I was only pre-born.) So we travelled from Stettin to Berlin. On the train my mother chatted with people who knew the city. Our district, Blumenstrasse,[8] is very badly made (they said), lots of factories and smoke, the language is very lively and flows like a river. I never dared say anything, or rather, ask anything. I suffered birth pangs. I was afraid, ever more afraid. It affected my stomach. The pangs grew worse. And as we drew nearer the buildings of Berlin, I was at the end of my tether. I stood at the window, it was dark, late evening, I couldn't hold it in. There was the child, it ran down my trousers, I felt better, I stood in a puddle. I sat down relieved. –

Later we travelled through the great strange city, and there a second miracle happened. At a brightly-lit station we got onto a train. Off it went, through the night, sped along for a few minutes, and stopped. And – we were back at the same station. I thought I must be mistaken. But the game repeated itself twice, three times. We moved, the same station came, then we got off and were soon home. Had we travelled in a circle? But why, what for, and in the end we had arrived. Only as a mature man did I see through the riddle. It became clear and clearer: we had taken the Stadtbahn. At night the stations of Berlin all look the same, especially if you come from Stettin. We had gone from Friedrichstrasse to Jannowitzbrücke. But it was an unforgettable experience; even today it exercises a calming effect on me.

There were six of us making this magical journey: my mother, forty-two years old, and us five siblings, a bunch of Stettin sprats, four boys and a girl, I the second youngest. We had shaken from us the dust of Stettin (the water too, in my case). For something had happened to us. We had been expelled from a little Paradise.

Bracing for a coming catastrophe

In Stettin on the Oder there once lived my father, Max Döblin, and he was a merchant by trade. But that's not really a trade: he owned a ready-to-wear clothing business that failed. Whereupon he opened a tailoring shop that did well. This man was married, and over the course of years achieved, not money so much, but five children. One being me. He was blessed with many inclinations and gifts, and you might well say that what his gifts brought in, his inclinations took away. So that this man's nature acquired a remarkable equilibrium. One day the equilibrium was upset in a most violent manner; how and why I'll report in a moment. Anyway, in his agitation this man decided to travel to Mainz. Anyone who knows Stettin will be astonished by this. For when someone in Stettin becomes unbalanced, he does not travel to Mainz. Maybe to Gotzlow or Podejuch or, if the case is serious, to the local loony bin. But Mainz is unusual. And there was a snag, which no one noticed, not even I, though I was already over nine at the time. The snag was: when my father set off for Mainz, he never arrived. The destination of the train was a clue. It was heading for Hamburg.

[8] Street, no longer existing, from Alexanderplatz to Andreasstrasse.

And when the train stopped in Hamburg, the motion in my father continued on. Even Hamburg wasn't the destination. Not Mainz, not Hamburg, it should and must lie farther off. It was America. Between Hamburg and America lies water. Twenty-nine ocean-crossing fliers have already drowned in that water. My father wanted to and had to go across, the urge in him was so strong. He took ship. Although my father's equilibrium had been upset, he had enough sense not to fly – maybe because at that time there were no aeroplanes. Anyway: he went by ship, like Columbus before him, and so arrived.[9] I don't know if the Statue of Liberty was already there in New York harbour in 1888. For sure my father erected one in his thoughts. So far had the Stettiner to travel to regain his equilibrium. Such a strange fate. He said he wanted to go to Mainz, but already the ticket was wrong, the train went another way, water came, and there he was in America.

Nor did he travel alone. He took along a mechanic, a doctor, to restore his balance, a body-doctor, body-mechanic. That it was a young girl is irrelevant. Women are suited to many professions, become lawyers, officials, ministers, why not mechanics. Indeed, the good sense of our America-traveller is also evidenced by his taking along a girl and not a man. For who knows better how to restore balance, in all perturbations of the horizontal and vertical state, than a young innocent girl. The girl who crossed the mighty ocean with him, his chosen girl, was called Henriette, surnamed – let us say – Hecht *[= Pike]*. A fish name, note, such as the watery region brings with it. But – a puzzling play of Nature, a paradox – she was entirely meat. Clearly Pikes had changed their nature in the course of generations, and so she stood there all charming before the man who was my father, and he found contentment in her.

My father had two eyes, a left and a right. With the right eye he looked constantly upon his family. But the left was to a considerable degree independent. While the right eye was always dimmed with cares, thickly clouded and prone to showers of rain, the left laughed and was happy, and the high pressure zone was a long way off. So that the strange difference between the two eyes should not be noticed, he wore golden eye-glasses. These masked it all, and so he became a serious man – which he was indeed – a man of many facets.

My mother was a simple woman. And because her husband often removed the glasses at home, she knew he had a wandering eye. And like any woman she was curious to know where it wandered to. The puzzling play of Nature, in itself, was of no interest to her. Pure science was no concern of hers. Just as later she had no organ with which to fathom the wondrous events related above, consisting of her husband setting off for Mainz but the train that entered the station was heading for Hamburg on the Elbe – blind violence of technical forces – and hardly had the train arrived when the husband was seized by impetuosity and had to go to St Pauli down by the harbour, stowed away on a ship and would and must cross the ocean even though it's

[9] Max Döblin sailed on the *Rhetia* on 8 July 1888, reaching New York on 23 July. He sought out a tailoring shop called 'Döblin' (on Broadway since 1867); maybe the owner was a relative. The attempt failed. In September he returned to Hamburg with his paramour Henriette Zander ('pikeperch' or 'walleye').

so deep and later many drowned in it. None of this interested my mother. Until the end she contented herself with: Husband gone off with another woman. A dreadfully simple formulation. My father later suffered greatly under it. Or let's say: suffered a bit. Or let's say: not at all. For he had the foresight not to come back.[10] So my mother was tremendously interested in Stettin, where my father's eye did its wandering. And the more she sought to expose the secrets of his left eye, the darker the shadows over his right eye. But this didn't shock her. It was a matter not of heroics, but of temperament and unreflectiveness, which easily modulate into heroism, to their detriment.

With his wandering left eye my father noticed many people in Stettin: inhabitants of both sexes, taxpayers of both sexes. But he wasn't interested in whether or how much tax they paid, rather whether they were male or female. He made a naïve simple classification. He was a kind of flesh-fancier. Male flesh he discarded at once. Leaving the female. Lots of that in Stettin. I can't form a clearer picture, because at that time I was so small. But I recall how as a very young boy a servant girl often led me by the hand out into the street, there were pushchairs, and our walk took us to a dancing-parlour. There I sat on a bench, and in the hall a lot of grown-ups danced, big men and big women , the women identified by their dresses, the men mostly in uniform, with moustaches, soldiers, enormous men sweating profusely. My father, too, must have discovered such girls in Stettin, and the joy of discovery gave him no peace. Just so do famous scholars go by night into their laboratory, peer into their microscope, or calculate, or adjust their apparatus one more time, begin to distil in the middle of the night, determine the melting point. In the end: isn't discovering a human being, a human type, not equally remarkable and unsettling and exciting, at least for the one who does it? And conversely: is discovering a new element or a chemical bond intellectually different, is it delightful in a different way, exciting, inflaming in a different way than discovering a new human? Thus is love linked to the joy of discovery. My father must have searched a lot and discovered a lot. He practised his science thoroughly and with persistence, and it would have opened great vistas for him if this science had ever been officially recognised. This was clearly the discipline wherein lay his greatest talents.

And while my mother otherwise took no interest in his many other inclinations – for he composed, wrote poems, drew – she was thrown headlong with him into this one passion. At least here a certain nuptial bond connected her and her husband. When the husband went off on his warpath and his left eye leapt into action, she too became agitated. The storyteller must alas avow that she was not so well armed on the warpath as her husband. He carried roses, while she brandished an umbrella. He was loaded up with tenderness and higher manly gifts, she on the other hand with anger. He went like a stag alone in search of water, while she carried projectiles to disturb his drinking. That was the difference between the married couple. She thought of her children, the family and that he was her wedded spouse, while he: How lovely to walk

[10] Not quite accurate. Max Döblin lived with the family again for half a year (April-Sept 1889), having sought since January to be reconciled. In 1895 and 1897 he made two long visits to the family in Berlin.

arm in arm in the sunshine – ha, it wasn't his wife's arm. It wasn't even always the same arm. The man lived in deepest turmoil. He had discovered Nature's breadth and the manifold variety of Stettin's females. He varied the sources of his enlivening. Only late on did he accustom himself to one, and that was the worst thing of all, for it so happened that the source was not his wife. Actually it would be true to say that the opposite would have been a coincidence. For there are notoriously many millions of women in the world; why should a man love precisely the one he's married to? It would be a very remarkable conjuncture! That's how it was with my father. The wife, the strong woman with the umbrella, drew near. Armed with anger, and a decided aversion to finding here anything to "understand". She bore herself with legitimacy, pathos, claims. The tragedy commenced. Thundering Jupiter revealed his presence. Thus do people stroll among greenery and a cloud gathers, and it begins to pour. You think of strolling through greenery, and already you've forgotten the umbrella.

When back then in Stettin the thunderstorm got going in our house and showed no sign of stopping, the husband, it seems, thought of savages in Africa. They have nothing on, but there's a roof of thatch over them. When a husband thinks of another arm, it's bad enough; but when he thinks of another roof, then it's dangerous, and the consequences can hardly be averted. Under the constant storms my father began to dream, mainly of Mainz, but the train was headed for Hamburg, then the sea came, and America. What came next was not in his dream. That's the worst thing about dreams, they end too soon. He should have dreamed about what came after America.

The tale is retold

Tell the story again. – Who, me? Why? – *Don't ask. Just tell it to me again, please*. – Hm. Well, if it must be –

One morning in Stettin there was a dreadful uproar at home, crying and screaming, my mother ran one flight up, conversations with her older siblings, strangers came. A letter had arrived from Hamburg, my father, forty-two years old at the time, was on his way to America. He wrote in his pathetic grandiose style – the man knew how to write to you, the most moving letters – "Mountains of gold shall I present to you."[11] This was all preceded by years of quarrelling between husband and wife, affairs with women. Finally it revolved around a young girl, one of his employees, twenty years younger than him, a seamstress called Henriette. My mother smoked her out. Incidents of assault and battery occurred, even, if I remember aright, between the married couple. There was utter turmoil in our Stettin home, mother's relatives came, business friends of father's, assets were seized, my mother was still paying off debts years later. Us children of course removed at once from the better schools and sent provisionally to a little private tutor lady. That's life. *Sauve qui peut*.

While all this was going on over and around us, the day beginning in commotion, grief and tears and ending the same way, while my mother was sounding the alarm to

[11] From Terence, 'Phormio'; no doubt here a vague trivial memory.

her relatives and begging on our behalf – the man who established this family was traipsing around New York with that girl twenty years younger than he, sitting with her in music halls, keeping a jealous eye on her, and he stayed there for months in New York in love and joy, until the money was gone. Then he returned to Europe and lived with the girl in Hamburg until the day he died[12].

My mother called him a bigamist, but it wasn't true. She divorced him only quite late[13], when she came into an inheritance.[14] In Hamburg he led a modest quite miserable existence, and towards the end relied on assistance.[15] Once he had us come to visit him in Hamburg – had there been a quarrel with Henriette, or had be become mindful of his duties? But the word 'duty' did not exist in his vocabulary – he swore it was all over with the girl. The oath lasted not even half a year. Then anonymous letters came, and back we were in the east of Berlin. Once he pretended he wanted to work in Berlin, had already found a position, but this or that failed to suit him, he disappeared with no farewells, a telegram came from the Lehrter station, and – he was back in Hamburg, his old haunts.

The man felt comfortable in Hamburg in his poverty and penny-pinching. My eldest brother visited him occasionally, spoke to the companion, they lived together in a poor part of the city, proletarian, clean rooms. At the end the man had a distinguished white beard, wore gold-rimmed glasses and looked like an old grade-school teacher. He was very active in Freemasonry.[16] In the end he fell ill: throat cancer. He died of it. My brother accompanied the body to the rainy cemetery, no one else went, and made sure the grave was left tidy. He, who had suffered more than any from the catastrophe, had a difficult encounter with the woman. She too was ailing, could hardly move. She said she was innocent in everything.

The husband saved himself in a criminal manner from what must have been a difficult situation. He was uncouth enough to dump his whole family onto his wife's relatives. He thought: they won't starve, the shirt is nearer than the coat. Overnight he cast us all into poverty, made beggars of us. He was a scoundrel, taken all in all.

– It's not right, you say, to utter such a stern judgement over a close relation, one's own father, now deceased? I would not be my mother's son and have lived through it all if I were to suppress this tone. I can pronounce a judgement only with words; he pronounced judgement over us in the sternest possible way, with deeds: *You lot are stifling me*; and he withdrew from us all the duties of his heart and his paternal duties under law. I have no impression that he found this difficult. The father pronounced judgement on his family, but it was, considering all the circumstances, not necessary to judge his family so harshly, with such dismissive cruelty. With due respect to

[12] On 22 April 1921, of throat cancer. Alfred's eldest brother Ludwig attended the funeral.

[13] In spring 1908.

[14] From her well-to-do elder brother Rudolf Freudenheim.

[15] From eldest son Ludwig.

[16] No evidence for this has so far come to light.

personality, you make it too easy on yourself if you believe you can fulfil your personality by destroying your responsibilities. We do not live in a Bedouin state, a father is not all-powerful over his family, he should be content with my response. If the sins of the father are to be visited on the children unto the third and fourth generations, then the children have the right to haul the father before a tribunal and raise a complaint. The man's dead. Before the great purifying filter into which we shall all pass, I'll call a halt and keep silent.

A third time!

You must tackle it a third time. You must speak about it one more time. – But about what? This affair? I've told it twice already. So why? – *You'll see, you know it already, just make a start*. – I don't know. – *Start*!

His parents were strict people. – *That's good. Start with the parents*. – They married him off at twenty-five. – *Well well, you know it all, young man! Always so fluent*. – He was weak, pliable. He offered little resistance, let himself be married, for the Freudenheim woman he was a good match, handsome chap with money. Dear God, but these are no excuses. – *We want to see for ourselves. Go on.* – Not much more to go on. They have children, his business fails, he sets up a tailoring workshop. Then – *What then?* – Then his parents died.[17] *Ah. So. His parents died*. – Yes. – *That must have been an important factor?* – I need to look into it. Let me look into it. So his parents died. They had married him off. The man's on his own. This gives the wife a certain difficulty. But I've forgotten something. – *Please*. – It's hard for me to talk of it, but I probably should. Well then: husband and wife did not get along. – *Because it was arranged? I mean, because his parents had organised it?* – That too, from his point of view. But that's not the point. They didn't belong together. Not at all. – *Hm, hm.* – Yes. It's probably not nice of me to speak of it. – *I think people should be at ease speaking the truth. It clarifies. Maybe you'll have a better view of other things too.* – The wife, my mother, was hardheaded, she came from a merchant family. He, the Hamburg fellow, was a happy-go-lucky type, a gifted creature. He had many gifts. – *Such as?* – He deployed an entire arsenal of gifts. He played violin, piano, without ever having lessons. We had our first music lessons from him. The piano, I still recall, was for a long time a casing without legs; the top was mostly used during the day for cutting cloth. Dust from the fabric dropped between the keys, it had to be cleared with bellows. The man composed. One of his pieces was even arranged for the organ by the music teacher in our school, the Friedrich-Wilhelm Realgymnasium in Stettin. He sat over books on composition. He sang, and not badly. He wrote occasional poetry, could sketch rapidly. He was clever at designing clothes. Really an amazingly talented lad; so many artistic things. This profusion of gifts came I believe from his mother's side, his mother was née Jessel; Leon Jessel, composer of the 'Tin Soldier' and other operettas, was a cousin. But nothing my father did prospered.

[17] Father 1881, mother 1886.

Firstly he was happy-go-lucky and never persisted at anything, then of course at home they never let him learn anything – this made him very fed up – and later his family clung to his legs. That was us, five kids, and the wife. He was also a creature of impulse, with no ambition. In this man, I can still see him before my eyes, was something soft, slack, weak and idle. So he and his gifts went on living. He maundered along, never felt really unhappy. A weakling, all in all. But not an ignoble animal.

– *It's all very good, what you say. You see how necessary it was for you to begin again. So, continue in your own good time.* – These are bad things I speak of. I know them well, though I don't like to recall them. It leads straight to me. – *But please, we have time. I'm not forcing you. Will it be so very hard?* – Oh no, it's all right. So, where was I, my mother, yes. My mother hadn't much respect for him. She called him an 'educated bootboy'. An evil phrase. A bad chapter, this pride in business and money in my mother's family. They were all very lively, active, practical people, earners, a few even gourmets. Anything beyond was unknown! No, not unknown but ridiculous! An excuse for scorn, for irony. Like when Indians or Blacks come to us and children mock them in the street. Dreadful. It was from that side that one of the bombs came that flew over the marriage of my mother with this multi-talented wimpish man.

That's it. I have to say it. I can speak of it because I too have learned to know this scorn, this narrow-mindedness, this bitter overweening hardness. I would never have dared, had no right to dare, to show my scribblings at home. For many years no one at home knew that I wrote. And when in 1906 a little theatrical piece of mine[18] was performed in a matinée together with a play by Paul Scheerbart[19], it was not under my name, the name of my family, but under a pseudonym.[20] But earlier, in 1902, this domestic pressure had already caused something almost serious, in fact only tragic-comic. Because I avoided putting my name to my scribblings, I had sent my first novel (it lies yet in my desk drawer) to Fritz Mauthner (at the time a critic in Berlin, since him there's been no theatre critic of any gravity in Berlin) but under a pseudonym. Mauthner's eyes were giving him trouble, he lived in Grunewald, after writing to me at the Anatomy Institute where I was then working he used my fake address, asked me to visit him and read the MS out loud to him, his eyes were giving him trouble. A truly strange shyness and dread held me back from paying him a visit. Now, I know where the shyness comes from. I already had a bad conscience about my works. I was imbued with it. Unto the second generation. I once ventured to Grunewald to look him up. But I'd arranged it quite cleverly so it was already dark and in the darkness I couldn't find my way to him. From a safe haven I wrote him a letter, in which without giving any reason I asked him to send back the MS. And now the real tragi-comedy begins. Mauthner sent the MS to my fake address, a parcels office. Oranienburger Strasse. And

[18] *Lydia und Mäxchen* (written 1905). It had already been performed in December 1905 (in Döblin's absence) in the salon of Herwarth Walden's 'Society for Art'.

[19] Scheerbart's piece was a grotesquery called *Herr Kammerdiener Kneetschke*.

[20] 'Alfred Börne'. But Döblin's cover was already blown. In a letter to Walden of 2.12.1905 Döblin expresses annoyance that several attendees already knew he was the author.

when I turned up there to fetch my MS, they wouldn't give it me. Parcels were to be handed over against proof of identity. But how could I prove it. I showed them Mauthner's postcard. It wasn't enough. I was baffled – and remained baffled. I dared not explain the facts. That bad, horribly bad conscience! The second generation! Oh, it's a torment. To think such things are possible. They'd have opened my MS, I – would have been embarrassed to death. So the MS remained unclaimed at the parcels office. It irked me for months. The handwritten MS of my first novel (*Jagende Rosse*) was thrown away by the parcels office, or pulped, I had no copy. I made a resolution: from sketches, drafts and my memory I rewrote the whole thing, in bitterness, despondency. In a thoroughly black mood the whole time.

Yes, it went on like that, and nothing changed. When I was already a doctor and a book of mine appeared, my mother asked: "What are you doing that for? Don't you have a profession?" She meant my medical practice. To mollify her I had to tell her I earned a little from it. It wasn't true (now, actually, when she's no longer living, I find that the woman was not so wrong. Really I should have let it be –). To her it was just playing around, my writing, a pastime unworthy of a serious person. That was still a definite character trait in people who came from modest circumstances into the Reich and had to earn a living, and strangely it was utterly different from what I found later in Poland among the Jews that impressed me so deeply: reverence for the book, reverence for the mind. My father had carried around such a spillage of gifts. Ethnologically, he was a victim of migration. All his values were re-evaluated and devalued. That's why, that's why his marriage failed to thrive. Not until my generation has a sense, a joyful sense of our origin and the ancient reverence slowly and painfully re-emerged. I – I survived the great migration.

My mother, I can go on now quite calmly, it was good after all that I said it, my mother had no respect for her husband. Her brothers too had no time for him. So the man, now I see more clearly, the man, who was anyway a skirt-chaser, now began to breathe the air outside the home, the air that home denied him. Gradually the man became a phoney rebel; phoney; he didn't dare escape. As long as his parents were alive he kept his head down. Then he grew defiant, I could say: braver, more decisive. He was often caught out. Quite clearly he neglected his wife. And he was growing older, he came to the dangerous forties, and now he had to encounter Miss H. It laid Fate on him like an experiment. He burst into flame, the man had probably never experienced anything like it, it was clearly a genuine, really strong passionate love. He was ripe for it. There was much in him lying ready for passion to stoke the fire and provide fresh logs. It was a life crisis. His cart starts jolting and lurching. At home the coldness, lack of freedom, quarrels grow worse. Then – suddenly he just leaves. Finally, finally. – *Why do you say finally?* – It just came to me. – *You look pale. It must affect you deeply. Perhaps we'd better stop.* – No thanks. I can go on. I'm no longer a young lad, to be sent tumbling by an insight. I see it all clearly. I'm glad to let it all out. How the Gods are feared by the human race! They hold dominion in eternal hands, and

wield it as they please.[21] – *May we continue?* – Of course. It was my father's life-crisis. He walked out, simply walked out, this man. It does me good to see it like that. Now, if you wouldn't mind, I 'd like to pause for a while. – *Good, good. We have time*. – [A long pause, eyes closed. Then:] Let's go on. So, my father swam away from Stettin.

Now he can do it. That's how far he's come. He goes quite easily. There's no reason at all to think he'll ever come back. Why would he? Pangs of conscience, should they arise, retreat behind the sense of a new existence, of freedom. Will his wife change? Not the slightest chance. She clings to him, he's her husband, but in their natures they are strangers. There is no contact. With the tender young girl over there, he blooms. He feels good. It's his element, his boundless element. His existence. He'll stay with her. Maybe nothing will become of him for all his gifts. His father wanted to force him to become something false. Result: desertion, the husband cheated of half his life, the family pauperised. They should have let him loose while he was young, or given him some coarse or clever woman, a tight rein or a very loose one. Now he is déclassé. Nevertheless: he's alive, alive, understand, he lives in that class, on another continent, according to his nature.

– *We'll stop here. It's all been said, no doubt. For now.* – Yes. But how to sum it up? As incontestable as his judgement upon the family is the family's judgement upon him. I cannot touch on this. For the one who takes on other deeds, the deeds of the parents, the judgement will be severe. It does not come to judgement. Only to a bowing of the head. To a complaint perhaps in another direction. In the end we are left with an insight, a lesson, a warning, for now, for those of us who are still alive.

…and he had a sister

The man I was speaking of had a sister, who was in many ways his complete opposite. She was of the same stern species as his parents. This woman would have suited him superbly. She was called Henriette (strangee, another Henriette), and had a husband, a very soft man, goofily active, lots of good cheer and heart. As far as I could see he didn't enjoy life with her. She was hellishly clever. At home she wore the trousers, sturdy and brisk. When she died of a heart attack, not yet old, it happened quite fast and unexpectedly, the husband married again with hardly a pause. He lived on in bliss. If ever he had dared to abscond! She would have hauled him back from the North Pole, from the Fiji Islands, from the Cape of Best-ever Hope, back to her loving breast.

FAMILY MATTERS

Respect to those who deserve it

I recall my mother as a woman who remained respectable into her old age. She paid great attention to her appearance, even during her last illness had her hair done, kept spick and span. She had a great warmth for her children, and later for her grand-

[21] From Goethe's play *Iphegenie auf Tauris.*

children. Dealing with laundry and underwear was a passion for her. She wasn't very clever, her sister was much cleverer. The level of schooling attained in her family was generally not high. She was born in Samter, in the province of Posen, where her father, whom I recall as a little man with a white cravat, was a small tradesman, village trader in materials. His children spoke German, but also Polish and an already somewhat weakened Yiddish. When my mother wrote to relatives, she preferred to use Yiddish letters [i.e. cursive Hebrew] that looked like Turkish or Arabic; I never saw my father do so. Anyway, he came from Posen as well, the actual town of Posen. My mother grew up in Samter, her brothers left early, around 1865, for Breslau and Berlin, and became prosperous timber merchants, the firm is flourishing to this day. In exile in Berlin, we children and the housework kept my mother busy with from morning till night. For a while she rented out a room. She did the laundry herself, she couldn't abide having a maid. She was brave and spry. You can't remain very unhappy for long. She had a curiously sceptical and resigned view of life. Her mottos betray a regrettably close acquaintance with existence: "It hits me like a house falling on my head." And the more soothing phrases: "As you wish" and "It was always so, and will always be so." She could declaim magnificently, and we still know by heart the wonderful poem she used to recite on homely evenings. You must speak it out loud, with heroic gestures, that's how to drill it into your soul:[22]

Geh, Meister, nimm mich auf zum Schüler,	Come, Master, take me as your pupil
Ist's einem Ernst, so ist es mir;	If anyone's serious, then it's me
Ich werde nicht nach Wochen kühler,	I won't cool off after a few weeks
Mich treibt nicht eitle Ruhmbegier;	I'm not driven by thoughts of glory
Nach andern, o! nach schönern Reizen	To other, oh much lovelier delights
Verlangt's allmächtig meinen Sinn!	My mind has an almighty yearning
Drum, Meister, will ich Maler werden	That's why, master, I'd be a painter.

That's all I remember. And anyway I'm overtaken by emotion. All I know is it ends in colossal sorrow with the words: "Of the dear girl on her deathbed."

On the fate of an uprooted family

Eldest son Ludwig was a huge success. He was of true mercantile stock, had his mother's family feeling and his father's musical inclinations. He became the family's provider, a second father. He joined the 'timber uncles' in their business, achieved independence, and left the family only when he married [July 1903].

On him fell the heaviest burden thrown off by the family's absconding founder; he bore it brilliantly.

We younger ones attended parochial schools in Berlin, only I reverted after three years to a Gymnasium. In all of us the father's blood beat strongly. Hugo, the second son, endured only a brief career in business, then had to go into the theatre. The lusty

[22] The verse, a bit misquoted, is from the Austrian Johann Seidl (1804-1875): 'The first picture and the last'.

lad quickly fell in love with the daughter of his teacher – Paul Pauli, who played Baumert in the 1893 premier of Hauptmann's 'Weavers' – and in 1901 married the girl, who was called Martha. He became well known on the Berlin stage and in film. [23]

Youngest brother, Kurt,[24] harboured a passion for music, you could never drag him away from the piano, he became an outstanding pianist. But as there was no prospect of formal training, he stayed in business. In the end he joined his eldest brother's firm.

Sister Meta is dead already. In 1919 she was hit by grenade shrapnel during the unrest in Lichtenberg as she stepped out one morning to fetch milk for her small children. She managed to climb the stairs with the shrapnel inside her – she had no idea what had happened to her – and then just lay there. On the bed they found blood on her coat. She lasted one more day.[25]

At the time I was not far from her in Lichtenberg, and lived through the Putsch and the cruel, outrageous, shocking things that accompanied the conquest of Lichtenberg by White troops. Around the same time, when in our district the grenades and trench mortars of the liberators were demolishing entire buildings, when many sat in cellars and then, horribly, when many were shot at the little Lichtenberg cemetery in Möllendorf Strasse – you had to see the corpses lying there outside the school, men with caps over their faces, to understand what class hatred and a spirit of vengeance mean – at around the same time the rest of Berlin was dancing away merrily, there were balls and newspapers. Nothing stirred as this was going on in Lichtenberg, and the many tens of thousands of workers in Berlin all kept silent. That was when I saw how necessary it was that this revolution should be repulsed. I am opposed to incapability. I hate incapability. These people were incapable of taking action. You have to declare a break with wimps, idiots and phrasemongers. That's how it went then, and whoever declared a break, whether coming from the Left or the Right, I was on his side. It was around this time – I have to keep on about it – that one midday the entire Siegesallee, Bellevue Strasse, Potsdamer Platz were stuffed full of demonstrators marching. Whoever saw these masses of people, trucks carrying machine guns alongside them, thousands of strong men, and this mass, these workers, did nothing but scream Up with and Down with, and another huge mass of workers drew close to them going in the other direction, also singing the Internationale and screaming Down when the others screamed Up – whoever experienced this will know the repugnance I felt for such a miserable "revolution". As alien and detestable as I found the White troops, I retreated and said firmly: this is good, better than that lot over there. Here a righteous judgement is being carried out. Either they know what a

[23] Hugo (1876-1960) secretly attended acting lessons from 1891, then appeared on various Berlin stages (including alongside Max Reinhardt). From 1930 to 1933 he conducted the first talking-film school in Berlin. He wrote songs, poems, novellas, essays and film scripts.

[24] Born 1880, deported to Auschwitz 1940.

[25] After a brief first marriage, Meta married a Russian, Bernhard Goldenberg,a decorator by profession, in London. They lived in Istanbul, then in Antwerp, returning to Berlin in 1914. See Döblin's eyewitness account of the March 1919 unrest in 'Cannibals' above.

revolution is, and they make revolution, or they deserve a rod for their backs because they are merely playing at it.

I meant to speak of my sister. That dreadful morning when the shooting approached from Warschauer Brücke I was unable to go to her. The heavy artillery fire in the Frankfurter Allee was too strong[26]. She was quickly carried to a nearby surgical clinic. When signs of internal bleeding showed, they made another incision. In vain. A major vessel had been severed, she died under anaesthetic. My mother was seriously ailing at the time, she lived with her eldest son in Lichtenberg. When I came to their apartment with my sister's husband, my mother heard my brother's painful sobs at the news. The illness had made her face rigid, but her hands and head shook more strongly. She said at once: "She's dead." And then: "Why her and not me." My sister hadn't had a good time at home. She'd grown up with the crazy bourgeois ideal: "Thou shalt, must and wilt get married." Though we had nothing, we made every effort to avoid placing her in a job. No thought was more alien to the family than that the daughter should earn money like everyone else and stand on her own feet. So my sister went here and there and for a long time didn't marry. Eldest brother made huge sacrifices to provide a dowry from his business. The man she married was a dubious character even before the wedding. She was warned, but wanted to get away, wanted her own household. A brief bad marriage. The man had taken her for the money. A year or two later came the divorce. For some years she lived alone with her furniture, then – it couldn't go on forever, once again the only solution was marriage,so she married again, an artisan, a simple tidy man. She went with him to Constantinople, then Antwerp. We visited her there once. She'd taken on two children from the man's first marriage – he was a widower, and because they were poor and had nothing they had four more children[27]. Earlier, at home, she and her no less passionate and solid mother had often danced lively dances. Later the daughter, this much-tested and experienced woman, was her closest confidant. Her fate was as heavy as my mother's, but she faced it just as bravely and was not broken. In October 1914 Antwerp was attacked and occupied by the Germans. She lived with her children through the siege and the shooting, then after Antwerp fell returned to Germany in a great transport.

Though she had lots of troubles she was always good-humoured and gave advice right and left and was much loved. Her end suited her image well: killed fetching milk for her little children. The children have grown up well, they go to school and look! even the daughters are already independent, stand on their own feet, though still young. They're all doing well. I say this as a quiet thought that she herself can hear.

My mother's life ends

We moved from Blumen Strasse to Landsberger Strasse near Friedrichshain, then to the quite new Marsilius Strasse opposite the factory, to the fourth floor – I could look

[26] Alfred was living at 194 Frankfurter Allee, Meta and her husband at 278.

[27] Actually only three.

out towards Blumen Strasse onto the yard of my parochial school. Then came Grüne Weg ('Green Path'), where we were honoured to receive a visit from the old Hamburg gentleman. The family slowly emerged from the status of beggars, mainly through the toil of my eldest brother. We lived in Wallnertheater Strasse, followed eldest brother when he made himself independent, to gloomy Markus Strasse, and later farther east to Memel Strasse by the Warschauer Brücke. Gradually the family melted away. First to leave the nest was Hugo, the actor; he married very young, and my mother's first grandchild came from him. Then eldest brother married, and there were three of us left with mother. Then came my sister's marriage, and I left to pursue my studies. Until shortly before her end my youngest brother was still with her.

Around 1908 the life of my mother, who was already over sixty, took a happy turn. A bright beam of light fell over her life: she inherited a large amount from one of her brothers. From that moment on she was economically independent and well-to-do. It was in her nature to give to us as much as she was able. Now she went to summer resorts, made little trips, once even to Antwerp to see my sister. But even at that time there were puzzling signs that not all was well. Her right arm trembled, her right hand trembled, and there was a remarkable twitching in the arm, which wouldn't relax even with rubbing, electric shocks and massage. It was 1910. I brought her to my superior at the time at the Urban Hospital, Albert Fränkel. With a shake of the head he said: Nasty business, better keep an eye on it. Half a year later it was clear: the arm had grown stiffer, she could no longer do her own hair, the tremor in the fingers had a strangely rhythmic character, the pill-rolling between thumb and index finger. It was the early stage of the shaking palsy, paralysis agitans [i.e. Parkinson's disease]. Which then proceeded on its slow heavy dreadful, slow heavy lamentable way. Slowly tension, stiffness and hardness set in in the right leg, and passed into the left leg. The head started shaking, the face muscles became notably stiff. She had no idea what was wrong with her. They said: It's your nerves. And she said: Yes, that's no surprise given all that lay behind her, long years of toil, alone with five children, then letting to sub-tenants and doing the laundry herself. I took her to Wiesbaden, she improved, but it was all deception. 1914, end of July, amid the din of war alarms, I took her to Öynhausen. The stations were full of soldiers, on the way back many bridges had sentries posted. I travelled with Russians anxious to get home. In Berlin I could hardly squeeze out of the train as heaps of humanity stormed their way into the carriage. But Öynhausen was not good for the old lady, the baths weakened her. I still recall how she visited me later in the Frankfurter Allee, October 1914 on the [2nd] birthday of my eldest, Peter. She brought presents, it was slow going up and down stairs.

At the end of 1914 I joined up.[28]

For two years I didn't see her, my leaves were taken up with my own ailments. Then I came to Lichtenberg, where she was living with my youngest brother. What a sight. I climbed the stairs. I knew she had a nurse. I rang, no one answered. I rang and

[28] By volunteering, Döblin could expect a professional salary rather than just a soldier's daily pay.

knocked. Then a door opened inside, and very slow dragging steps could be heard. The chain was lifted, and there she stands. It's her, "Granny". Her hair is snow-white and sparse. It hasn't been combed today, it hangs about her ears. The woman is so small, so small. She stands stiffly, rounded back bent forward, the illness has pressed her head down onto her chest. She holds her hands like little paws close to her body. A sad sight, so sad, as if pleading from below. There were big bags under her eyes, yellow spots on the eyelids. She stands there at the door. "It's you, Fritz. Why do you never visit?" A monotonous, gently quivering voice, the old sound is there but broken. I led her slowly back into the parlour, the nurse had gone shopping, I sat her in a chair. I spent that leave with her. Though outwardly she was so changed, pressed by the illness to the ground, she still had her old habits and her nature of a housewife, calculating, and a mother, worrying; everything gone senile. She liked to hear stories, even laughed sometimes. She was immobile as a stick, had to be sat down, fed and washed. But once set on her feet she could take her little steps, though if she fell she couldn't get up by herself. The war ended, we were all there again, visits came from this one, that one. She moved in with my eldest brother, during the bombardment of Lichtenberg she was carried down to the cellar.

I shall say nothing of what happened that final year when she could no longer sit, became bedridden. Anyone familiar with this disease knows: the song has ended. They lie in their helplessness like a stone just where they've been laid, and their flesh succumbs to bedsores. So there she lay during her final year in her room – my brother had moved with her towards the Tiergarten – tended by the nurse, a skeleton with rigid limbs but still with the unmistakably dear suffering features of our mother. That was her thin white skull. Her gaze. She didn't suffer greatly. Those who saw her suffered more. There's morphine, and even stronger stuff. I attended to her along with others. Sometimes we sat her up, she was like a doll made all of one piece, covered horribly in wounds at the hips, the heels, shoulders, the dreaded bedsores. Mostly she was alert, but also very confused, from the creeping wound-fever, painkillers, senile delirium. Until peace came and the soul received a mercy and left the body.

She lies in Weissensee beside her daughter. On her gravestone we had these words inscribed: Love never ceases.

Mother and Daughter

Back again in Berlin.[29] The same smoky East End was again chosen for our domicile. First the upper part of Landsberger Strasse near to Friedrichshain, later Marsilius Strasse, a newly laid out link between Blumen Strasse and Grosse Frankfurter. In Landsberger Strasse we again lived on the third floor. For the doctor-to-be this scene was unforgettable. Mother was a hot-tempered woman; only at an advanced age did she adopt a certain mildness and let her innate loving motherliness shine forth pure and unblemished. She was an upright, well-proportioned woman with fresh and not

[29] September 1889, after half a year in Hamburg for a failed reconciliation with Döblin *père*.

unattractive facial features; she was not a little vain, enjoyed looking at herself in the mirror, set great store by hairdos. Her inclination to powder herself, darken her eyebrows with a pencil, was a source of great vexation to her eldest son, also her habit of dressing up younger than was appropriate to her years. She liked to hear occasional acquaintances remark on the pretty young woman – she was in her mid-forties at the time. She was the daughter of an apparently well-off man from the province of Posen; her eldest brother had been the go-between for her marriage to the not yet independent son of a Stettin merchant; money played an important role. Father at once took the opportunity to bow low before his parents; as long as his much-feared father was alive the marriage must have been a model affair; his escapades only began when the coast was quite clear. Mother was in no way a member of the intelligentsia; there was something about her that was ordinary, humanly good-hearted, amiable, completely benevolent, and she offered it to the whole world, most lovingly and powerfully in interacting with her children, for whom she was the support and the centre of the family. But now and then something fiery, wild, uncultivated broke out, and almost always only in interactions with her only daughter, the second-eldest child. Quarrels with her were almost the order of the day. Dozens of times the tormented daughter, whose future was totally opaque and hence oppressive, screamed that she would leave home. During one quarrel Mother wanted to hit the girl, who was 17 or 18 at the time. She fled crying and screaming from room to room of the third floor Landsberger apartment, beside herself. Finally she jumped onto the windowsill in the front room, flung open the window, and seemed ready to jump out. Mother stood frozen in the doorway, in horror called out to the eldest son, the daughter shouted threats that she would jump and take her own life if people wouldn't leave her in peace.[30] The episode ended with everyone crying, mutual recriminations. Eldest son went around raging: "The curse of the mother lies on the family." For Grandmother had once cursed her entire family; the stupendous wording often made an appearance, with ritualised gestures. Even Mother when she was angry cursed one or other of her children, mostly the daughter, with no detriment to her love. Nevertheless Mother never managed, or not until very late in life, to relate properly to her daughter; time and time again the girl had to feel and hear how she was a burden to her mother, to the family. But it wasn't her fault she wasn't a boy. And she could not bring herself to the decision, the almost so obvious decision, to stand on her own two feet, which would at once bring her a new status in the family. She was too clearly set on marriage, like all girls of this bourgeois class especially at that time. The leap from marriageable middle class girl to servant was too degrading, and there wasn't much to choose from: shop girl, piece-worker at home etc. She had no learning, had learned nothing; there would at that time have been chances enough for a person of the better classes with some learning. So she stayed at home for years, until quite late on – she was no beauty, but to her brothers a very caring, very kindly, very dishevelled person – with money from her eldest brother, the later provider of the family, found a husband – it lasted

[30] In at least two of his fictions, Döblin has a female character jumping from a high window: the Empress in *Wallenstein*, and Therese in Book 3 of *Amazonas*.

hardly a year. As a young woman she was not domesticated, her husband soon ran away, and finally, when her dowry was almost all gone, she married an artisan, a widower with several children, lived in straitened circumstances, had to turn to relatives all the time for assistance, had several children, grew into a skinny overworked woman, but one who never wearied of her laborious toil, considered herself, astonishingly, well-situated, a good indulgent woman who with great love and sympathy … [*the text breaks off here*]

Report on a member of the family

We have the honour to present a member of the family, Alfred Döblin, resident in Berlin, the second youngest son of the family. We provide several pictures of him, as well as a palm print. He was born in Stettin on 10 August 1878 as the son of the above-named Max Döblin and his wife Sophie, née Freudenheim.

Height 160 cm. Weight unclothed 114 pounds. Chest, inflated: 92 cm, deflated: 86 cm. Skull circumference 58.5 cm, length 22 cm, width 16 cm. He has hereditary extreme short- sightedness and astigmatism.

Facial tone mostly pale, visible mucous membranes strongly bloodshot, musculature weakly developed, almost no fatty deposits. Pupil reflexes to bright light and close focusing are normal, knee and Achilles tendon reflexes notably enhanced. Hand pressure on both sides good, no abnormalities of motor strength. No swaying when eyes are closed, no tremor in the hands. Normal skin sensitivity to pricking and touching. Pharyngeal reflex present. Thoracic and abdominal organs show no findings.

Face narrow, hair dark brown in good quantity, mixed with gray, eye colour is gray-blue. Mouth has a prominent overbite, apparently hereditary in the family, like the short-sightedness. The gum is high. Dentition lacking the upper left canine, first upper right molar, wisdom tooth lower left and upper right.

The bone structure is gracile. The subject belongs overall to the slim active type, which Kretschmer[31] assigns to the schizoid rank.

The nose is characteristically large, also long, in profile lies in line with the receding forehead which, bending away at the front, is that of a Jew. Ethnologically he is no pure type, there are Nordic acclimatisation influences, evident in the dolichocrany, the eye colour and the colour of the head hair, which in his youth was flaxen and only later darkened. Several of the subject's children exhibit Nordic assimilation more clearly.

His handwriting is analysed by Dr Max Pulver[32] of Zurich as follows:

[31] Ernst Kretschmer (1888-1964), psychiatrist, founder of 'constitution typology'.

[32] Max Pulver (1889-1952): Swiss Expressionist poet and dramatist, later turned to graphology. He wrote a newspaper article on Döblin, timed for an evening of readings in Zurich in 1927.

His temperament: An amalgam of the nervous and the motor: unparalleled range of activities, very delicate, but subtly soulful with comprehensive radiations to the outermost ethereal regions, as well as into the abysses of the collective unconscious.

A zeal for composition is first, then a broad-reaching bracketing of wide groups of regions.
Matter does not exist for him, everything is soulful, in an almost gaseous aggregate state.
Self-discipline urges towards analysis; bourgeois thoroughness is replaced by inscrutability.
Courage and delight in fabulation, fairytales on an analytical basis.
The creative wave ever and again blocked by self-control, ever and again set in motion again by immanent levity.
Gigantic extent of the fables as of the impetus to work.

The private Ego: Empathetic in association with physical weakness; modest, hedged in by constraints, need for pressure, everyday activity broken, but not smashed.
Here well-meaning, but abrupt. Employs diplomacy out of human thoughtfulness.
Made necessarily sensitive by pressure, just as by the enormous dilation of his being.
Sarcasm and mockery as defences.
Impulses to ambition may put personal modesty at risk.

Among people: The greatest self-assurance, direct, almost naïve.
May barge in, exhibits little vanities, but also courage to express his mind.
Despite the presence of routine in regard to the public, this makes him to some extent alien to himself.
Ego-impulses become mixed in.

His profession: Doctor for children or nervous conditions. Also artist.
Great and sensitive receptiveness, unprecedented capacity for analytical penetration, especially in the direction of the Spiritual-Unknown. But also strongly anchored in the physiological; probably more neurologist than psychoanalyst.
The words 'medical' and 'literature' reveal characteristic disturbances of writing.
Collision of interests probably coloured subjectively in their projection.

Health: Delicate, with a personal economy in energy use; states of weakness of a nervous kind are registered, along with probable metabolic disorders.
The very unusual combination of existences allows here no further prognosis.

Reading and palpation of his hands by Frau Marianne Raschig, who is unknown to him:

The small, not wide, finely articulated hand with feeler-like pointed nervous fingers, of which the little and index fingers are narrow and so delicate and flexible that they appear crooked, speak hypersensitivity, a mental capacity for adaptation which follows inspirations and mental manifestations, which is almost overwhelmed by them and receives them in a kind of mediumistic trance.

The many lines on the inner surface reveal, despite their idiosyncracy and bizarre shapes, a great harmony and clarity (the doubled, broad bright Mercury line towards the little finger is particularly striking.) The pronounced Venus mount crossed by delicate curved lines reveals a sense for beauty, a strongly marked sensitivity for form.

Particularly noticeable in the interesting hand image is the shape like a divining rod which, formed from the Saturn and Mercury lines, encloses the Apollo mount (below the ring finger). A large crooked cross is visible on this mount, woven of many lines, which – already named the 'croix mystique' in old books – hints at mystical undercurrents and metaphysical gifts.

"You expend too much nervous strength. Your nails are noticeably red. Let them grow longer. – Logic is well developed. – You have many internal disturbances and moods, this comes incessantly through you, it is something mediumistic. You are a sort of medium. The safeguards needed by a human medium are present, are developed, but you don't always use them. – Especially noticeable is how yielding, gentle, how enormously empathetic with others you are, you have a real excess of this. You should think of yourself much more. Egoism is totally absent. – You are very impulsive. Whatever catches your attention you pursue to the end. You are very steadfast and reliable. – You have an enormous sense of duty. Really it is too big. You are constantly on the alert. This is not entirely good. One can be on the alert now and then, but this constantly. – You are completely without prejudice. You have an outspokenly individual will, an independence, your own being. – The Life line is very good, very long. No doubt you come from a long-lived family? But think of your nerves, your nails, and store the strength more externally. You are inclined to ruminate. – And this is remarkable: you will have good fortune or success, maybe this very year, from abroad. Do you have contracts or deals there? Are they about translations of your books? Well, something is coming from over there."

She keeps feeling the fingers, joints, twists and turns the hands. –

SCHOOLDAYS

Introduction

Following his first impressions of Berlin and his memories of Stettin, the above-named, when asked about his schooldays gave the following account:

In Stettin, the big Parade Square. We live in Wilhelm Strasse near den Linden. We play on the Town Hall steps, we can look down on the railway. Excursions by steamer and on foot to Gotzlow, a school trip, during which the older pupils made a great impression with their deep voices. Kaiser Wilhelm the First visited Stettin, the ceremonial entry, Bismarck was with him, he wore a cuirassier helmet, shiny, colossal, much too big for him. When the Kaiser dies, school is let out, bells toll, speeches are made in class, it's a serious matter. And then on the way home I don't know if I'm supposed to cry, at home I find it all calm, no one pays attention to anything. Finally

after the family catastrophe I hold my mother's hand along den Linden, I'm embarrassed, I think everyone's looking at us. –

The subject advises further that he has visited his birthplace Stettin on the Oder, seat of a regional government etc., on another later occasion. He wanted to become a doctor at a hospital there, presented himself, was given the brush-off. He said with a smile: The town has once again shown me the cold shoulder. *He believes that his nose (see above) was found objectionable. On this occasion his view of the town seemed totally altered. He discovered a big villa quarter unknown to him. The Parade Square was unusually boring. The precipitous steps at the Town Hall were quite unhazardous, they were an easy climb. The buildings were low. The town was very empty and colourless. The subject declares, word for word:* I ascertained that I was born in this coastal town, but this fact, like the town, I would like to let go at that.

Please provide some data from your schooldays. –

I was taken out of the Friedrich-Wilhelm Realgymnasium in 1888. At that time, ten years old, I was in the Sexta[33] Aged 13, in 1891, I was again in the Sexta, in Berlin, in the Gymnasium, had a free place. In between I'd attended parochial school. So the path from first year to first year can be circuitous. I left the Gymnasium not before contending successfully for my Abitur[34] and carrying away the certificate.

Conduct and Diligence: His conduct was licit (!!), his diligence adequate.

German: His essays had mostly satisfactory content, albeit not always presented with the necessary consideration and adequate care. The examination essay was adequate. Of the literary works and essays discussed in class he developed a sure grasp, always followed the discussion with lively eagerness and very clear understanding. Adequate.

Latin: He manages satisfactorily to translate not too difficult passages into German. He possesses adequate knowledge of the frequently used metres of Horace. He showed adequate confidence in grammar and the use of grammatical rules. The verdict on his efforts in class matches that of his written examination work: adequate.

Greek: He demonstrated lively interest in this subject. He has a good grasp of the most important metres; he has carefully memorised a number of poetical passages. He is confident in grammar and gained adequate preparation for the translation of schoolroom writers. This testifies to adequate exploratory work. Hence the overall verdict in Greek is unequivocally adequate.

French: His knowledge is sufficient to translate easier writings adequately. Although his examination work, which he prepared taking no care, was inadequate, and the oral examination betrayed great weakness in grammar, the overall verdict on his efforts can still be described as adequate.

[33] First year of secondary school.

[34] Abitur: the highest school leaving qualification.

History and Geography: He knows the epoch-making events of world history. Through careful diligence he has attained extensive knowledge of the spheres of German and Prussian history. He was able to provide satisfactory accounts of connections between events. His knowledge of history therefore deserves an overall verdict of adequate. Likewise in Geography he possesses adequate knowledge.

Mathematics: With great diligence he has repaired gaps from earlier years. He has enough knowledge of the syllabus to solve not too difficult exercises independently. Since at least recently his class contributions and his examination work satisfy the requirements, the overall verdict is: adequate.

Gymnastics: Adequate. *Singing*: Good.

In the Year of Our Saviour 1900

I was 23 years old when I left the Gymnasium: thus does the above-described subject from the family in question express himself. When I left school for the last time, I spat on the ground. I attach great importance to this being confirmed and recorded. He says no one in the utterly transformed school will remember him. There will of course be different teachers, even the syllabus has completely changed. But if any should think of him as they pass the great school building or even climb the steps, he urges them to look down at the foot of the steps, the lowest sequence of stones, to the right. That's where he spat his goodbye on the ground.

Here the subject falls silent. He was urged several times to provide more details, to unburden himself. But he has a black look and gives an impression of stubbornness. All we can do, since the subject maintains an obstinate silence and there is here clearly a matter important to his verdict, is to enact a specific ploy. We leave the respondent locked in the examination room. But before doing so, unremarked by the subject, we place a pile of white paper and a pencil on a side table. We place cigarettes and matches on the windowsill. When we return in the evening, we find the subject asleep on the sofa. The light is on. He has evidently been smoking heavily. On the floor by the table lie papers covered in dense script. They are numbered. The first sheet bears the title 'Ghost Sonata'.

GHOST SONATA[35]

This is the X Gymnasium[36] in Berlin. Taking their places at desks alongside one another are the teachers – Professors and Doctors. Almost all are dead. They have come to hear what a former pupil, who was in their company for ten years, has to say about their school. They sit quietly on the benches, they're not a whit scared of the man who summoned them. They won't defend themselves. They always knew he'd never amount to much. The Summoner moves towards the rostrum. He's unsure of

[35] Allusion to Strindberg's 1908 play about unmasking and punishing the wicked, and summoning the dead.

[36] Döblin attended the Köllnisches Gymnasium from 1891 (when he was 13) until gaining his Abitur in 1900.

himself. He wants to sit at a desk, as usual. The teachers nudge one another, a few smile ironically. Then the Summoner pulls himself together, stops for a moment at the front row as if pondering, in fact he's overcoming an inhibition. Now he stands on the podium, blackboard behind him. There's a long silence, during which many things sort themselves out within the Summoner. An uncomfortably long pause before he opens his mouth. The teachers below regard him as they would a guilty pupil.

The Summoner begins to name the teachers one by one. He speaks softly, doesn't look up from the desktop. He's wearing big glasses with enormously thick rimless lenses, his eyes are behind them. Now and then he removes the glasses; the teachers take fright and look away. He has big grey-blue eyes, deep-set, that gaze into a void. His face is suddenly unfamiliar, metaphysically alien, and yet remarkably penetrating, a map in which you can't find your way. The teachers are relieved when he picks the glasses up from the desk. He speaks.

– I've invited you here, gentlemen, my teachers who all know me. And I thank you for accepting the invitation. I thank especially those who are no longer with us, the so-called Living. I knew in advance you would come. I knew that professional curiosity would help you through the rigours of your long journey. I thought to myself, gentlemen – my teachers – that one shouldn't speak unilaterally into the world. I want to speak out, but you must be present when I do so. I do not speak in order to unburden my heart. My conversation is to be a settling of accounts with you.

I spent ten years in the school where you taught. From the Sexta up to the Abitur. It was a long time. I leave open the question of whether it was a good time. It was not a good time. A difficult time. If I – permit me to speak frankly, you'll have your turn – if I may be quite frank, for me it was a decidedly difficult time. –

Now the Summoner falls silent, drums on the desktop, continues in a low voice.

– You will – this will make no impression on you. In fact it's my belief that already at the start I make a feeble impression on you, a sentimental one. I recall your history lessons, Professor Kerka.[37] You were a strict but good man. You lectured on Prussian history – that Frederick the Great was made great by his father's harshness.[38] Nietzsche said something similar: "What a man becomes, he becomes despite everything."[39] There's something in that. But I find (here the Summoner hesitates, and swallows and chews) that this was something … by which … you set rather great store.

Professor Schattmann (*generally known as Thickhead, a name he liked to apply to others; hesitantly*): May I ask: did you make something of yourself? What are you?

S[ummoner]: I'm a doctor, Professor. Apart from that, I write.

Schattmann: So you did in fact go to university.

[37] Pseudonym. Actual name was Zellmer. All the other teacher names are pseudonyms.

[38] The artistic Crown Prince clashed with his militaristic father, eventually making an escape attempt in 1730, for which he was brutally punished.

[39] Döblin's rendering of Pindar's aphorism, quoted frequently by Nietzsche: "Become that which you are."

S: Yes, I did.

Schattmann: Well then, I've no idea what you mean by 'difficult' and 'not difficult'. Surely you won't start whining about us. So what do you want. Some find it easy, others not. That's always the case. (*He sits, he has penetrating eyes. He is a good, honourable man*.)

S: That, actually, talking about it, knocking it about between us, is why I've invited you here. It's the question of how difficult it should be made for someone, and how to decide the dose. Life isn't easy, the school shouldn't overprotect, as many parents do. My home wasn't bad. It was small, crowded, we were good to one another. Especially my mother, she was a caring, truly loving mother. I say only the best of her, of all of them. At bottom, however – you grow up by yourself, after all. The school, too, should disregard this. This too the child should experience at school, later life will be no different. But – in one respect surely the school differs from later life, even I know this now: this disregarding occurs in outside life by chance, in school it has to be applied deliberately. In outside life I have the opportunity to withdraw from the general disregard and go in search of something, someone or several people who do not disregard me. But what can I do among all of you. Life isn't yet there for me – school could surely fill the role! Please don't misunderstand me, gentlemen, professors, I don't mean to insult anyone, but I just think: in a certain respect the teacher should be at the service of the pupil. In a quite general and crude sense, not pedagogic: the school should help the pupil.

Schattmann (*not looking up*): But damn it all, you made something of yourself.

S (*very softly*): I'm ... not ... sure.

Schattmann: What's that supposed to mean? **S** (*keeps silent*).

Schattmann: Doctor, I think you said? **Bräuel**[40] (*beside him, nods vigorously*.)

S (*remains silent a long while, then makes a move, clearly an abrupt turning back from something, speaks in an altered fresh tone that at first sounds convincing*): So, when I first started at the school, all went well with me. My first teacher in the Sexta was you, Professor Haffner. You had a serious eye problem, they'd had to remove one eye. I was first in your class, remained first up to the Quarta [third year]. I have fond memories of you, Professor. I suffered a little tale of woe under your care. You know nothing of it. It's perhaps not without interest to hear something private from a pupil. You know that in each classroom was a cupboard for storing all kinds of materials. As the first in class I was the key monitor. I wore it on a ribbon around my neck. One day – the key was gone. I'd lost it. The ribbon had somehow come undone. Well, it would have been easy enough to repair the damage. I could have reported it, I could have said something at home. I said nothing. The cupboard was, by good fortune, unlocked. I left it unlocked and made no report. I was in constant fear of something going missing from the cupboard, and I'd be guilty, and on top of that the fact of the lost key

[40] i.e. Maths teacher Dr Meder, largely responsible for Döblin's first failed attempt at the Abitur.

would be revealed. It was a tormenting strain, month after month. At home every penny was sacred, I had no way to come by money, the key apparently cost 1.5 Mark. I thought of saving, but months later had still put together only 30 pfennig. At night I dreamt of the key. I often imagined the scene where I would reveal the loss, and many times I made a start: I'd clutch at my throat, where's the key, the ribbon's come undone, I had it just now. And the apartment would be searched, and a rock would have rolled from my heart. A dozen times I walked home with the firm intention: today I'll tell them. I held back until promotion to the next class approached. Then I had to say it, and nothing bad at all resulted. My mother's only concern was whether it would harm me at school. She went at once to the school, it was afternoon, you were there, Professor. She told me afterwards, you were there and said Yes, it's true, the cupboard's unlocked. So the janitor was called, the lock was replaced, and – problem solved. It's strange how even as a child, I was thirteen at the time, life can be made difficult by thinking, through embarrassment, timidity. There were many oppressive moments that year. I know the fault lay with me. For you perhaps this is of no great interest. It's only a private experience.

Bräuel (*the Mathematician, very eager*): No, no, it's of great interest to us. It confirms what we thought of you. There were many occasions when you should have been more open. Even later you always lacked frankness.

S (*not smiling*): I know. I have seldom been open. But would it have been of any help to me in your case, Professor? Openness always requires two parties.

Bräuel: No. Never. For openness, one is enough.

S: You're right. That would be me.

Bräuel: For sure.

S (*stares hard at him*): I – could not speak out. I could not. And – why did you not make the first move, why did you not loosen my tongue?

Bräuel: Well now, this is better. We're meant to have some part in it. But it's not our job to cure character defects.

S (*twitches, his shoulders droop, he stands slack*): Thank you. (*After a pause*): So I came to the Quarta. From then on I went downhill. First I was a middling student, then just average, then I wavered between average and poor. I went to school, it was my duty. That's how I remained to the end, up to the terrors of the Abitur.

Bräuel (*broad figure, folds his hands, turns smugly to his neighbours left and right*): We're happy to confirm this. All of us, I think. You were a sad figure.

Buttler (*Old Butt [= flounder], an excellent man, Classical philologist*): My dear colleague, we should not venture there.

S: No, Professor Buttler, I would ask most cordially that you let Professor Bräuel speak, he was just getting wind in his sails. I was a sad figure. This was your opinion too, when some years ago you bumped into my friend Kurt the attorney, on the bridge

at Halensee.[41] We were both long out of school. You recognised him at once. He told you he was an attorney. How surprised you were! You said: "Well I never, something became of you after all. And you have a practice? So you're up to that!" Once there was the following incident between him and you, he tells it to this day: He had to come to the blackboard to make a mathematical calculation. He'd prepared well, for he knew how readily you'd give a boy one. But there he stands up front, this time you couldn't let loose on him, you sat there and watched. The exercise was done correctly but the boy was nervous, couldn't write well with chalk. So you could at least criticise his writing. "Poor handwriting is a sign of deficient love of truth." So he was allowed to return to his seat, the matter was all square. At Halensee you also asked about me in a friendly way. You couldn't grasp we were actually alive, were capable of existence.

Bräuel (*leans calmly back*): I believe you developed better out there than at school.

S: At school I had no understanding of Mathematics, and that holds even today.

Bräuel (*glances lazily about, gives the Summoner a friendly nod*): Out there you come across not so many clear minds. This is not unknown to us. In school we pay attention to logic and precision.

Buttler: But please, Mister Summoner, Doctor, please do continue! We really are very interested in your personal impressions and experiences. It's like on the stage: it's nice for once to watch the play from backstage. Let's talk about it. The story of the key in the Sexta was already most instructive. Oh, one must be careful with childish souls! But I always say: where's the time, where's the time! Correcting exercises, conferences, and one has one's own interests. And then the lesson plan, the syllabus – a pain.

S: You're very kind, Professor. You're as good as ever. Just now my little boat was – about to capsize. Private experiences and impressions. When I listen to our mathematical colleague, something occurs to me. An anxiety dream. I have those, like many people. So, I'm dreaming, Professor Buttler, I must be dreaming, I'm as old as I really am, thirty, forty, forty-five, and then for some reason, I don't know why, I must come here, to the school, and sit with the boys in class. I must sit beside them on the narrow bench. I know I've actually completed the Abitur, even completed university, I'm a doctor. But – I sit there, unhappy, I can't understand what this is, they hand me old books, from time to time I stand up so I can say I've already done the exam, and I've already been to university! But I have to sit down again, it's no use.

Bräuel: Not hard to explain. You're not yet finished. You have more to learn. There's something you must put right.

S (*eyes lighting up*): Wonderful, Professor! That you know this.

Other teachers (*a confusion of voices*): Nonsense! Demonology!

Bräuel (*turning to them*): The murderer returning to the scene of his crime. In my home town they tell other tales as well.

[41] Kurt Neimann (1877-1944 in Theresienstadt): fellow pupil of Döblin's up to 1899. Lawyer with musical talent.

Other teachers (*there's a rustling, a buzz of talk*): Demonology. No doubt you know best, dear colleague.

S: I dream about school as others dream about an accident! During the war many were traumatised by shocks, grenade explosions, falling bombs. In their dreams this situation kept recurring, made them anxious. Why? They weren't murderers. In dreams the person seeks to nail the situation that startled him. It's a reaction of the soul. It's traumatised because it was unable at the time to defend itself, because it was ambushed, surprised too violently, too suddenly. Now it conjures the situation up as a dream, tackles it anew, and gradually gains strength from it. The shock heals, a balance is restored between inner strength and external jolt. Just as a boxer learns to harden his stomach muscles against a dangerous blow. That – that's why I dream about school. You think I should mug up on the lessons? No, I have to overcome the whole school, this accident, the grenade explosion. It has been overcome. The dream does not recur. But it goes further. The result does not satisfy me. On my own behalf, and on behalf of others. I must now nail you, really and directly, gentlemen. We are on the same level. Your faces should be turned towards me. Now the question comes of the originator, the culprit, the one responsible for this grenade explosion!

Schattmann: Sir, Doctor, you know me, and you said you have no bad memories of me. Now gather your wits and think a single thought all the way through, a significant one. You speak with emotion, in a passion. Is this the place. Are we men? Express yourself as you wish, or don't express yourself, you can praise, you can rage, you can blame, you can go to your mother. Regrettably, I have no interest in your dreams. You learned something from us. You mastered the syllabus. To do so you had to undertake all kinds of tasks, and you did so. We are not a kindergarten. You stand on your own two feet. Now put an end to this business. You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, damn it.

PE teacher: He was always a weakling, a slacker.

History teacher: Be objective, that's Prussianism, Doctor.

S (*will not be interrupted*): But it so happens I have come to know the boundaries of this objectivity. The point is: how is one brought to objectivity, and whose objectivity? Whether I want this objectivity, or not? Whether it is alien to me, or comfortable. You say: achieve, achieve. I ask, I have always asked, even at school, without clearly knowing it: achieve for whom, what are these achievements for?

Schattmann (*hard*): That's not for you to ask. It's beyond your competence, and was beyond your competence as a pupil. Those who are older and wiser have thought it out for you. Your task was to achieve, and develop yourself according to the requirements. What you think as you do so doesn't matter.

S (*savagely*): Wrong! Achieve, even if I go to the dogs in the process! No one needs to think for me, or you thought against me or you thought wrongly. I never entered into your calculations. I want to unmask your wisdom. You wanted to make me, this

"I", into your thing, hide and hair. A thing. That's it. Bearer of your objectivity. But that was barbarism, not education. I was handed to you for an education, not sold.

Schattmann: Unclear statements. Piffle. Really, you need to go back to school.

S: Your whole system never listened to us. It was proud that it never listened. And so you never noticed what was happening. You never wanted to hear the word "I". I too don't give a damn for the "I". But there was one "I" that spoke to you. Just one. The state! What called itself "the state". And not just "I" but at once demanding "We" in the royal plural. We, that was the Hohenzollerns, the Hohenzollern state, to which I was to surrender my "I". Given there was such an enormous "I" there that swallowed everything, swallowed the school, swallowed the pupils and wanted to make everything one single cause – I don't say "no", I merely ask, and I have a natural right to ask, this I stress to you, gentlemen: who was this "I", what did this "I" want? I can look it in the face. I can size it up. And as concerns me: what did this "I" want with me? Tell me, Professor Schattmann, you who never posed this question!

Schattmann (*angrily*): Yes, sir. I did this. I am a civil servant. You seem not to know the state. I served it.

S: But I have never served it. Not I! Even today I serve no state. None can persuade me to it. Hölderlin, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche were already there under my school bench. They were my "I"! Already in the third year I was thinking and writing.[42] You volunteered for service to the state; nobody asked me or the other pupils. We were kids, pupils, commodities. You never even considered it needful to ask. We were mere nothings. – It's bitter for me to have to speak so. It's hard for me to speak expressly against you, Professor Schattmann. I'd like to bite off my tongue for having to do this.

Schattmann: You're ranting, sir. You're more our pupil than you want to admit. But I'd like to interrupt this unilaterally excited discussion for a moment to ask: what's the story here. Information has been brought to me: in the school, the school building, the entrance stairs, you spat on the floor. Intentionally. What the devil was that about? **S** (*lowers his eyes*).

Headmaster: I'd like to request clarification. This matter has only now come to my attention, and in the absence of satisfactory information I would prefer to abstain from any further comment.

S: I will say that I did this. I would only ask that you dispense with an explanation. I foresee that the moment will soon arrive. Then you'll understand.

Schattmann (*harshly, shouting*): There's nothing to understand!

S (*just as loud*): We are no longer at school, Professor. You will show patience until I come to speak of it. I shall answer when it suits me. Why are you grumbling? You have no power to slip away. You're dead. You are no longer my teachers, my superiors. At last I have outlived you. The world rolls on over you. Here you are, you will not

[42] 1893-94. The archive contains only fragments of writings before Döblin's first published story (1896).

move! We shall speak more about "I" and objectivity. And what sort of objectivity did you practise? Professor Bräuel, did you ever reflect on your Mathematics instruction? There sits an "I", a pooor uninterested "I", and you start up with greater or lesser scorn, over-estimating yourself, over-estimating your subject – oh, you were all of you Popes – you start up, hammering away at the "I", theorem after theorem, proof after proof, formula after formula. What were you drilling into this "I" unknown to you, uninteresting to you and yet alive: so many foreign bodies? To me they were foreign bodies. And for every foreign body a new aversion. You weren't a bad man, but your understanding of the human was exactly as much as a mathematician, as a pensionable civil servant is duty-bound to understand. A ridiculous thing overall, Mathematics at school. For most of no value, a diverting thought-game, a torment, because lacking any conception, any purpose, any connection with a life. This kind of abstraction should be forbidden, or shunted off to the Academies. Only this kind of Mathematics, actually, the Mathematics of today. Earlier it was a tremendous subject, the secrets of number, a religion. And how does a school day progress, an objective school day, in general? Now I have this lesson, and after the break it's another, all the same to me, and so the hours slip away, and at home there's homework deep into the evening – but one lesson is History, there's talk of Thermopylae and the Wars of Liberation[43] and we read about Tell and the wicked Gessler. "Yes, there's a limit to the despot's power" and "It is from Heaven we draw down our rights,"[44] mendacious words to arouse our enthusiasm. (*The Summoner controls himself, the corners of his mouth twitch*.) I don't give a fig for Wars of Liberation, for talk of foreign domination. What does that have to do with me. A soldier in red trousers goes down the street, has a bayonet, well now, that's aggravating. But foreign domination at home! Serfdom is no better when practised by a fellow countryman. Frenchmen in the school! There, I've said it. That's what you were. That's why I had just as little enthusiasm for your History lessons as for the other subjects.

The Unspeakable[45] (*stands. The Summoner does not name him*): That's quite true. You were a rebel. A recusant. The school failed with you.

S (*trembles when he sees the Unspeakable*): Now I'd really like to see that there are such things as exorcism, spells, sorcery. I had a patient who told me once that in his hand he had special rays, short rays, as soon as he says the spell, everything shatters to pieces. To think you still live. Though you are long dead, to think you are here still.

The Unspeakable: I'm one of your teachers. I know you hate me. It's a perfect delight to see a bad pupil again. He wants to flounce, a leading role. It's a failure.

S: When I issued the invitations I wasn't thinking of him. I'd never have completed the incantation. That's a life-shortener. I won't look at him.

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[43] 1813-14, against Napoleon.

[44] Approximate quotes from Schller's play *William Tell*.

[45] Gustav Weldig, Döblin's form master in the 7th year of Gymnasium. Döblin's classmate Moritz Goldstein called him "the only one of our teachers to whom I would ascribe a thoroughly bad, malicious character."

The Unspeakable: You must have thought we'd let you speak out, with a "Thank you very much."

S (*turns decisively to the window*): Professor Konrad, I see you, I'm glad to see you again. We had you for German in the upper classes. We read some Goethe, but Schiller above all, you know, the long philosophical poems. It's curious, Schiller seems to have written those poems expressly for school. I never heard later of anyone ever reading them. The Classics above all, gentlemen, the great storehouse, it's bad, sinks away from the people or fails to stir the people and at last remains like a rock – lying there in the school. Marvellous invention, German education. I shouldn't like to be a Classic. You used to read the poems out to us, Professor. You stood in front of the podium, one arm stretched behind you, your clothes were too loose. You were rather tall, jauntily slender. You always held your head bent back. You spoke of the True, the Good, the Beautiful. When you said it, it was authentic, not just sounding words. It was moving to watch you. When you recited a poem, Professor, believe me, this I retained, this attitude is imprinted in me. When I think of Schiller, and Idealism around 1800, I think of Professor Konrad, and then – Schiller is true. Schiller can rejoice, Professor. He was well served by you. If you see him up there, don't be afraid to talk to him, tell him what you've been hearing here. (S. *falls silent suddenly, gazes at the podium. He has noticed a sheen run over Prof. Konrad as if he's streaming with blood.*

S (*continues*): Later on one occasion, in the Prima [final year], we sang together in a big choir, outside near the Kroll opera house. The rehearsals were in [a secondary school in] Steglitzer Strasse. It was Berlioz' *Damnation of Faust*. It gave me enormous pleasure to see you there. It did me colossal good to have you sing along, two rows to the right of me, you the teacher, I the pupil. All at once I was ten times more ready to believe everything you said, and do the work you set. Once, to my even greater joy, I was present when you apologised to the conductor for having missed the previous rehearsal. You acted just like anyone else did and was obliged to do, of course with the refinement that you bore within you. I observed, quickly left the hall with the crowd. I was happy. I was still happy next day, and my benevolence extended to the entire school. (*General calm, a pause. The Summoner looks up again*): And what a pleasure your Greek was, Professor Buttler. I'm not sure, I think you died soon after I left school. Once you fell down on the podium, you were a little old man, spoke so drolly from the corner of your mouth, like a pipe-smoker. Ah, such things we still know, others are forgotten. You had a good feeling for everyone. Sometimes you tried to be strict but never succeeded, your warmth always showed through. Your lesson was always a kind of a break for us, we misbehaved, did work for other subjects, read books we'd brought along. Such fun when we had to recite what we'd learned by heart from Homer or Sophocles. We presented ourselves, the reciting started, with a prompter of course, you stood aside, then it couldn't go on, you said reluctantly, "All right, that's enough". Some of us said the same lines three or four times, and earned your praise.

Buttler (*smiling*): I know. (*His neighbours stare.*) Now my sins are revealed.

S: The Professor doesn't feel ashamed.

Buttler: No, not at all. I've grown accustomed to it, in Heaven.

S: Yes, we sometimes wondered if you hadn't noticed something. When we threw spitballs or stuck little notes to the back of your gown, you scolded but never made a big deal of it. You knew us. In April and May many never came from break to your class, sometimes half the class went missing. You would ask: "Excuse me, but where are the others?" Unanimous response: "Spring Festival, Professor." Then you'd send someone down to fetch them, they came very slowly and with beaming innocent faces told of the wonderful air, the beautiful weather. And then they sat down quietly. You see, Professor, this could never have been mentioned at a staff conference, you'd have had no way to defend it. But I assure you in the face of that learned conference: those were beneficial and pedagogically wonderful moments. Even when once you went down in person to fetch the truants back, and – stayed down there yourself. And then you said: "But we'd better make a start", and they came meekly up the stairs.

Buttler: I too loved May, you see, even in the little school yard.

S: Grey on grey the other lessons painted themselves, with you we burst into colour, warmth, fun, the world, and with that we too could bloom. You told us about yourself, and what sort of man your teacher Boeckh[46] had been. We drank it down like milk.

Mocking voice: Andante con moto.

Another: What do you think of this elegy? First the sugar, the whip comes later.

Another: He spends all his time on the premise, afraid to come to the consequent.

Squawking voice: What's all this drivel? Where were we with objectivity? Don't plead feelings as an excuse.

S: You've already heard the consequent. Bureaucrats, civil servants in the school tried to recruit me, make me their stooge. I declined. I rejected their idol-worship.

Schattmann: That's funny.

S: For me it was idol-worship. You were its agents, paid functionaries, nothing more, I saw through it. Not I alone. There were others in the school. They didn't make it as obvious as I did. Often I kept my head down, engaged in mimicry, but you saw through me. I was and remained "opposition". Without doing a thing I attracted from left and right your dislike, even your repugnance and hatred. "Nasty piece of work, bad element," the PE teacher often called me. You gentlemen had no need to guard your tongues: God had given to you a mouth and a bad mood; to us, ears and the motto: keep quiet! It seems I had something within me that aggravated you. You noticed that I and others too had more than ears. Contravening the divine order. It transmitted itself from one class to the next. Like a wanted poster.

Mocking voice: You should have been expelled.

[46] August Boeckh (1785-1867): philologist, founder of classical studies; professor in Berlin from 1811.

S: They'd have had to expel more than you would have liked. You had already retracted my fee-free status in the Tertia or Sekunda [middle-school years], I wasn't worthy, I was a bad pupil. You practised your benevolence on me in other ways. On my Middle School Certificate[47] you assigned a general conduct grade that made the certificate almost worthless. And then once I was sitting in the Sekunda,[48] almost 20 years old – one is no longer a child then, and I was still weighing down a school bench, endlessly, twice I had to repeat a class, Mathematics wouldn't let me through, - there in the Sekunda I was reading Schopenhauer, had the book under my bench. Suddenly there was an inspection. They found *The World as Will and Representation*, the Inspector said sternly and with contempt: "You would do better to occupy yourself with other matters." But I didn't. I was already writing all sorts of things that I concede you don't learn in Mathematics.

Bräuel (*smiles condescendingly*).

S: You think that was nothing? It was another thinking power of which clearly you still have no conception. Around the same time I was sitting there once, whispering, clearly in the wrong, with my neighbour. Then you, Professor Rudner, stood up on your podium, came calmly down the aisle, to me: ""You said something?" and gave me a loud smack in the face. And I – the rage is still in me – I did not hit back. Those were the methods of objectivity. And finally, to wrap this up, you'll be content now, gentlemen – I come to the spitting event. ***(S.** chews again, bites his lips, but he is not pale. He gazes blackly into the room from lowered brows. An unease seizes the teachers, they press back from the benches but, remarkably, stream towards the front.)*

Schattmann: Out with it. Speak, damn it. Tell us what happened.

S: My blood is cold. You can learn from me. It was the Abitur. Naturally I took the orals as well, there was nothing special about it, I wasn't a good pupil. The School Counsellor[49] came, the "Royal Commissar". I know his name still. We were all in formal dress. We wait in a classroom. But the exam doesn't begin and doesn't begin. The pre-conference with the Counsellor lasts a very long time. Then we're let in. And at once I was called up. The teachers were sitting at a table. In the middle seat was the School Counsellor. He was no better and no worse than the others sitting there. They'd told him about me. Probably he'd have let my achievements pass, they wouldn't have put him in a rage. He waved a familiar flag over me. It was shameful, unprecedented what I had to listen to. I was shouted at like a rogue, like the stupidest boy. Assailed. On account of my conduct. That I hadn't deserved to be admitted to the exam. The expression "moral immaturity" occurred a few times. This fellow, the School Counsellor, who'd never met me before, dared to say this. He knew, this lad knew, he had to stay silent. I kept asking myself as I stood there: but what was it I'd done? But once again I was being assailed, and quite openly, by the alienation, the

[47] Known as the 'Einjährigenzeugnis' as it qualified for a reduced one-year military service.

[48] Lower Sekunda: Easter 1896, Upper: Easter 1897.

[49] One Herr Vogel, the "Royal Provincial Counsellor for Schools", according to the certificate.

dislike that I already knew. He had to unleash his rage on me, had to give me a moral box on the ears, because he'd heard I was not of his state-concessioned kind. I had no need to master myself. I trembled physically. I was afraid of failing, of having to stay here longer. Then – I passed. When the School Counsellor read out the results it was with a hope and a stern warning to me to pull myself together out there and take to heart what the school had taught me. No, I did not take it to heart. I have never done so. I went down the stairs, and spat on the ground. There you have my answer. Even today I take a detour to avoid the school. Even today it disgusts me, this Bastille.

The Unspeakable: Thank God they weren't all like you.

S: Who said that?

The Unspeakable: You know who. Stop playing games. You're a writer, that makes you a hypocrite, but on us it has no effect.

S: Come up here. Gather round.

The Unspeakable: See him emerge from his little shell when he hears my voice. Here his bombast has no effect. Blusterer. Agitator. Let me through at him. He must look me in the eye.

S (*steps down from the podium*): The time of trembling is over. No more standing in silence. Of us two, one is living, the other dead.

The Unspeakable: You're the one who's dead.

Others (*laughing*): That's right!

S (*roaring*): Silence in the ranks! All of you. Sshades, mere ghosts, air, I can blow you away. Scraps of paper, fly's legs, dirt. If I hadn't summoned you, conjured you up, where would you be. You know why you keep silent when I ask: where do you all dwell? You dwell nowhere. You are present only in me, and in the many, many others whom you taught, no, drilled and tormented. Out of all of these I have summoned you here. God knows you haven't changed, you still have all your limbs. And you, Unspeakable, you were my teacher, you tiger-soul, you monster. You others, don't stand in line with that thing. Though you are shades like him, don't keep company with him. I don't call him by name, his poison must not be kept intact by naming him. The system ruins its functionaries. The system engenders evildoers, or favours them. Just as in the military it favoured slave-drivers and soldier suicides. There is the evildoer.

The Unspeakable: Yes, it's me. And there's the rebel.

S: Yes I was. But you won't wash it clean, Professor.

The Unspeakable: No need to keep on about it, I know it all already.

S: No doubt you found me tasty, for breakfast or on those mornings when the gall was flowing.

The Unspeakable: Yes, you served that purpose too.

S: You want to brand me as a rebel. But I have never been one. I am not a born insurgent. It's just that I've always lived in a world that is not the same as yours. I have and had my sense of duty, my rigour, my objectivity. It coexists with yours. I knew why my apparent slackness and apathy, directed only at you, annoyed you so. Behind Hölderlin, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche you sniffed something bad, dangerous. You said "rebellion" and "moral immaturity", but that was your "No" to my world.

Bräuel: Is that supposed to be a defence? It's a basis for the accusation.

S: Nothing is a basis for that! Not for this one whose name I shall not speak. Your devilry, sir, in the Sekunda I have almost entirely forgotten. From that time I have only the image, the statue, the podium and the man on it with the stabbing eyes. Finally I made it out, escaped your clutches. Then once you came after me.

The Unspeakable: As a substitute teacher, in the Prima.[50]

S: See how you remember.

The Unspeakable: Yes, I remember. It's fun going after a rascal, an insurgent.

S: You know me, gentlemen, and consider me an enemy of this person. But recently, for the first time, I spoke with someone else who was at school with me, a calm man in a respectable position. We discussed our schooldays. And look here: he came out without any prompting from me with the name of this unspeakable fellow! He said: If I ask myself whether there are evil people, evil by nature, cruel, I have to think of this fellow. Can never forget him. – In the Prima, when the Headmaster was ill, it went like this. He whose name I shall not speak knows it, but I'll tell you just the same. He came into the classroom, settled himself on the podium, and at first all went well. I had the misfortune to be sitting directly in front of him, in the first row. During the lesson I sat quietly, but my hands were active, I fiddled with my pencil. I wasn't nervous otherwise, the sight of him meant nothing to me, for who was he? I'd put him behind me – the substitute. But he knew better. You can make use of a substitution, even. Suddenly he'd had enough of my hands. I was 22 years old, what was his problem with my hands. So I kept them still. But as the lesson progressed they began fiddling again, picked up the pen, put it down. Then suddenly he said: "I already told you once, you should keep your hands still. Go and sit in the back row." I: "Maybe my hands are a little twitchy. I'm not doing it on purpose. And therefore I shall not go and sit in the back row." He: "You will gather your things and move to the back row." I: "This is my place. The Headmaster assigned it to me." (*The Summoner is not chewing and grinding now. He stands beside the podium. He is quite beside himself, his face is twisted in rage, his arm is raised.*)

S: He stood up and said: "You must obey. I am directing to that place."

The Unspeakable: That's what happened. You tried openly to kick against the pricks. But you couldn't put it past me.

[50] The 1899 yearbook notes that Weldig (the Unspeakable) took classes on behalf of headmaster Dr Meusel.

S: I did not gather my things. I remained standing. A remarkable sense of freedom was suddenly in me. I had no clear consciousness of what was happening or should be happening. But at such moments one does things that are very true, very pregnant, symbolic. Then – the bell rang for break. He picked up his books, went to the door, said: "Tomorrow you will sit in the place I have assigned you." I made no reply. My schoolmates spoke of it during the break. I maintained I would not take the seat of punishment. How could the man come to this – assigning me to the punishment seat because of unruly fingers, I'm in the senior class, 22 years old. They all agreed with me.

The Unspeakable: That I believe. Readily believe. You knew how to stir them up.

S: Next day – I succumbed. He stood in the doorway, didn't enter the classroom, called my name: So, you're still not seated in your place. – This is my place. – You must gather your things and sit at the back. – I shall complain to the Headmaster. – Yes, you can. Now you will sit in your place. – I remained silent for a moment. Twenty things at once passed through my mind. I was quite calm. I shan't ruin my Abitur. It was just like at the Abitur itself. But not a day longer in this Bastille. I shall not stay a moment longer than necessary. I folded. For the moment. My time will come. I picked up my briefcase. And sat at the back. As I stood at the back with my briefcase, before sitting down, you heard something else from me. I don't think you ever heard anything so clearly in all your time at the school. You'll recall what it was. I said: From the earlier class I know you've taken a dislike to me, and that, that alone, is the reason for this punishment seat. I sat there for just the one lesson, the Headmaster returned, I resumed my own seat. The headmaster at once informed himself of the situation, heard the general tone of disapproval, made some notes, and that was that. But it seems this incident brought upon me the "moral immaturity" at the Abitur.

The Unspeakable: I hope so.

S (*struggles with himself, sets one foot down from the podium*): That's enough. Gentlemen, my teachers: just listen to it. You cannot endorse this.

(*The shades throng about him, are very close. All that can be heard is isolated fragments: You didn't fit in with school discipline. There's a gasping, slurping among the shades. Step by step they approach. The Summoner recognises them*.)

S: If you want me as your enemy, then I am. Attention! Careful! High voltage!

(*The Summoner has leapt from the podium to the front row of benches. He holds his bare hands out against the shades. They snuffle at him. They are stretched thin. He rages, lashes about, at which they hiss more greedily and flow ever closer to him. Finally the Summoner stands in a thin loose cloud of mist, from which comes a rustling. He himself is smoking, smouldering. Three snake-bodies come lapping out of the smoke, snap around. Suddenly the smoke parts, red hot. The Summoner on the podium stands amid flames, laughing. He holds his glasses and – laughs and laughs!*)

S (*laughing*): The beaks! My beaks! I'm quarrelling with them! I'm having a conversation with them. Let goods and kindred go![51] Eternal peace to the departed! (*The shades, the mists gather by the two windows. Glass shatters under the heat. At once the teachers are outside.*)

S: Out! Pack of rascals, out! Motheaten bunch. Look here, a teacher's podium, the high court of judgement, my classroom. This is where I learned. Who here is still alive? Who or what? (*The benches smoulder, blaze, the teacher's desk first of all.*) Who is still alive? There was a king in Thule, he fell down from his stool.[52] Godspeed to the virtuous. Farewell, gentlemen, I too shall disappear, wish you all bon appétit. (*He goes through the burning door. Outside is pitch-black night, utterly silent. He goes down the steps through the hiss of burning; down in the entrance hall he burns a piece out of the floor.*) Where once spittle lay does not need always to be spittle. Even spittle is mortal. That was in our days of joy, and now is a time of bliss. We are not for letters tied with blue ribbon and locks of hair. Away with harm, into the dustbin. Now when I spit it's from pharyngitis. Receive now my blessing one and all, revered pillars, revered staircase, revered teachers senior and junior, rest in peace. We write 1928, we have a new Parliament and still no money, these are our troubles, our only troubles. Farewell, wink wink, Chaos has you, Chaos shall always have you, it's very nice in Chaos. And now the letter is addressed, stamped, sealed and posted. But better get going. They could have me for material damage. Quick, must pass my One-year…

Adding water to lye[53]

The Investigation Commission visited and spoke with the above-named / described on two subsequent occasions. Once on the morning after his unexpected incarceration. There we found him taciturn, sullen. Of course we did not bring the conversation around to the previous day's topics. But we were not uninterested to note that,staring at the table, head in his hands, he failed to ask even once what had become of his papers. Hence we avoided bothering him or provoking him to raise hostile questions.

Exactly one week later we convened again to continue the observation. We invited him to visit one of us, Dr P. the zoologist, who wrote to him that he had an unusually fine French cognac which he would like to sample in his company. He turned up, expansive again, and the conversation took many strange and weird turns, as sometimes happened with him. He began with the burlesque assertion that it was actually he who was investigating the Investigation Commission! There were four of us at Dr P.'s party. He had no prior acquaintance with us, had submitted to all our measurements and questions, never even asked why, what for, and now suddenly evinced a somewhat unwelcome interest in us. Our member R. suggested he was pulling our legs, perhaps hoping thereby to render unsafe the entirety of the above

[51] From Luther's hymn 'A Mighty Fortress is our God'.

[52] Parody of a poem by Goethe later incorporated in *Faust* (2759-82).

[53] Something one should never do, because of the violent exothermic reaction.

evidence. To us others he seemed good-humoured and in his own way benevolent towards us, even affectionate. We make no further report on this somewhat awkward part of the conversation / interview. He then began to whistle, and came straight out with it: "You stole my papers." R. at once returned them to him. Of course we had made copies. "Tell me, what did you actually want with them?" Whereupon Dr P. claimed (truthfully) to be a zoologist, and then (cheekily): he's interested in domestication phenomena, such as those the subject, for example, exhibited at school, and is at present experimenting how birds of passage, migratory birds, behave in artificially lowered temperatures and fields of magnetic force of different strengths. Anyone else might naturally have taken this response the wrong way. But *he* was delighted, interested in the methodology, and he wanted to know what Dr P. had learned from reading his papers.

But then he interrupted himself and launched at once into the topic of Slow Motion. The subject asked us one after the other about Slow Motion. Our guest then lectured us: Slow Motion is a very clever, philosophical and instructive thing, but is, on the other hand, a deception. And all reports, even his, are a kind of Slow Motion device. They pull together facts at random or stretch them out and extend them and by doing so there emerges not just a temporally shortened or lengthened image, but a false one. He argued: "Take the ocean. Go to the North Sea, how it storms, hurls waves. Take a dozen barrels down, fill them with water, and drag them back to dry land. Now you have some sea water. Now the shortening goes further. Bring the barrels to a chemical laboratory and start to vaporise the liquid masses or confine them in a vacuum chamber. You'll end up with a little bowlful of yellow-brown sludge. So that – is the sea. Add a few gallons of distilled water, and it will be chemically identical to the water you started with. But is the little bowl with the yellow gravy the sea? A myriad things are missing. The wind, the waves, the storm over them, foam, colours, seaweed, snails, fish in the water, the seagulls and sailing boats – I cannot dispense with these." And that was why we should have left his papers undisturbed; there was not that much to the report. When we expressed doubts, he refused to concede. Although the report was true, he said, it gave a totally false impression. It was false from A to Z – though it was true. What was missing was the ten years, which meant ten times spring, ten times summer, autumn, winter, and then ten times three hundred walks to school and back, ten years of growing up, ten years of domestic life. In other words, it was a laboratory extract, and if you were to pour those barrels of water on it, it still would not be the sea. What was written there was a boiled-down caustic solution.

Our Dr P. commented incautiously that it was an uncommonly astringent solution. Such an incautious remark – we tried at once to signal to our colleague. But our guest had already shrunk back. "You think so?" he asked, chewing his left index finger. He at once sank visibly into the same train of thought as his report. The anger his report breathes was made flesh in his strongly twitching facial muscles. He pushed his cognac glass aside, sipped slowly from his glass of Fachinger mineral water. But Dr P. could not be brought to his senses. It was precisely this remarkable gesture that interested

him, and again he fired away. This colleague of ours is a dangerous companion on such expeditions, he has in his blood too much of butterfly-pinning, we cannot use him in tricky matters. He would not let go: Your schooldays are already twenty-five years in the past, you work, have a practice, there's been the War, you have a family, God knows what experiences you've had. Has there as yet been no abreaction?

The subject: No pretty words! Abreaction. I initiate a reaction with the substance, then there's an abreaction. If I have poison in my stomach, they put a tube down and wash it out. A cute notion. Just right for the better class of girls' school. But it could be that acid burns leave scars. Can they be washed out? By "abreact" do you mean "forget"? Or stop making a big thing of it?

– No, certainly not. I was referring only your agitation. You are still, or seem still to be so caught up in it. Everything you say or write about it envelopes us in such a gloomy suffering feeling. We don't really know what you're plunging into. Maybe it's not school at all you actually mean, that you're actually talking about.

– What is it then, actually?

– I don't know. But I was intrigued by your story from the Sexta, the business with the key. Isn't it a little bit peculiar, don't you think so yourself? Being so tongue-tied? What actually are you keeping silent about?

At this point the subject's face is quite relaxed. He puts down the glass of water in his hand, and lifts his arm in a formal gesture, smiling a very strange smile: I am most grateful to you, sir, for what you have said. Now matters are on the right track. I have the poet's gift – of keeping silent! Born with it. You will seldom hear me utter the word "poet", but now you force me to say it. Before the singing there is always a silence. In me the silence lasted a long time, a dreadfully long time. Everything I said was askew, and wrong. Twisted. It was not "I".

But at school I gradually became "I". It is not given to people of my type to be friendly and nice in the normal way. We become so later, by detours. I was unable to speak because I could not accept superficial actions and feeble speech. I already knew another kind, with a different syntax and grammar. And how I later grew into this object, no, grew from its soil. The names that others gave to things I rejected, I was already on other natural, familiar terms with things. Just you try to prattle on then! I learned to do so later, and do you know how? When I began to realise that this easy prattle and these interests bore a closer and more extensive relation to the great matter in which I found myself so deeply and blindly rooted and which came from me as silence. And so I learned human speech through the back door, as it were. And now you know why I kept silent, and what it was, this silence. But: whoever sings must take his chances with the blows that silence and false speaking bring his way, Mister Zoologist. Anyway, I always knew this. In some respects the school experience was general experience, in others it was personal to me. I had to pay, pay doubled.

The subject takes a sip from his glass. For entire long years I never thought of these things, and when at last I did speak of them, with vehemence, you thought – even if I contradicted you – here with this fellow we have a complex, this is an aspect of his analysis. Well then. Fine. Whatever. That's how it stands with me, and because, I suppose, I can do nothing against your theory, I would ask your kind favour in allowing me to make an observation. This would also be in the interest of similar types you will encounter, and will perhaps help to clarify your concept of Art. My reminiscences angered me as one who had been mistreated. This I can get over quite well. Conscious remembering of an event with unquenchable anger: that's a natural thing, a healthy thing and also useful. But I must present you with a more exact concept of the "power of silence" of which I spoke and which actually provoked the mistreatment and also overcame it. I remember from my very early childhood that I would often not go out to play but was content to sit around at home. At nine and ten years old I preferred to read rather than play on roundabouts, and was never sulky about it, and no one rebuffed me. Pay attention to that last point! It was more comfortable to my way of being and totally fine with me. Without any tangible thought I was already as a small child occupied with myself, entertained by something that worked away calmly and benevolently in a kind of half-dark. You have the ready-made template: memories of the mother's breast, the maternal uterus, splashing about in delight and amniotic fluid. Blessed, oh blessed to be an embryo.[54] You should have everything that brings you enjoyment. All I want is my own joy. How, for example, does it happen that one holds fast to old blessed memories while another still plays on roundabouts? It must be something to do with the individual. It occurs to me, and I have made observations, that people are born different and grow up different. Even in the same milieu. One grows up bigger, another smaller, you can measure it directly. One takes more after the father, the other more after the mother, and the third maybe more after the grandfather. I've even heard that there's a theory of heredity. This all sounds embarrassingly banal, but even learned men shouldn't be afraid of it.

Now, there are two ways to hold an umbrella in the rain: the correct way, by the handle, and the wrong way, by the ferrule. If you hold it the wrong way, by the ferrule, you will stay dry for a while, until it overflows. Therefore it is recommended to hold the umbrella by the handle, as any superior umbrella establishment will be sure to tell you at the time of purchase. So much for theory. Now I – hold the umbrella at once by the handle. And I can say from my own observations, anyway without repulsing the mother's breast: there is the fact of a natural disposition. And the lived experience of such a disposition. That disposition being something like an eye, a finger, or the spleen, something compact, solid, that has a function. Such a thing fills one with pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, repletion. In a funny way it reveals its existence a long while before its "accomplishments", through such feelings. In some circumstances you are like a Raphael even in the absence of arms, of pictures. Such a feeling, such repletion I already had very strongly, very early – it was like an air bubble

[54] Parodic quote from the 1837 opera 'Tsar and Carpenter' ('Blessed oh blessed to be still a child.')

inside me. And so I had no real inclination to play roundabouts. Maybe I wouldn't have had the ability, but that never upset or disappointed me. All it did really was legitimise me. I never really wanted to, and because I didn't want to, the roundabout of course never turned. Good, so you will hold this thought: here was a disposition, a power. Not an inferiority, how ridiculous, and not the overcoming of an inferiority, more a pride, but not even that. Anyway, let's leave it there. –

The interlude was over. And there was no disturbance later when our disturber of the peace, Dr P., who comes from Baden, interjected that where he came from in southern Germany, the teachers had more to fear from the pupils than the other way around. The subject at once objected: Let no one come at him with southern Germany and set southern Germany against his northern Germany. He has no high regard for southern stolidity and so-called freedom. He was a Prussian. And he laughed: Here he is defending his school against southern Germany! All sorts of water is missing from his dehydrated report. Thus, apart from the four times ten seasons, for example, there are friendships, comradeships with one or another, in the upper classes enthusiasm for Wagner[55] and for Hugo Wolf,[56] and then finding our way back to Haydn and Mozart. And then, acquaintance with Dostoevsky, his Raskalnikov. In the Tertia, encounters with Heinrich von Kleist, *The Prince of Homburg*, and especially the fragment of *Guiskard*,[57] the *Penthesile*a.[58] Long months immersed in reading Schopenhauer, Hölderlin's poems year after year in my breast pocket. In the Prima or even earlier, the encounter with Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, which I read breathless and trembling. I wasn't so keen on *Zarathustra*, it struck me as overblown, artificial prophecy, and an impure genre as well, a mixture of art and philosophy, pseudo-art anyway, apart from a couple of genuine bits. It's philosophical Wagnerism. –

THE LIFE OF JACK THE BELLYRIPPER

SO WHEN Jack the Bellyripper had done the deed in the attic room that he rented for a shilling, and when at the conclusion of matters with his victim he found himself in possession of three shillings and a satin girdle, he pulled out from under the bed a sack he had positioned there ready, stuffed the victim into it – her name being Angela Kalb – and carried it by fits and starts down the stairs. On the way he encountered neighbours with wax tapers who said: Evening, Jack, where are you off to so late. He replied: I still have lots to do. Which filled them with horror, for they knew who he was and that in the sack he had another girl, or bits of her. But even though they knew it and no good rumours flew concerning his reputation and/or no good reputation

[55] Döblin later distanced himself from Wagner. He refers elsewhere to the "fascination of the Wagnerian artist with the grandiosity of the new image of the world, which is the image of a battlefield."

[56] Composer and critic (1860-1903) on the threshold of the modern.

[57] The fragment of Kleist's tragedy *Robert Guiskard, Duke of Normandy* written 1802-03, was first performed in Berlin in 1901.

[58] See 'Cannibals' above for several paragraphs on *Penthesilea*.

attached to rumours that flew about him, they dared not enquire who it was this time and what exactly it was of her he was hauling down. For they thought: Sweep your own doorstep, and, Who laughs last laughs longest. And so they greeted Jack the Bellyripper and wished him good night, hope all goes well for him and his children and his children's children. All they asked was that he close the street door firmly behind him, the neighbourhood being so unsafe and you never know what will happen. He promised, and hastened on, for he was frightened himself, though it's true nothing had ever happened to him, not even one of his victims, deposited quarter of an hour later under a willow, regaining consciousness. After each one of his innumerable deeds it gave him renewed satisfaction to ascertain this. Even married couples, whom he occasionally dealt with together and during the disposal of whom he for some unknown reason especially feared a return to life, remained lifeless and speechless under the willow and caused him no trouble. Jack was still a young man with a hearty laugh. God, how he could laugh.

But one time, when after the done deed he was in a nearby tavern eating goulash with gherkins preceded by oxtail soup all for sixty pfennig, his sack with its contents was stolen away from where he had placed it beside his chair. It was very cold at the time, and he needed to boost his strength for the unpleasant path to the willow. So he let loose a hellish row over the customers, that workshy bunch of thieves, the host took exception, an English bobby came in brandishing his truncheon and levelled all sorts of accusations against them. But the sack, as Jack had expected, turned up the very next day in the tavern with a cheeky note that outraged him: *Don't bring your dirty women to a respectable tavern, you. Do it at home, you bastard. K. R.* Then when he shook the sack out under the willow tree Jack saw other big bones alongside the bits of victim; the villain had added beef and horse bones. All I shall say is, this was a life-changing moment for Jack the Bellyripper. We know no one had ever found him out, and the person who was declared to be him and was thereby made totally unfit for employment was not him. He was insulted by the tricks they now played. He was teased left and right about his hobbies. He could be sure that when he had dealt in all stealth with a girlfriend, that same evening he would find a funeral wreath under the willow, or a lantern, and once even a fence around the tree with a sign: "Closed because of Overfill". He never caught anyone, but everywhere they were grinning. Even his neighbours treated him rudely. Where could he turn to. He was at the point of slitting his own gullet in vexation. But all he did was move to another district, where he set up a business in wrapping paper for confectionery, and cake-doilies. And so he became respectable in the usual sense, but he had no joy of it, none, never. He only had to revisit his old district on a Sunday to see the disdain they all had for him on account of his inclinations. People are so fickle in their favours. He experienced this in its full severity. He got married in order to overcome it. He promised his wife willingly, quite lovingly, to give up the old monkey business. He really wanted to, for he could no longer eat with knife and fork but only with a spoon, his nerves were so shot. But he never really swallowed the insults. He had, as they say, caught one right on the noggin from a rake-handle.

To cut a long story short: the woman took the man on at a hundred and twenty pounds – he had grown thin on soupy leavings. Half a year later he was over a hundred and fifty pounds. She brought him up to a hundred and ninety, not only because she cut up all his food for him, but because he became ever more lethargic. She took over his doily and wrapping paper business, and within a few years had her own little confectioner's shop with a regular clientele of lovebirds. She sat Jack at the till. He had kept his sworn promise to his wife, and for this she was grateful to him her whole life long. He sometimes worried, when he found himself growing ever fatter at the till, that she would one day do away with him in favour of a thinner replacement. For the shop was small, the space cramped, and new shops were hard to find in London, or very expensive, and where was the money to come from. Thin customers who entered the shop he regarded with gloomy suspicion, asking himself every time: "My successor?" But she said, when she guessed his thoughts: How would I drag you away afterwards? Jack, you're so thoughtless, me being up to light work only, what with my hernia. This made sense to Jack, and he was mollified. Loyally and to the best of her ability she helped him to bear his ancient troubles. She embraced him often, when the lovebirds were occupied in the back: You should have got to know me before, Jack. You could have made merry with that whole humpbacked crew. He sighed: Not so fast, Miss Cilly, then I'd have chopped you up as well, and what would be, would have been.

– A disappointed, aggrieved man our good Jack remained till the end. And he never went out to vote. He loved to offer advice from his perch at the till to young ladies of the clientele, gave them very pessimistic advice about their relationship situation, and was always proved right. At least this brought him a ha'p'orth of the recognition he needed so badly for his inner life. But he never messed with any of the girls, though several were curious to know how loving would work out with such a girth. He remained true to Cilly. For he was used to her, and she knew all about his diet. –

– I beg your pardon for letting the story run on so long. I really only wanted to tell you about a sack I filled, with lots of old dusty things inside, school from 1890 to 1900 and so on. And then Jack popped up, and the story ran away with me. Many apologies, please, I'll start again and pull myself together. So:

I filled a sack, and have shown what it contains. I carry several such sacks on my back. Should I unpack them all, one after the other, to sell rags, old boots, old clothes, bottles, paper? Chimney sweep! Sweeping today! Shutters closed! It is better to close the shutters. If I open a sack, many men come out, known and unknown, living and dead. If I open another, young girls come out. Lots of conversations come out, ones I started and ones that others started, also lots of conversations I never started and were never started with me. One sack contains achievements, another deeds left undone. One sack is full of superfluities and refuse. Empty it all out? Why? What for? I shall do so when it will amuse me to dream and play with you in my own fashion.

Now – I lie down on a hillside green as spring, all the clobber around me, I breathe and am alive. There's an island, in the South Seas I believe. At a precisely calculable hour on the evening of a particular day, a kind of worm appears in enormous masses.

The natives know the hour. The worm is edible. A whole flotilla sets out to catch the creatures. Where the creatures come from, and how to understand the punctuality, the sensitivity of their emergence, no one knows for sure. That's how life seems to me. My thoughts are like this. Whether they're edible I have no idea. But they must emerge calmly at their exact hour out of the sea, emerge ever anew, thoughts and plots. You won't find any detective in me, not least because I'm clever enough to know that one cannot see farther than five metres. And the truest things one knows without moving; so I can go on lying here peacefully on the hillside on my back. I grow – even as a human being, even with a mind, with my will – no differently than a tree. I'd love to have a full crop of apples hanging off me. Birds should nest in me. In winter I shall stand in snow, cockchafer grubs among my roots.

And all this even though I'm no different from you and you and you, you being an office worker, you a security guard in a department store, you an actor (I can't call anyone a "worker", they think I'm a bourgeois), I a little doctor in Berlin East who suffers from insomnia and never receives any presents. – And now farewell, kiddies, farewell everyone. I'll head off quietly in my socks. Say hello to your washerwoman for me. And don't snap at me if I've sometimes made you cross. I meant no harm. Everything passes. Look, I too am passing from the scene. –

ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE
from *Unser Dasein* (1933), Part 6[1]

He, a shop employee. Mid-thirties, calm, serious, travels a great deal. She pretty, chubby, feels a little unloved. Husband keeps a close eye on the wife, but isn't inclined to little adventures on the side. When he's back in Berlin for a while, he notices his wife is eager for company, and especially wants him to take her to his rowing club. There she and the husband soon make great friends with an older man. With surprising swiftness he's invited by the wife to visit them, all three are on familiar terms. At Easter the husband takes another trip. Afterwards the wife is changed, upset, tearful. Anonymous letters arrive, strange telephone calls to the husband, asking questions. Finally, after an outbreak of weeping, the wife explains. She'd already known that man for a long time, they were just good friends. Then at Easter she was unsettled by the absence of husband and love. The man became insistent. Afterwards she was horribly ashamed. Had already talked about it with a friend, who must have passed it on. And she (the wife) couldn't keep it to herself. The man is furious at first, comes at the wife with coarse expressions. Then he goes hunting for the man, who avoids him for two days, and then strolling with a trusted friend calmly swallows the husband's insults. In the end the husband forgives the wife. Both are now hostile to the wretched older man. But the husband finds it hard to recover from the episode. He becomes withdrawn, gloomy, torments the wife, clearly keeps a closer eye on her than before. At first she feigns 'sickness' in this dangerous period. The business of her infidelity ends in a stronger marriage in which the wife has the upper hand.

*

A very low-key tale. Again the hard-working, serious husband. He has no mind for pleasures, other than chess and cigarettes. When he's away from home for days at a time, for years he's demanded to know hour by hour exactly what his wife is doing. Calls her often. He's good to her, loves her, he's caring, watches over her. Debates about "the husband" and "the wife", about "marriage", theatrical pieces of that kind, are unappealing. She, very sweet, educated, has in the course of the marriage found everything closed off to her. They have a very small circle of acquaintances. Almost all actions and thoughts in this small childless marriage are stereotypical, sacrosanct. She reads a lot, has grown sardonic, always dresses elegantly. The wife values her wardrobe to an extraordinary degree, but doesn't stand out. Has withdrawn entirely into books and elegant dresses. Talking to her is a pleasure. She pays great attention to her body, powders herself, wears lipstick, and sits there with her brown shining eyes very refined and unapproachable, almost hostile, shy. – She's the husband's "sacrificial offering". She still enjoys life, through surrogates and behind the curtain.

*

[1] Published a few months after the Nazi takeover, this compendium ('Our Existence') of reflections on urbanised humanity and Nature met a predicable fate. The only one of Döblin's works *not* burned was *Wallenstein*, presumably under the mistaken impression that it glorified war.

Two fighters. He robust and she robust. No children. He an independent craftsman, late thirties, she mid-thirties. After a brief peaceful overture the marriage has hardened. He is brusque, often coarse; for she is his wife. From the start she's stood her ground, despises the husband, in the end he disgusts her. For weeks she spurns all conversation with him. He's slow-paced, likes the wife, drinks a lot, is jealous. She's embittered, never looks at anyone else. At last their marriage is hard as iron. The woman has repeatedly gone away, out of the house; he has made her economically subservient. She always wants to leave, but it's hard to find a place, and she doesn't want him to have the furniture. That's how they live, hit each other, make peace.

*

A couple married for love. During the war he discovered he had a talent for acting. From that moment the marriage "in principle" no longer suited him; it was, so to speak, no longer of the right class for him. He set himself up with love affairs. He secured a minor engagement at a small theatre. At the start of the marriage the wife had him in her pocket. Now, emancipated, he declares beaming: he feels free, feels really a man, masterful. In fact someone else has him in her pocket. She soon joins their household. The wife lives in one room, the husband and the emblem of his freedom in the other. The wife struggles for a living space. She, who still loves the husband, urges him to marry the other woman. But he declares he feels totally independent, as far as he's concerned he sets not the slightest value on marriage, at best he'll marry only if the emblem insists on it. When at last the wife is able to move out, she is broken. Even before this she had to support herself, since the husband's money was confiscated by the other woman.

*

Civil servant aged twenty-two, young intelligent face, very reflective mournful gaze, brown hair combed flat, in speech suave and courteous. He comes from an old family of civil servants in Westphalia. He married two years ago. For love. The girl, same age as him, had no money; his parents didn't entirely approve of the business, but they were so much in love. She too came from a good home, "regular people, at least", as he put it. Their marriage was at first untroubled. Then the wife fell ill with fever, and just at that time an official letter arrived: the wife was summoned to appear in court charged with a serious case of burglary. The husband was in utter shock, thought it must be a mistake, said nothing to the feverish girl about the summons, went himself to keep the appointment. There he learned it was a matter dating from before their engagement. She was accused of complicity in the theft, involving burglary, of a large quantity of linen. She was said to have kept watch on the street while the three men were "at work", and to have rented a room in a boarding house in the west to which the goods could be brought. The case was heard in the absence of the wife, and a severe penalty imposed. He discussed the case with his wife. She said she'd just been pushed forward by the men, whom she'd got to know at a café. It was another woman, lover of one of the men, she didn't want to expose her, she was away now over hill and dale. She wept dreadful tears about the wicked men, he consoled her, she was still ill.

A while later another letter arrived from the court. This time about the theft of a gold ring. He at once handed the summons to his wife. She declared in outrage: she'd had a girl friend to whom she'd confessed something bad. When the girl was unwell they'd gone into a jeweller's, the friend wanted to buy something for herself, but actually she'd tucked things away left right and centre and out of mischief had stuck a gold ring in her (the wife's) pocket. As soon as she found it she took it back the very next day, and was arrested, and they'd actually detained her for a while. – Now a new court date is hanging over them in the burglary case. The young man loves his wife. He's broken, doesn't know what should happen. He's sent his wife off to her relatives in the country; he complains: "She's well clear of the disaster." It would be terrible to think of the girl being convicted and his parents learning of the case. He paces anxiously back and forth, in a whirl of doubts, yearning, shame.

*

Qualified technician, big serious man, rather passive, big horn-rimmed glasses, flat face. He got to know a young girl, went with her, he liked her, but it never came to anything. He had to go to war. Meanwhile she married. When she'd been married two years he came back, looked her up. Now they became very close. The husband noticed their relationship, ascertained she'd been unfaithful, the marriage was dissolved. When the man returned from an installation job, he wanted to marry her. But now she runs off again – back to the husband! The technician had to be admitted to a sanatorium for nervous conditions. Meanwhile she lived with the divorced husband. The technician has already – so he says – completely cut off contact with her; but here she comes, again and again! She even visited him in the sanatorium! He loves her, is inconsolable. If only she would leave him alone, if only he could be free of her.

*

A young girl is frightened. Has no idea what to do. There's a choirmaster, almost fifty years old, a well preserved jolly man, going bald. Her sister got to know him, in her family. The choirmaster is going to be divorced by his wife on grounds of infidelity with this sister. Now he can't marry his lover because she's a sinner. One day the man asked the young girl if she wouldn't like to marry him; there were too many difficulties with the sister. She said: "Why not." He's such a nice, funny man. They often come along together, they deny themselves nothing, the banns are called. Only now does the first sinful sister find out! Appears again at the choirmaster's house, furious. After a few weeks the choirmaster deserts the young girl. He can't marry the one, isn't allowed to marry the other. Dangles – contented between them!

*

Jaunty young lady, boisterous, laughs, has a sly expression, often a false teasing tone. From a petit bourgeois background, she's been living loose in the city. Got to know a strong young boatman, lived with him. But he wouldn't marry her. His brother came to visit, a porter in a department store in another town, a very serious , calm chap, not like the other, and when he makes a second visit he proposes to her. She accepts, her

boatman-lover approves. A few months later she runs away from her husband and small-town life, knocks about in Berlin, goes back. She does this several times. The husband threatens to divorce her. But she doesn't want that. When the boatman appears, she loves him. The porter in turn "understands" her better.

No such thing as "Nature"

Love leads away from society. You can't turn love into something moral. In love many people, women especially, feel a release from shame. This is a distancing from the pressures of a particular society and morality. – Morever, there's no such thing as "Nature". It's just a different state of society.

A YEAR IN HOLLYWOOD
Letters 1940-41

For a year – 8 October 1940 to 7 October 1941 – Döblin was under contract to Hollywood's MGM studio as a writer. (His ID card labelled him Motion Picture Employee No. 42874.) He arrived in California after gruelling months fleeing with wife and teenage son from the war in France, in desperate uncertainty about exit permits, entry visas and funds for onward travel to the USA.[1] He spoke of his five years in California (1940-45) as his third exile, the first being his time in France (via Zurich) in 1933-40, the second his escape via Spain and Portugal.

With dozens of Germany's writers, musicians, scholars, and film and theatre people gathering in southern California, some film studios provided paid jobs, partly out of charity, partly on the off-chance that useful script ideas would emerge.

1. To Elvira &Arthur Rosin[2], 10.10.40 (Beverley Hills, address via Mrs Frank[3])

Dear Rosins, here we are in torrid California, having traversed the wastelands, deserts and mountainous regions you know so well. As planned we visited the Grand Canyon, and spent a day studying it closely. (I seldom join tour groups, I find them a torment, but the Canyon is of course quite extraordinary.) In Los Angeles, welcomed by Mrs Frank, [Charlotte] Dieterle[4] and A[Lexander] G[ranach][5], a bunch of very nice concerned people. We stayed first in a hotel, then in a 2 or 3 room apartment to give us time to search. The search is still in progress, and is the opposite of a pleasure. For Los Angeles is a region, not a city. Along the coast, and here and there, a few centres have been created with houses and little buildings, and between them 'in-between spaces'. As far as I can tell Los Angeles consists essentially of in-between spaces. In some gaps you find oil wells, in others wooded hills with lots of villas, sometimes all you see are just dumping-grounds. Wherever you want to go you have to pass through these places. It's always as far as from Berlin to Prenzlau or Frankfurt an der Oder. The species 'pedestrian' has therefore died out, or been exterminated. People come into the world as a driver. The city (I'm not joking) is empty of people; all you see are villas, little houses (without the slightest aesthetic charm – oh, what was New York!) and

[1] See *Destiny's Journey*.

[2] The Rosins– connoisseurs of art and literature – were old friends from the 1920s. He was a banker. They emigrated in 1934 to Rome, then in 1936 to New York. A great support to AD during his stay in the USA.

[3] Elizabeth (Liesl) Frank (1903-79): key figure on the Emergency Rescue Committee that helped several exiles arrive (and survive) in the USA. Née Pallenberg; daughter of operetta star Fritzi Massari; married the writer Bruno Frank; they conducted lively salons in Munich, and after fleeing in 1933, in Sanary-sur-Mer, where several exiled writers gathered pre-war. In USA 1937-1945.

[4] Charlotte Dieterle (1896-1968): actress and scriptwriter. Active on the Emergency Rescue Committee.

[5] Alexander Granach (1890-1945): actor on stage and screen; appeared in *Die Liebe vom Zigeuner stammt* ['Love comes from the Gypsy'](1920), then in Murnau's *Nosferatu (*1921*),* Arthur Robison's *Schatten – Eine nächtliche Halluzination* ['Shadows – a night-time hallucination'](1923) und Jessner's *Erdgeist ['Earth Spirit']* (1923). Exiled from 1933, he performed in Yiddish theatre in Poland and USSR, emigrated to the USA in 1938. In Hollywood he appeared with Greta Garbo in *Ninotchka*, in Fritz Lang's *Hangmen also Die*, and on Broadway in *A Bell for Adano*. His German accent often had him typecast in Nazi villain roles.

cars big and small, parked and moving. People are found in drug stores, little houses and shops. The women prefer to wear beach pants. In short, why keep quiet about it, Los Angeles is the opposite of a place I'd seek out as somewhere to live; for I simply love strolling among crowds of people, to observe them and get my money's worth. But it's not for fun I'm in this region they proclaim a paradise.

I saw the Pacific as well, the ocean, the other one. Well, it occurred to me, I've come far in my life; I thought I would stay cocooned in the Brandenburg marchland, and now I have to, or am allowed to, get to grips with the various oceans. I'm curious about the Red Sea, which blooms before me: could I make a pilgrimage through it dry-shod, like our forefathers?

Yesterday evening around ten the ground here seemed to sense my scepticism; there was an earthquake , my bed shook, the house made cracking noises. I didn't allow this rude behaviour to change my mind; it soon stopped.

I've already made a start at Metro Goldw[yn] May[er], together with Herr Kurt Götz[6] (Lessing-th[eater] Berlin) and Wilhelm Thiele[7] (the 'Filling Station'). The aim is to cook up a 'funny' bit of nonsense. I'll write more about this writer-factory next time. Several dozen of us sit, each in his office, where he broods; you are seized with terror when you walk such corridors and listen: so many writers in there, on a weekly wage.

Once we have an apartment, Etienne[8] will go to school. Already we speak fluent German and French, and await English with patience.

Adieu for today, I am devoted to you both.

Your DDöblin

2. To the Rosins, Hollywood 27/10/1940

Dear Rosins,

my wife has written on the new Royal machine. I, being conservative, write with a pen, as in May. The hot season here is over, we've entered the rainy season, and should really, like good Indians, betake ourselves to our winter huts higher up. But we let it rain on us. Every day it rains for 24 hours, and if there were 25 hours in the day it would rain for 25, and no doubt it will now and then. You can imagine how healthy

[6] Kurt Götz (1888-1960): Swiss/German actor/writer. Went to Hollywood in 1939 to study film-making, and was stranded by the war. Rejected a five-year contract from MGM following his success with the Garbo vehicle *The Woman with Two Faces*, on the grounds he'd seen enough of how it was done. He and his wife bought a chicken farm, becoming famous for their double-yoked eggs. In 1946 he returned to Switzerland and directed several well-received 'screwball comedies'. Often compared to G B Shaw (a distant relation) and Oscar Wilde.

[7] Wilhelm Thiele (1890-1975): Austrian-American film director and scriptwriter. Pioneer of the German talkie /musical film with the 1930 *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* ['The Three from the Filling Station']. In Hollywood, directed *The Jungle Princess* (Dorothy Lamour, Ray Milland, Akim Tamiroff), and two Tarzan films.

[8] Etienne: AD's youngest son Stefan (born December 1926), who accompanied AD and his wife on their arduous escape from Europe in 1940.

the climate is. Polgar[9] has arrived here and had to take to his bed on the first day with lumbago; Bruno Frank[10] had to go to a spa for his rheumatism, and as soon as he came back the pains started up again.

The city, I mean Hollywood, I am getting to know better only in the immediate neighbourhood near our house, which is not far from Hollywood Boulevard. On that street you occasionally come across people, all of them of course continually avoiding cars. (The other streets of Los Angeles, as I wrote before, are empty and only there for driving through; there are also filling stations, and building plots for sale.) In Hollywood there are some very elegant businesses, all with narrow fronts and a great depth. And it's astonishing: on the streets you meet so few people, but in the shops there are some, they try on shoes, they sit in the drugstores and eat. Although everyone has shoes they are always buying more. In the bookshops you seldom see anyone; I've only ever seen employees busying themselves with the accounts; clearly they're tallying the still unsold stock and the size of the profits that are not coming in, so they can share the latter out among themselves. The ladies, as a matter of principle, even when it's raining, wear long trousers under the raincoat, decorated with flowers etc. The trousers are often of silk, sometimes of artificial silk, and sometimes I think the ladies themselves are made of artificial silk. But they brighten up the street.

There's really no way to tell where Hollywood ends, but it's always starting up again. A quarter of an hour to left or right of us the desert begins, and just now you took the elevator in a skyscraper.

Georg Fröschel[11] was telling me yesterday (in Berlin he was an editor with Ullstein, now he too is a *writer* at MGM) that two weeks ago a friend of his drove on a Sunday excursion out of the city, after an hour and a half he (and his wife) suffered a breakdown, they were stuck in burning sand, they walked and walked, it was truly a desert, they were half dead with sunstroke when they were found six hours later.

Yesterday the *yewish-german club* put on a welcome evening for me in a church, Granach and Leo Reuß[12] read from my books, L[eopold] Jeßner[13] gave a welcome speech, finally I said a few words. Organ music before and after. Strange. Even the

[9] Alfred Polgar (1873-1955): Austrian writer, critic and translator, key figure in the Vienna Modern. He translated Ferenc Molnar's Hungarian play *Liliom*, the precursor of *Carousel,* and staged its first successful production in Vienna in 1913. He landed in Hollywood after a gruelling journey similar to AD's.

[10] Bruno Frank (1887-1945): popular author, now forgotten, husband of Liesl Frank. In California 1937-45.

[11] Georg Fröschel (1891-1979): Austrian writer, scriptwriter, Oscar winner. Invited by Louis B Mayer to recommend three German-Jewish refugee writers, he secured one year contracts at $100 a week for Walter Mehring, Döblin, and Alfred Polgar. He headed the team scripting *Mrs Miniver*; Döblin's Dunkirk scene made it to the final cut. But since Döblin had already left MGM, he was not one of those awarded the Oscar in 1942 for best screenplay (Fröschel, James Hilton, Arthur Wimperis, Claudine West).

[12] Leo Reuß (1891-1946, in USA known as Lionel Royce): actor, had supporting roles in dozens of films. In mid-1930s Austria he could obtain theatre work only by pretending to be an unschooled Tyrolean peasant, in which guise he was a great success before being unmasked.

[13] Leopold Jeßner (1878-1945): innovative theatre and film producer in 1920s Germany. To USA in 1937, where he became a script editor for MGM.

Rabbi was there, a Hamburger with a long beard and little twinkling eyes. And suddenly a cousin from Berlin greeted me, whom I'd never seen in 40 years in Berlin! That's who he said he was, anyway, and he should know.

How goes it with you, dear Rosins? New York's so far away, it's dreadful, we're outside the world here. New York was the second emigration, Los Angeles is the third. I'd love to hear from you soon, I'm doing all kinds of work, about which more next time!

Cordially, Your DDöblin.

3. To Arthur Rosin, November 1940

[greeting missing] In 4 weeks or so the depiction of my experiences in France ('Robinson in France'[14]) will be ready, a little book; probably the last. You know I have the MS of the big second volume of the '1918' book[15] lying around; I set great store by it, the development of the themes remains valid, I think, in these times. All that's lacking, as ever, is a publisher. As for Hollywood, at the moment I'm 'working' from home and only seldom drive out to MGM. I'm supposed to give my *Producer* outlines of some of my books; I've just finished *Mountains Oceans Giants*; what do you say, dear Herr Rosin, what material for a film would that be – the de-icing of Greenland and the Cretaceous upon us![16] The *Producer* (who speaks French) was very interested in my oral sketches. I'll make an outline of *The Blue Jaguar*[17] next.

That's all. I'm learning English, slowly but surely; I already read the newspaper whenever possible. I'll tell you more about Hollywood next time; there are any number of famous people here whom I never knew in Berlin.

Cordial greetings to your dear wife!

In friendship, your DDöblin

4. To the Rosins, 4/12/1940. 1842 Cherokee Avenue, Hollywood CA.

Dear Rosins, first, an explanation for the yellow paper. It's royal 'MGM' paper and lies in an enormous packet in the drawer of my desk here. 'Here' means in an *office* building at MGM in Culver City, where I now spend my days – or if I'm honest, my idleness. Like the others. I hoped we could go on as before, working from home, for I felt more comfortable there. But suddenly the overlords assigned Polgar and me to an existing team that's been working for six weeks to turn the book *Mrs Miniver*, by Struther, into a film (more precisely, into *box office*), and I was given an *office*. So here

[14] 'Robinson': see Note 1 above.

[15] 1918: eventually published as the three-part/four volume *November 1918: eine deutsche Revolution* (*November 1918: a German Revolution*), translated by John E Woods.

[16] *Mountains*…: The core of AD's 1924 dystopia is the melting of the Greenland icecap (after Iceland is destroyed for its volcanic energy), and the unforeseen resurgence of Cretaceous monsters that ravage Europe. The cinematic special effects of the time might have struggled!

[17] *The Blue*…: second volume of Döblin's South American epic trilogy *Amazonas*.

we are, a team of six, plus the *Producer*. I've read the book, it's a *best seller* just now, and actually an interesting and occasionally lovely work, not a novel but a series of sketches that appeared in *The Times*, London conditions, London family idyll before the war and its transformation by the war. Mrs Miniver is a fine fictional invention, I thought we should make something of her, a kind of female Chaplin, but no.

Of the six, two are actual English writers[18] Georg Fröschel is the link between the German and the English speaking team members (he was formerly an editor with Ullstein, a Viennese). I have to turn up around 10 and sit around until 5 or even 6 in my *office* (make an *acte de présence*). So – I write for myself, learn English. When someone has an idea he makes an animated phone call, has a lively discussion until nothing is left of the idea, and calls that 'working'. (It's a puzzle where the millions are earned; I'll have to investigate.)

Dear Herr Rosin, I wrote at once to the agent you named to me; an answer is awaited. From Klaus[19] we have at last a more satisfactory letter, he is in Marseilles living in a furnished room, has acquired an electric cooker, is looking for a job, so far without success. Etienne, our Little Flag, now Master Stefan (pronounced 'Steven') has calmed down, and is growing enormously. My wife often has a difficult time with the boys, especially because of Wolfgang[20], her favourite; but she too is much calmer.

Dear Rosins, just a little report on our morale!

Your old DDöblin

PS: We have just received your friendly letter, with answers to my wife's queries. I knew that would be the case, but a mother never gives up! By the way, did you receive my little Confucius book[21] that I asked to be sent to you? The agent Harold Ober whom you named to me, dear Herr Rosin (40 E 49th Street) replied asking me for details: '*Have you anything to offer now which we could see?*' etc. I thought he might enquire about me to you or Schermann. Anyway, I'll write to him myself about my ideas. I'm still working on my 'Robinson in France'. Facts and thoughts: I really don't know what they'll make of it here, but I keep writing.

It's December, lovely weather, just starting to cool down and become a bit damper; apparently the rainy season is not far off. Wendriner was here on a *'lecture'* tour. He's a tourist in the history of German literature.

[18] Two… writers: actually three were both English and writers: Arthur Wimperis, James Hilton, Claudine West.

[19] Klaus (a.k.a. Claude), AD's 3rd son, born during an air raid in May 1917. Served two years in the French army, demobilised in July 1940.

[20] Wolfgang: AD's second son, born March 1915. A gifted mathematician, he (with Klaus) was conscripted into the French army, and killed during the German invasion. (Military service of the two sons was a condition of AD's acquiring French citizenship.)

[21] Confucius: Döblin compiled and introduced a selection of *The Living Thoughts of Confucius* (Cassell 1942).

5. To Hermann Kesten[22], Hollywood 11/12/1940

Dear Kesten, well, what's new in the world? I've just read in the *Aufbau*[23] that I'm working on a *musical*. But that's been overtaken: I'm now the occupant, together with Polgar, of an *office* (i.e. each of us has his *office*), and every day from 10 we have to be on duty (exactly like L[eonhard] Frank, Heinr[ich] Mann[24] etc). The work day ends officially at 5, but I leave at 4. We do nothing. Absolutely nothing. Supposedly we're working on something together, but so far that's just a rumour. We deal with our correspondence, make telephone calls, read the newspapers, write our own stuff – whatever one can do under house arrest. Why so? It's the way things are. Some are quite content with it. Some. Are you content? How are things with you and your wife? What are you writing? I hear it's very cold over there, here it's slowly starting to rain. Maybe a Deluge will develop, and engulf the film industry and its writers. Let's hear from you before long!

Cordial greetings to you both, from your DDöblin

6. To Hermann Kesten, Hollywood 7/1/1941

Dear Herr Kesten, many thanks for your letter and for forwarding the telegram from Landshoff[25]. I am so glad that at last Landshoff – and I hope Landauer[26] too – will escape, and you'll be able to welcome him over there in New York in a few weeks. Interesting, his plans for publishing. There is really a dreadful vacuum to fill. And even if someone or other quickly brings out his work in English, it's after all still a translation, and the vacuum persists. It won't be easy to bring this so necessary activity, so greatly desired by us all, under one roof. Or does Landshoff envisage a mainly English-language publishing house, with translations of German authors? Maybe, as an experiment, in parallel with the German original? That would be a lame solution, and probably wouldn't succeed. Anyway it's great that someone who has already taken so much trouble over the crisis of emigrant literature will soon be at it again. It's essential to round up all the writers under one firm; the *whole* must not be lost sight of.

I'm toiling away on my own stuff, my main task at MGM is to draw the weekly paycheck. Write as soon as you can to tell me what our acquaintances are doing,

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[22] Hermann Kesten (1900-1996): leading figure in the 1920s 'New Objectivity' literary movement. Close friend of Döblin, like him fled Germany in 1933, in 1940 arrived in the USA and was very active in the Emergency Rescue Committee.

[23] *Aufbau*: German-Jewish monthly published in New York from 1934 to 2004. An important source of information and contact for the many German speaking refugees.

[24] Heinrich Mann (1871-1950): older brother of Thomas. Like Döblin was in exile from 1933 in France, in 1940 made his arduous way to USA where he lived until his death. In 1940-41 had a one-year contract with Warner Bros; thereafter depended on friends and relatives. [https://archives.usc.edu/repositories/3/resources/207]

[25] Fritz Landshoff (1901-1988): his Querido Verlag in Amsterdam published virtually all the well-known émigré German writers. Escaped to USA via England and Mexico, set up a publishing house in New York.

[26] Walter Landauer (1902-44): colleague of Kesten and Landshoff in the Kiepenheuer Verlag. Died in-Belsen.

Schwarzschild[27] in particular? Brecht[28]wrote to say he has a Mexican visa, maybe things are looking up. Cordial greetings, to your wife as well.

DDöblin

7. To the Rosins, Hollywood 9/1/1941

Dear Rosins, my wife has left me little space for writing, I'll write with more soon. Here we have entered a slightly cooler period, it's the not quite fully developed rainy season. From the newspapers we slowly gather generally more pleasant things: the African wedge that signals the end of Mussolini, and America's attitude, a good start to the year. I am determined this year – in contrast to the last – to experience outstanding things of a political nature! I think you'll join in!

MGM still makes only very tentative use of me. It's tolerable; I can keep myself busy.

Kesten reports a telegram from Landshoff in London: he'll soon set up his stall in New York. Shame that we're so far apart on this continent!

Devoted to you both, your DDöblin

8. To Peter Döblin[29], Hollywood 4/2/1941

Dear Petrus,

so you have our new address again (from 7 Feb on): 901 Genesee Street (Hollywood Calif.) Our telephone number is not yet fixed. It's Mamma's birthday on 13 February, don't forget! The day before yesterday we received news (via Princeton) from the Red Cross regarding Wolf: he's not on the lists they have at present, but those lists are not complete. Anyway, the letter wasn't particularly encouraging for Mama, for it's a long time from early June to December; but of course everything is possible. I'll write more to you next time, because I'm going to make independent enquiries without your mother's knowledge, and I'll let you know the result. But I'll write to you again about this, and you must not tell your mother.

Otherwise all is going well, very hot here, on 4 February! (From Klaus still the problem with the money that never arrives, at the moment not less than 110 dollars are on their way to him and he receives nothing! At least he has Syngalowski[30] etc.)

All the best, cordially, Your D.

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[27] Leopold Schwarzschild (1891-1950): editor, sociologist. Founded emigré journal *Das neue Tage-Buch* in 1934. With Döblin and others formed the Free Press and Literature League in 1937, in reaction to Moscow show trials and to oppose totalitarian tendencies Left and Right. In USA 1940-49, arriving on same ship as Döblin.

[28] Bert Brecht (1898-1956): playwright, producer. In USA 1941-47, unable to find work or stage productions, monitored by FBI, questioned by HUAC.

[29] Peter: Döblin's eldest son, born October 1912. He worked as a book designer in New Jersey.

[30] Syngalowski: probably Aron Syngalowski (1890-1956), leading figure in the Jewish ORT movement ('Society for Handicrafts and Agricultural Work'), active in many countries, including France until 1942.

9. To the Rosins. 901 Genesee Ave, Hollywood (Calif.), March 1941

Dear Rosins, please excuse the dreadful yellow paper, but it's what MGM places in our *office*. (I find it's the paper that puts you off paper.) I must now tell you a little of how it goes here. First: we had a telegram from Klaus in Marseilles yesterday: he 's secured *Passport* and *Visa de sortie*! Now for passage and transit; he relies for these on Herr Schwartz[31] of the '*Joint'* in Lisbon. So we hope to see the youngster reaching Lisbon at least. This was a great joy, especially for my wife, as you can understand.

We were away from Hollywood for 8 days on the Mexican border (Nogales in Arizona, 20 hours drive, a real trial). There we obtained our '*immigration'*. It was, or is, horribly expensive (c. 200 dollars and more for each person), of course not for the official but for lawyers etc. (Please don't speak of this; we're grateful that it just went well.) We still owe you 75 – what must you think of us? We had hoped to set aside half of the 100 dollars [i.e. weekly wage], but instead we only receive 70 (around 20 tax deduction, 10 to the agent) and it's astonishing how little remains in the bank however little we buy.

Another topic: Landshoff was in Nogales as well, for the same purpose, we met together here, he's travelling back today. My 'France' book is with Bermann[32]; they want to bring it out in German, Landshoff says; as for English, I'll sort that out myself. Yes, it's a shame nothing came of the translation of *Land without Death* with Lippincott; I thank you most cordially, Herr Rosin, for all your efforts! For the moment I have only my contract as a means of support; after that, God will help too.

For all of us the next weeks will be tense with the coming German offensives. I am certain that England will hold fast. This year will bring the beginning of Hitler's downfall, and next year America's help will be fully there! We'll see the fellow laid out on the ground.

You sent such kind words regarding Wolf. Yes, it's hard to still hold out hope; but I've just heard at the studio that the son of a Baroness von Havatny, who works with us, is in the same situation, i.e. missing – and she learned through reliable personal contacts that he is alive and in Metz; he cannot give any sign of life! So, one possibility.

And how are you both? I would so much like to see you and talk with you! Frau Rosin was in Cuba? How do you feel, are you in good health?

With all best wishes, your Alfred Döblin

10. To the Rosins. Hollywood, 30/4/1941

Dear Rosins, we've just come into the hot season; it's deadly; I estimate about 30–32 C. How time flies! We've been here half a year already! The youngster is growing

[31] Dr Joseph Schwartz, Lisbon representative of the Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish-American charity. He engaged in illegal rescue and support activities in occupied Europe.

[32] Gottfried Bermann Fischer (1897-1995): publisher, set up an exile firm in Sweden, moved to USA in June 1940 and continued publishing.

enormously and we – grow not at all. When I look back on this half year, I've done all kinds of work; but I can't say yet whether anything will come of it. The *'storys'* that one writes for the film probably go mostly unread; there's a huge over-production of these, *au fond* hopeless for *outsider* like us. And my 'Robinson in France' – dear God: Bermann and Landshoff write me encouraging letters, but they have no publishing firm of their own, and two American firms who looked at it (Little Brown in Boston, and Harcourt Brace in New York) don't want it; they already have something from France. So, our eyes are all on the political developments; it's good that everyone is with Roosevelt, and Hitler's triumph stands on feet of clay. Aside from that everything else is trivial, I think.

Shame that we are so far away! Eternal summer freshness here, that isn't even fresh!

Cordially yours as ever, DDöblin

11. To the Rosins. 901 Genesee Ave, Hollywood (Calif.), 11/7/1941

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES

Dear Rosins, this is the first letter I have written on a machine, and in truth it's more than a letter, it's *un travail*. Here in my *Office* (which for the most part sits directly broiling under the sun) they've placed an enormous Remington, I look at it amazed, and now begin to play with it, and it's to be a letter to you – if I can manage it.

As you see I'm still with MGM, I have to be diligent, always be writing new *'storys'*, they flow to the inventory of the firm, are translated and wait for a *Producer* to pick them up. What I've learned: the *story* is the first thing, delivery is the second, and much harder. You have to understand how to 'sell' an idea. Sell means: suggest to one of the twenty producers of the firm that it has appeal. Very difficult for the son of my father. Along with that I belong to a *team*, which is turning James Hilton's *'Random Harvest'* into a film. Claudine West and Fröschel are on it too. It's a *bestseller*, a deeply untrue book, but exciting and sentimental; a man first loses his memory through *shell-shock* in the war, and back home in England leads a life as someone else under another name, and through another accident regains his memory, but meanwhile has no memory of the intervening period during which he was happily married! And what does God, i.e. James Hilton, do? He has the wife turn up as secretary to the hero, who of course fails to recognise her, fails so far to recognise her that he – marries her for the second time, and then separates from her because (in his subconscious) he really loves another , namely – the woman from the intervening period! The point that it's the same woman, now and in the intervening period, only becomes clear to him and to the reader on the very last page, with the very last word. But it's not too late, as long as it will and must be a *bestseller*. And I'm to keep an eye on the psychiatry, oh lord.

Otherwise: Peter has just been with us, we were so happy with such a good son, he's still hunting for a better paid job. Our Klaus is still in Marseille; now, when the travel funds are there, the earlier visas and affidavits are no longer valid, and he and my wife

here must go through the whole dreadful grind again. I'm now deeply sceptical, even Washington's agreement has to be secured again.

Strangely sunken life I lead here, have to lead. Streets without people, garden idylls, office; well, even this won't last forever. My contract will soon be up, and then everything will change. And it's all the war, and we can surely expect it to end. The war progresses slowly, but in its second phase now, a balance is forming, the third phase, i.e. the overpowering of Hitler, will be shorter than the first, and a rapid collapse is even possible. Anyway, we are just at the beginning of the second phase.

And how goes it with you, dear Frau Rosin and dear Herr Rosin? Such a shame, this long distance between us! What's happening in my American home town, New York? Are you well? And your children, young Keins, Frau Guttmann, the young Rosin in Virginia? For sure they're all developing like our Little Flag. Let me now close this letter. From the bottom of my heart, all the best. I squeeze your hands. Your

[signed] Alfred Döblin

12. To Hermann Kesten, Hollywood, 24/7/1941

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES

Dear Kesten, this is a typed letter, I'm practising, the machine sits in my office room, so I type and you will excuse the mistakes. You've taken yourself off to the countryside and don't feel happy there? You don't give details, so I don't know what you're doing there on the land, in the New York heat? Land is almost always a horror, to be borne only by nerves of iron. Neurologists always send their patients there, to freshen them up. And you work hard and have no money – well, anyone can have no money, you don't need to work extra for that, I think. For no money I wouldn't work very hard.

Dear Kesten, are you at least working at something proper and to your taste? Now I think of myself: I have to sit here in the *office* and exercise predation on my brain and invent *Storys*, may God have mercy. And the contract is not indefinite, and one has to deliver something. Stupid baloney, and I can't make it stupid enough. The gods here are a certain Reisch[33] and Fröschel is a bigwig too, and Franz Schultz[34]. (I hear nothing of Lustig[35]) All of us blunder around and can't compete with the gods. Otherwise I do no work. I did write my Robinson in France book, it's probably still with Bermann, but who's going to print it these days – even though it turned into a purely personal book. I don't believe one can serve both Mr Louis B Mayer and one's own work at the same time. *Voilá* slavery. It's not prostitution, for I am not present at this sort of fraudulent wordsmithery.

[33] Walter Reisch (1903-83): Austrian screenwriter and director. Under contract to MGM from 1937, he wrote scripts for all the major stars.

[34] Franz Schultz (1897-1971): screenwriter from Prague, where he mixed with Kafka, Werfel etc. In Hollywood from mid-1930s. American citizen from 1940; changed his name to Francis George Spencer.

[35] Jan Lustig (1902-79): Austrian screenwriter, arrived in Hollywood in 1940 and secured a contract with MGM. Scripted several successful films.

'Little hope', you write. Only Feuchtwanger[36] here declares hopes. He's an ultra-optimist. Confusing. When I said to him recently that I reject all dictatorships, those on the left no less than those on the right, he gave his opinion that I needn't worry, in a Left-Germany he and Heinrich Mann would decide what could be published and what not. So there's a hope for you, dear Kesten.

Sometimes I see Marcuse[37] here, he runs a popular Philosophy course Mondays, he's closing it down. When we recently celebrated H Mann's 70th birthday at Salka Viertel's[38], it was like the old days: Th. Mann rustled a piece of paper and congratulated from it; his brother then rustled a piece of paper and expressed printed thanks from it, we sat at dessert, around 20 men and women, and eavesdropped on each other about German literature. Also there were Feuchtw[anger], Werfel[39], Mehring, the Reinhardts[40], a few film people.

It looks like a very long war. I can't predict, will Stalin make another treaty with Hitler, nothing is impossible.

Tell me more about your work. I'd like to be in New York. F Lion[41] is in Nice, his friends the Jakobi were here recently.

Heartiest greetings to you and your wife!

Your [signed] Alfred Döblin

13. To Peter Döblin, Hollywood 14/9/1941

Dear Petrus, we received your letter and are glad that you are working hard on the 'Madonna'. You asked about my contract. It hasn't been renewed. And practically speaking I, along with a number of other *writer*, am out. But the result is not yet so final. People are making *démarches* on our behalf. Whether anything will come of it, *qui sait*? In any case we have the wherewithal to survive for the next few months. In any case we've given notice on the house and want to lower the monthly rent from 60 to 40 dollars. If the annual contract is no longer valid (and annual contracts are very rare) I might be able to, and hope to, secure one of the weekly contracts for special task. That's what I hope. But there's no reason to worry just yet.

[36] Lion Feuchtwanger (1884-1958): famous author (*Jew Suss*), criticised for self-censorship on Moscow show trials. In exile first at Sanary-sur-mer, fled to USA in 1940. Had a good income from royalties and film rights.

[37] Ludwig Marcuse (1894-1971): writer, philosopher. In USA from 1939, taught at USC in Los Angeles.

[38] Salka Viertel (1889-1978) = Salomea Steuermann, Austrian actress and screenwriter, mentor to Greta Garbo. Helped set up the 'European Film Fund' that enabled several refugees to come to the USA.

[39] Franz Werfel (1890-1945): best-selling author from Prague; in 1929 married Mahler's widow. In exile at Sanary-sur-mer, to USA in 1940 together with Heinrich and Golo Mann.

[40] Gottfried Reinhardt (1913-94): Austrian film producer/director. With MGM from 1932, worked on many successful films.

[41] Ferdinand Lion (1883-1968): Swiss journalist, edited exile journal *Mass und Wert*. Spent war in France.

Re Klaus, we had news from Washington that all has been resolved positively at that end, hence a *recommendation*. So a gleam of light. We've not heard from Klaus in quite a while.

Petrus, see to it that the MS of my France book comes back to me in due course. There's no hurry.

We are all well, my novel is being transcribed, (the volume has 800 pages). I haven't of course started on anything new. It's hot summer weather. I've read the very interesting Churchill speeches, and am starting on the other book.

Dear Peter, all the best, and let's hear from you soon!

Your Pappa!

14. To the Rosins 17/9/1941 LOEW'S INCORPORATED STUDIOS

Dear Rosins, I've been meaning to write to you for a week or so, and keep putting it off. It's a letter I wanted to write after a rather confused and quite agitated letter from Peter. But now I'll do it.

Peter writes that he spoke with you about his religious matters, which I know about, which even after discussions here in Hollywood have become stronger in him, - and in so doing he experienced a very bad reaction from you. You, dear Frau Rosin, spoke apparently – I don't know whether in relation to me, or to Peter – of "betrayal". After a very tense and not very long debate, writes Peter, he felt he was actually being "thrown out". What the rights and wrongs of it are – my old Peter being the reporter – I cannot exactly know. But let me in any case say a few things on the matter.

I am terribly sorry that Peter even broached the subject. It is wrong, it is unjust, and I have informed him of this in all clarity and with no possibility of misunderstanding, and he has told me he understands. Religion is a private matter; his relationship to certain things he would do best to keep to himself, even more so when revealing it to others, as in this case, leads to annoyance or misunderstandings.

I myself, it's true, have been occupied, through Kierkegaard, more strongly over 2–3 years with Christian mysticism and philosophy. You may have seen something of this in my book *Citizens and Soldiers 1918* (the Becker and Tauler characters); it comes more to the fore in the unpublished 2nd volume. It's nothing more than my (basically the general) endless conversation between "Ego" and "Nature". Insofar as this has been my constant line of thought, dear Frau Rosin, I'm sure you'll not speak of "betrayal".

Were I to appear in public behaving and speaking somehow or other like a Christian, especially now, that would be a "betrayal", namely of whathich I also am, of Jewishness. Am I doing that? Have I done that? Not as far as I know. This story of Peter saddens me, it's annoying, even dangerous, it torments me. I have always had the same attitude towards Jewishness, nothing has changed there: we are a people that finds itself being utterly dissolved and absorbed. The Jewish religion is a national religion. And as little

as we – you as well as I – feel ourselves still to be Jewish people, so little is the old Jewish religion suited to us, suitable for us. In fact, dear Rosins, we have never had occasion to talk to each other about religion as such. It never seemd to me that you were Jewishly "pious", in any event we never had cause to discuss it. – Why, I now ask myself in all seriousness, why are you two, to whom I am honestly so cordially devoted in friendship and who I personally love – and how many people does one have, especially now, with whom one can have such a relationship – why suddenly are you angry with me about a – fundamentally absolutely unchanged – line of thought?

If, which is not the case, I were today or tomorrow to become Catholic or Protestant, why should I not do so – as long as it remains "in my bosom". We now know that Bergson, publicly a Jew, was for years a Catholic, but he kept it to himself as a private matter and knew that revealing it at that time would be to stab his own people in the back. My connection to the Jewish people in recent years even became politically active – and I have appeared in public 1000 X as a Jew even though already in 1912 in Berlin, i.e. before the First War, I left the Jewish community and religion – you can find this printed in the "Jew[ish] Lexikon" etc. However – I did not hide away in a corner; because a battle was raging I was and remained a Jew. And so now – even if my reflections of a philosophical kind should urge me to become a Buddhist. – (Here in Hollywood many American Jews are followers of "Christian Science".)

Dear Rosins, what I've written is incomplete and maybe not clearly expressed. Actually I now believe that everything Peter wrote was misunderstood or exaggerated.

Allow me to add that otherwise we are living peacefully (probably my last weeks with MGM; they probably won't renew our contracts; Heinrich Mann is already dismissed).

I hope to hear good things from you soon! With the most cordial greetings,

your D Döblin

15. To the Rosins. 901 North Genesee Ave, Hollywood (Calif.), 10/10/1941

Dear Rosins, I must ask forgiveness for delaying so long my reply to such an attentive and delightful missive from you both. The reason is the simplest in the world: more exactly, two reasons. First, I've been working madly on a *story* I wanted to hand in, secondly a certain depression following my termination with MGM. My contract expired last week. It was simply not renewed. 'We are not issuing any more annual contracts.' That was all. Several gentlemen, including *producers*, spoke up for me, *sans effet*.

Ergo I am on the outside and 'at home'. I cannot say I am languishing in boredom, but I have a sense of being *en chômage* [unemployed]. (and in fact in two weeks I shall start to draw unemployment support for the first time in my life – about 15 dollars a week, for 20 weeks.) This situation, which we expected (though I hoped to avert it by working hard) apart from the inward unease has all kinds of outward consequences. For example, looking for a place to live. Naturally we can't keep the little house at 60

dollars a month; we must reduce to 40, maybe even less, 2 rooms. We have enough for a few months and must be absolutely certain to raise the amount we give Klaus. You can imagine that for me, here in a strange land where I count for nothing, where I have no spiritual credit and my earlier productions really have no chance, everything is difficult. For my wife too, who feels constant strain on account of the boys, (We had news from France: extensive enquiries were made about Wolf, including among his regimental comrades, his name appears on no lists, his regiment suffered '*sensibles pertes'* [substantial losses] during the retreat.)

Now I'm working through my big book about 1918, more than 500 pages have been transcribed. Bermann, who was here recently, (old Madame Fischer, 70 years old, has a manic-depressive condition, she lives here with her second daughter and their *baby*) took some of it away with him to look it over. I plan to enquire with Little Brown in Boston, who translate a lot. The book will be 800 pages printed.

Allow me to write another time, dear Frau Rosin, on religious and theoretical matters. My head is elsewhere at present.

My greetings, with all cordiality!

Your DDöblin

16. To Peter Döblin [Oct 1941]

Bonjour, dear Peter, nothing new here, except I am now at home and so to speak "working", i.e. dictating the second volume of my "1918" book which already has 600 typewritten pages and needs another 250 or so. Nobody will translate it, but I want to put the work, which still needs a month, behind me. We'll see what comes next. I have no clear idea what to do. For medicine I'm hindered by the language, and especially because I have no registration here. Sometimes I think of something "psychologic", that's allowed, psychotherapy or the like, but I'm not clear if I can or even should.

Petrus, Mamma has already written to you about the religion stuff and Rosins. So you'll finally let it drop. Of course you don't want to insult anyone. And one should watch one's every attitude and not be importunate. If people don't want to listen, just leave it, and this you should *absolutely* keep to yourself! It is *not a matter for conversation*! And now here's Bermann with it!

All the best, dear Petrus,

your D

17. To Elvira and Arthur Rosin, 5/11/1941

Dear Rosins, first, our new address: 1347 North Citrus Ave, Hollywood (Calif.)

Now we have, not a little house, but a "flat", au fond one of the board-walled little houses so common here, three apartments under one roof. We have a larger and a

smaller room; the larger sub-divided by a curtain, then kitchen and bathroom, all tiny, and unfurnished. But instead of 60 it costs us only 35 Dollars a month. The sour citron name is quite suited to the place, for what a bother it is to furnish it. Frau Dieterle and Frank, from the committees, congratulated us on choosing an unfurnished residence, and promised to support us (for finally, even if you're somewhat short for a few months, you can't do without furniture). But then they and others telephoned around the neighbourhood in order to find some old piece in a garage; the result was an old camp bed, lent to us for four weeks. The landlord at the flat gave us a couch from his garage, we only need one more – and tables and chairs. You may imagine the bitterness and embarrassment in the situation. My wife feels it more strongly than I, and it's a fundamentally different situation than last year in Toulouse. Today is Wednesday, we move in tomorrow and still have only the two pieces, but I think we can shop cheaply today for essentials in the second-hand stores, of which there are heaps here; we only need a few woollen blankets, some chairs, tables, and a stove. For it's war and exile, and we are determined to drain the cup to the dregs…

One ray of light is the unemployment support, to which I will become entitled in two weeks, after being dismissed by MGM. It will last for 20 weeks. Heinrich Mann (we are often together, and I have a good understanding of him, an excellent man, serious, kind, and personally not at all 'revolutionary') is still in his apartment, he went to the *employment office* for the first time, had to wait for hours, very impatient and downcast; he is over 70 years old.

Dear Herr Rosin, could you make enquiries for me about the "Guggenheim Foundation"? Frau Frank said submissions for this year had to be in by 15 October, and they had made a strong pitch for Ludwig Marcuse here. Could you pas son the address of the Foundation and the conditions, or do you perhaps already have some connection with someone on the committee? I would be hugely grateful if you could manage this – or any other step – for me.

The thick 2nd volume of my *November 1918* is now finished, not a bad book, but as of today's date I have still not found a single agent in America –

And how goes it with you? Good health! I squeeze your hands most cordially, both of you!

Alfred Döblin

ADDENDUM: Brecht reacts to Döblin's conversion[42]

Embarrassing Incident, by Bert Brecht

When one of my highest gods had his 10,000th birthday
I came with my friends and my pupils to celebrate him,
And they danced and sang before him and read out prepared words.
The mood was lively. The feast approached its end.
Now the celebrated God stepped onto the stage
that belonged to the artists
and declared in a loud voice
in front of my sweat-drenched friends and pupils
that he had just experienced a revelation and from now on
had become religious and with unseemly haste
and in a challenging manner placed a motheaten priest's hat on his head,
dropped indecently to his knees and shamelessly Intoned an insolent hymn
thereby injuring the irreligious sensibilities
of his audience, among whom were
young people.
For three days
I have not dared to meet the eyes
of my friends and pupils, I am so
embarrassed.

[42] Tr. CDG. Earlier Brecht had said: "I've learned more from Döblin than from anyone about the essence of the Epic. His epics, and even his theories about the Epic, have strongly influenced my playwriting. And his influence is detectable in English, American and Scandinavian dramas, which in turn have been influenced by mine."

LITERATURE

[Introductory notes to be added]

REMARKS ON THE NOVEL
Die neue Rundschau (March 1917)

THE EPIC, both the lower and the better, has been beset for some time by wreckers. I'll jump right in.

They don't keep their room tidy; excitement ruins the novel, writers give in and sit on a dry branch. Writers forget more and more that they should be producing epics, they crowd more and more around the Drama, around the tying and untying of conflicts in this or that direction, plays, tragedies, comedies. A wedge has been driven into the novel; for sure it doesn't come from the German, rather from the French: the obsession with condensing things together, point-blank problem-setting, an abstract rigour, reinforced beams, decisive downhill run to the conclusion. It appears to be a novelistic form – which does not exist and should not exist – let alone with blueprint, scaffolding, architecture.

Appearance, false pretence. They present plot, people and actions straight from the egg, better as few people as possible, and other people as shadows in the background, decorations, fillers, and then a little setting, scenery so far as necessary; it's all just accoutrements, everything is simplified to a slick, narrow, onrushing plot. The game is revealed at the start: we are to be deceived, we have a closet dramatist before us, we have a drama, narrated on paper. No new art form, no art form at all – what a proud word – but an incapacity and a plagiarism. The novel has nothing to do with plot. We know that at the beginning even the drama had nothing to do with plot, and it is doubtful if the drama did well to tie itself down like that. Simplifying, battering and trimming into shape is not the business of the epicist. In the novel it's a case of piling, heaping, turning, shoving; in the drama, today's drama, impoverished with its one-track plot: 'Onward!' Forward is never the watchword of the novel.

The simplification of the novel to that forward-moving single plot is connected with the growing incapacity of the public, so carefully nurtured. Time there is a-plenty, but they've been totally ruined by the newspaper. Impatience is the measure of all their affairs, excitement the A to Z of the book. An hour and a half of torture, they spit, the book has done its duty. What does not excite is boring; here is the unconcealed naïve shamelessness: show defects as advantages, and add demands to it. The film is stuck in the same groove as the newspaper. That's the whole debacle of the novel. The better authors should not let themselves be deceived. The public are insolent, and the publisher is of the public.

In the drama the great pathetic scene was once the centre and the main object. All the rest a to-and-fro, something like a plot through prologue, epilogue and all the "logues" in between. Then they must sniff around this and that hero, and in particular this and that heroine, bring them "closer to the human". Soon the centre of gravity shifted to the intellect, cosy understanding, neighbourly interests, the progress of the hero's life. Psychology battered down pathos. The broth is diluted with "development"

to make it tasty. The concept of plot has swallowed up everything that, by the grace of art, billows on the stage and in the novel.

And it's not enough for them to have shock, joy, laughter, inner balance. Let's see what happens: the poor public disappears from view. Now the second mask has fallen. You don't let yourself come too close, you hate the crude familiarity, you won't be operated on, you won't let them dig into your own defenceless entrails, whoever they might be, you have your gas mask, people want excitement. That's enough. Instead of prayers, words, instead of shock, spiritual preoccupations, instead of poetry, plot. All the rest is conceded, given away, is redundant.

It's already back to front to accept, and under this acceptance to work and read that Man is the object of the drama or the novel. Both have nothing to do with Man, or with the importance of an individual hero and his problems. Leave all that to the pedagogues, parsons, psychologists, psychiatrists: poeticised psychology is a nonsense. All we have, in colour or black and white, are happy, sad, deep, superficial events in a life: make of that what you will. But Man and his things are easily found, you just stay at home, problems and conflicts lie around on the floor, you only need a bit of construction: wham, you've slipped right around Poetry.

Better models are Homer and Cervantes, and Dante as well. Dostoevsky should not go unmentioned. They show how one moment is justified by another moment, how every second of our life is a complete reality, round, fulfilled. Every page says: "Here I stand, here I die." If a novel can't be cut like an earthworm into ten pieces, and every piece moves by itself, then it's worth nothing.

*

The hunchbacks in the chapel of Saint Remacle in de Coster's *Tyl Ulenspiegel* are epic writing. Ulenspiegel's japes and adventures were created at source. Of Dante's monstrous Hell we cannot speak, in detail or in general, only remain silent. Rogoshin in *The Idiot* of Dostoevsky, the scene with the banknotes in the oven, the statements of the maid and the young lady, the scoundrelly general's attempted theft: rooted firmly in the soil. What should be said of Don Quixote, the fight with the windmills, his fat companion? Odysseus fighting the suitors, his encounter with the swineherd, conversations among the gods of Olympus, the so-called descriptions of Ilium – whoever could make such descriptions – the armaments, ships, orders of battle, clashes. Show the "fast-moving plot" the door: it's Michelangelo's statues as candle-holders, functional objects.

*

Ten novellas don't make a novel. Nothing in a novel should grow into a novella; but there are connections, in spite of everything. One has to balance between the bunched arias of early opera, and Wagner's endless melodies.

*

The novel has a job asserting itself as a work of art; that's how the detailed novel-like newspaper report makes the apparently fluid transition to a novel. It's true. Life writes

superb novels; adding art is mostly superfluous. This closeness to everyday reportage discredits the novel, turns it for many into the lowest form of art. The epicist needn't be embarrassed by this, for he is said to despise art above all; he turns the apparent defects of his position to advantage: he stands closest to the lived life by virtue of his material: the word. He should keep art ten steps away from his body. Simple, narrative, representational speech is a gift of God, of which no one can rob him. Style should not overlay representation, not even as wet matting. Style is nothing but the hammer with which to work away most objectively at what is represented. It's already an error when style calls attention to itself.

*

Enormous, the material of the epicist. In the epic you hardly notice this. The average narrator stays on the level of the writer, as a rule hasn't felt his way into life, and so lacks creative power. Without further ado he takes the man-woman relationship as the material available to him. The novel has of course as little to do with love as painting has with the woman or the man. This assertion renders the everyday novel totally sterile. There are bones, muscles, lungs, nerves as well as sex organs. The everyday novel will not recover until the basic principle breaks through: *mulier taceat*,[1] in English: an end to loving. The despised robber-novel, Karl May, pulp literature are better. They well up more strongly, broadly, and from stronger, richer and purer instincts.

[1] "Let your woman keep silence" (in church – 1 Corinthians 14:34.

THE EPICIST, HIS MATERIAL AND THE CRITICS
Die neue Merkur 5 (April 1921)

SUPPOSE YOU toil for months, years, over a book; live in its time, concentrate soul, imagination, mind, experience for several hundred pages, at last hand the book over: in Germany don't expect any echo! If all goes well, you are rewarded with – criticism.

Earlier – long long ago – epicists sat or stood before an audience: they spoke, they had an impact, they were alive. Thrust was met with counterthrust; you knew where you were; you saw, heard, felt those who were the reason for your presence. Cities have destroyed all that. You sit with your sheet of paper and start scribbling; the scratch of the pen is a delight. Humanity in the mass has no cohesion, only motion; that people speak a common language is a mere formality. Peoples have grown into huge conglomerates in which, among other diseases, Industry rages, the unleashed spirit of invention, all-absorbing, under no one's control – it has led the intertwined nations of Europe to the ideals of the sprung mattress and toothpaste. In these huge human conglomerates, it is not only individual voices that go unheard, even small circles are swallowed by the giant whirlpool, and so anyone with something to say sits before a dead sheet of paper, surrounded by dead walls, and going among people the best he can hope to meet is – this or that person who has "read" him, who "rates" him, maybe rates him "to an extraordinary degree", rates him more than so and so –

But the worst thing about the public is the mass of critics. They are not even the public. Just as a hedonist demeans the mysteries of love, these demean the book with their eyes and hands. I've always found this thing called a critic a mere mischief-maker. The only justified "criticism", in my view, comes from a loving or a combative heart: thrust, annihilate; or comfort, revere: that's all. Art appreciation is frivolity, is a mockery of what the toiler has achieved or striven to achieve. But the mass of critics knows neither love nor hate, only *metier*, and the indecent concept: "Art".

And I can deflect the justification for "criticism" only thus: that the toiling masses also know only *metier*. Cellar air and spider's webs belong together.

A rather recent custom, and hardly just a custom any more, is to propound critiques, judgements about works of art, as incidental and supplementary quasi-illustrations and examples for the point of view or theoretical postulate of some critic or other. If the opus in question is an important one, then this treatment corresponds not to the intrinsic worth of the work, but only to simplistic theorising; and editors of periodicals for the promotion of literature and the safeguarding of art have a duty to keep this critical habit in check. Authors endure outrageous treatment from the daily press. Important and essential books are either silenced to death, or served up as part of a slapdash global fricassee. Added to this is the unholy alliance between even the most major newspapers and one or other publisher, whose propaganda commandeers much or even most of the available critical space. That leaves the few big serious journals. I ask the editors and publishers of these journals: what is more important,

more supportive of literature and life: the theory, the postulate, the aesthetic fancy of a speculative brain; or the toil of those who may have spent years applying their best instincts and most intense moments to several hundred pages. Are our books objects for aesthetic speculation, or can criticism not learn something from our books? And, from another angle, our books are fragments of a lived life, and should be treated only with attentiveness and the strictest discretion.

In recent decades a particular trait has gained hold among the critics, in parallel it seems to me with the stagnation of certain kinds of art: these gentlemen lose all sense of the proper boundaries of their task, make themselves out to be, or feel themselves to be, creative artists, little different from those they write about. And they do not write *about* the artists at all, but toil away on their own account; the work of art is to them like any other material for thinking, for stimulus. This new genre, when it succeeds, is very interesting and justified. But in general it does not succeed, and meanwhile actual criticism still stands there as an autonomous profession and – is orphaned! Those who feel productive in this sort of thing should not be stopped from playing around with it; but, in opposition to such Dionysian criticism, authors reserve the right to shrug the shoulders and say: what has this to do with me.

Some person X or Y is known to me perhaps as a fine mind; I think perhaps he belongs to that group which is occasionally productive in the new genre. But after I have laboured for years on a book and the printed volumes lie there before me: what has X or Y to do with me? And who is the object of X or Y's attention?

Some have said of a book of mine, the novel *Wallenstein*: Let those old historical chestnuts lie; especially now: for when a much bloodier war has just ended and enormous consequences are playing out in our own backyards, what is the point of the Thirty Years War three centuries ago. When Flaubert published his *Salammbô*, the Parisians, who revered *Madame Bovary*, sneered at this raving compendium of archaeology. My position in regard to the stuff of *Wallenstein* is different from Flaubert's in relation to *Salammbô*. Saint-Beuve wrote three extensive articles about *Salammbô* (three, three articles, extensive – we are in France, not in the Germany of Dionysian superficiality); Flaubert, in an exercise of anti-criticism, defended himself against supposed inaccuracies regarding say the Temple of Tanit: "I am convinced that I have reconstructed it exactly as it was... In all probability and according to my impressions I believe I have made something that resembles Carthage." This he says, but then this too: "I laugh at archaeology! If colours clash, if details are dissonant, if customs do not follow from religion, or facts do not follow from passions as shaped by custom, and architecture as shaped by climate, if in a word no harmony is present, then I am guilty. Otherwise not." I cherish this, and it is still not enough.

When I wrote a "Chinese" novel, I made several visits to the Museum of Anthropology in Berlin, read a number of travelogues on China and accounts of Chinese customs: but how misleading is the term I use here: *read*: at the time I had no intention of busying myself with China, never even dreamt of travelling to China: I had a fundamental spiritual experience or mindset which I tended with the greatest care,

furnished it with everything it needed to work itself out. It seemed comical to me when one of the first thorough notices of the book came from a professional Sinologist, who – even found my main character authentic! So little did I engage with the real China as I absorbed and observed, that after the book was written you would have searched in vain in my memory for the most crucial facts about China or even the primary sources for my novel: these sources – historical, ethnological, geographical – were not taken in or viewed as facts, but within the framework of a surging psychic process, as its vehicle, conveyance, stimulus to activation – so that once the surge had spent itself there remained only a hazy memory of the milestones that the activation had raced past. At that time I went through so many books about China, but an hour after the *reading* you would have asked me in vain what was in the book: at that time I had more to do than busy myself with Chinese porcelain, the role of Lamaism, the woman question in China. Once I was done with the book I often thought I should follow up this or that topic that seemed so interesting; never did so; what had China to do with me (Lao-tse excepted), when I do not even know Europe. Let psychologists busy themselves with the remarkable phenomenon, which is not new in literature: that the landscapes, atmosphere, depictions of cities and people so often show a surprising similarity with provable sources. If Nature offers us a finger we have her by the whole hand: the author has a duty to guard against every laudatory or reproachful confrontation with the sources. You cannot build a person from the food he ingests, even though the food sustains him, indeed influences him.

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You ask: who cares about the Thirty Years War?

My opinion exactly. Once I too cared about it not at all. I have vague memories of it being mentioned at school, it was some time after Luther, I retained no more details; apparently it ended with the Peace of Westphalia; a bleak cheerless affair with many battles, many contending parties. I never even knew which contenders were fighting in any particular battle. But in 1916, when I was in Kissingen, in an item in the newspaper – I believe it was a notice for a Gustavus-Adolphus Festival – I suddenly came across a picture: Gustavus Adolphus setting out across the Baltic from Sweden with an endless fleet of ships. It surged around me, ships sailing across the grass-green sea; I saw them approaching through the trees as if through glass, the air was water. This compelling and totally incoherent picture stayed with me. It forced me, despite my distaste for the confusions of that time, to read some histories of the period. No, once again not *read*, and this is the crux of the matter: rather to ascertain what I actually wanted from them, and why this apparition, this dazzling vision of cogs and corvettes sailing across the sea would not leave me. I wanted to give tongue to this surging around me, this relentless motion; shapes thrust themselves forward. I *read* these books, and countless more later, as a flame *reads* the wood. I never caught sight of any *fact*; like a magnet my feeling swept over the pages and sucked up whatever belonged to it. Inclination to breathe life into an inert dead mass? Not a bit. My eyes never saw a dead mass, the Thirty Years War is as much a sealed book to me now as it

was twenty years ago. Empathy? I know nothing about that, but my feeling even now is the direct opposite: ecpathy. Empathy requires loving obeisance, an effort, and the urge to want to be fair (hence something that today's critics ought to have). But since I acquired no knowledge of the Thirty Years War, being hindered by my inward dazzlement and preoccupation with my part in this definitely very interesting event, how was I to arrive at empathy. Gloomily uncommunicative as I was then, I had not the slightest capacity for reading. I sought stimulation, to lose myself in stimulation. From the midwife who was trying to deliver me I tried to wrest the forceps that would assist the birth. I mean the documents, the books. They were not my topic.

Now, I must make one thing clear: much of what met my gaze in these books and documents seemed without further ado to be proper to my purpose – to be my property. You ask: so, you had decided to start writing? No, it was configured for me, I was lucky to find it, come upon it. Sometimes I sat there quite amazed and said to myself: it's all there, that's how it was, these events, this "historical" context. Until I said quite simply: how lovely that Nature has moved in the ways of my thoughts; so I don't have to go to any trouble. The centre was in me, here was the rim, all I had to do was draw the spokes: the wheel was ready to roll.

There is not much to be said about the centre because, as everyone knows, you can't look into the sun. And if you look through a piece of green glass it's no longer the sun but a supposition about the sun. The wheel rolled, driven by the loudly pulsating motor that was housed within me. The motor pushed on from turn to turn, ate up the road. In a work as expansive as an epic usually is, the author seems to himself to be a swimmer who jumps in telling himself: sink or swim.

Someone who makes great plans, sets goals, or too many goals piled together, is more likely to sink than one who takes the plunge calmly, confident in the strength of his arms and legs and his regular heartbeat. This – swimming and seeing how far you come – is first and foremost what is demanded by living production, not merely literary or more generally artistic production. You can see this with orators: they stand up holding two or three little notes and now everything develops from there; from this phrase another follows; an aside leads to a penetrating observation, the oratory is before us, with us, addressed to us. You must always pull yourself towards things and see what then jumps out from us; that's all you need, nothing more. A product arises from production: the phrase seems comical, but it is certain that, before the production, the product is at most only intuited. It is only during the process of producing that the powers of material, word, tone, concepts, associations, the human spirit first appear; absent these everything is vague, the battle cannot be fought, there is no result. Only during the production does the bull whose horns you intend to seize step forth; only then do you see whether you can in fact seize them. You live in the moment, die at some point from some banality: but it is in the to-and-fro of the moment that everything develops and *is*. Past productions and the past itself leave traces, and with these you travel, enriched, constrained, ossified, measurable, to new regions. If you know the traces you leave, you can even make plans, dispose of and

almost manage yourself as a person. But no disposition as a rule is ever very accurate, only putative and most of all –

Most of all, whoever makes a planful disposition of himself is at once impoverished and exhausted. Or intimidated. Whoever does not preserve wilfulness and freedom overestimates his planful intellect, binds himself to what is dead. It is the last refuge, this confidence in the source – when the plank onto which you have stepped breaks. When a snail is still young, you can break its shell; the contents do not necessarily die, they can produce a new shell.

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When all's said and done, what is it that endures – in life and in aesthetic production – other than the struggle against the clear rigidified course of the dead and the past – in favour of what is obscure, delicate, only just revealing itself, forever inhibited in its revealing – in favour of *moments*. You fight for the rights of *minutes*. The moment: that's me. I can set up a target, will always be caught out by things I'd never dreamed of. But in the end I don't say: I have been diverted. In the end I plead guilty to the diversion. A hard task, and this is not an aesthetics for everyone, and no folk religion.

But the core of my inward work on the book *Wallenstein* – to touch on this once again in passing – was, at the moment I gave this inward work enough room to play: Ferdinand. It's all about his soul. On this I could leave nothing unclear, felt him and the whole world that extended out from him with the utmost clarity, and only for his sake did I persevere with the book for all that long, long time. If I didn't succeed in making this core clear, if this sun sheds no light, then my book is just an objet d'art, and I can go and paint teacups. A sun only becomes a sun by having something to illuminate, by helping flowers grow, by making holes in the darkness, by enabling people to find joy and ruin beneath its rays.

This is the fundamental conception of the book: an emperor, a latent emperor, is held back by another earthly power, Maximilian of Bavaria; he suffers in this earthly plane, and is filled by another tellurian fellow – this the most potent of all potentates, Wallenstein – with the ultra-maximum of power, and projected beyond the earthly. Thus far the first volume: Ferdinand cannot ascend any higher through earthly means, the kingdom of the earth and its glory are not only in his possession, but he is bloated with possessing. There is nothing to be done. In him, then, follow all the consequences of the situation. He never loses the sense that all riches are in him and hence under him. This so takes hold that at the end he is paralysed – things happen of themselves. This is what must be felt through. The dismissal of Friedland [i.e. Wallenstein] at the Council of Regensburg only makes sense in this light: anyone who fails to see the Ferdinand of those days need read no farther; it's all just painted teacups. Ferdinand admits: wherever he may turn, he is in the right. From that moment on there is no more development in him, merely a percolation, a becoming-clearer, a differentiation of himself. Affairs assail him from this point on through a barely penetrable mist; he suffers a final blow in the circumstances surrounding Wallenstein's dismissal;

thereafter he comes to absolute certainty in his feelings, and the long drawn out dissolution of the empire, the kingdom of the earth and its glory, now becomes visible.

No, that is poorly expressed: *dissolution of the kingdom of the earth and its glory*. This smacks of saints, renunciation, flight to subterranean realms. It is not an ascetic flight to some god and the feet of some idol. In the end, and long before the end, Ferdinand is a man who no longer knows what good and evil are, who can no longer feel 'sin'. Ferdinand's way is this: come cleanly to the goal – ever and again frustrated, but in the end boundlessly certain: never to suffer constraining influences from this subjugated "world". How badly, how superficially German critics read can be seen in the fact that one of them stated that the emperor was, at the end, despairing. Tolstoy once said of critics: "They are mostly schooled, trained and educated writers whose capacity to be moved by art is quite crippled or lost." The only role I see for criticism is to grasp what is fertile and beautiful and convey it to others. But what if those through whom criticism works are themselves devoid of grasping organs? In the book I have been discussing, the man Ferdinand doesn't despair in the least. His beatitude shines through. He hasn't renounced the throne, but has surrendered it to himself. The throne was no longer of concern to him. The Emperor ends where he must end, in awe and joy.

The world around him, inexhaustible, goes on. I had no right to set the Emperor up against the world, like a Dante setting himself up against Hell. The Emperor is of the same flesh as anyone; we're dealing with human beings. I could present them otherwise, hang different names and masks on them: but I never wanted to forget what was imperial, Ferdinandish, in them. Even if only a distant gleam. So Ferdinand is not an isolated figure among a thousand other characters: he is no hero, he is in among them, as they are with him. I said: he is the sun; but plants and stones and chemical elements are also of the sun. No one can accuse me of failing to decide firmly for the "hero". I decided for him so firmly that the book is from first to last nothing but the song of a "hero".

REMARKS ON *MOUNTAINS OCEANS GIANTS*
Die neue Rundschau 35 (1924)

After my novel *Wallenstein*, in 1919-20 I was caught up vigorously in politics, continually, not least in writing; staked a position. With my *Linke Poot* (Left Paw). That was a different kind of style, of speaking; it was good that I gave it a distinct name. For Kant was not Kant when he was a Geography professor (which he also was). Then some messing about: a mediaeval drama came along (*The Nuns*). Meanwhile on a Baltic beach I had seen some stones, ordinary pebbles, that moved me. I took stones and sand home with me. Something was stirring in me, around me.

When at the war's end I brought *Wallenstein* back home from Alsace-Lorraine without a concluding chapter, I felt around, sought around in me how I should end it. Best not to at all, I sometimes thought. Then, at the beginning of 1919 in Berlin, I was profoundly affected by some blackened tree-trunks on the street. That's where he must go, I thought, the Emperor Ferdinand. What stirred me, the stream of feelings, a new spirit, at once seized on what it had found. Commandeered what another related transient vanishing spirit had left behind. How feeble, to stick the label "re-orientation" on this. We are terribly fouled up in our thinking, by our daily practical dealings with its clear challenges, by the need for quick decisions, by habit. Puzzling things are no longer a puzzle when repeated ten times over, without in the least being cleared up. Most discoveries and scientific thinking consist of grabbing chunks from the jaws of habit and showing their obscurity. I "re-oriented myself": it was merely the symptom of an inward process. When I saw the blackened tree-trunks and was affected by them, the consequence was a child stirring in its mother's womb.

Emperor Ferdinand had to go right away down that path. I laughed, but allowed him no grace period. I felt: this is a break. It's no longer *Wallenstein* but something new. But I ought to and must lead the Emperor to it, whatever his past. Even if he should only become lost in this new realm, and pass away. And what else should he do: even I couldn't find my feet there. But I had to give the book this wonderful full stop. Even today I'm glad I allowed no contradiction, rule, consequence to trouble me, but set down what I was able to, what I loved, and let it go from me.

The full stop wasn't the end of it. With me it's like this: some things start by entrancing me, but I can't pursue them systematically. They slip away. I don't know where they go to, but if they're important they come back again and again, and that's the way I "pursue" these things. It's a kind of acid test that things undergo. If they don't come back they're deleted and were as nothing.

Amid all the politics I spent some months in 1920 – I don't know how it happened – occupied with biology, which I hadn't bothered with for years, and then with all sorts of natural science stuff. I sniffed about here and there. Took notes on ants and the curious way they construct their fungus gardens, then stuff from astronomy and geology. I had no idea where it was leading. A remark in a historical record about the

Abbess Judith of Kemnade took me off for several months in a quite different direction[1]. But the stones from the Baltic moved me. For the first time, really for the first time I hesitated, no, was reluctant, to return to Berlin, to that city of buildings, machines, masses of humanity, which otherwise I clung, clung fast to. I had a desire to stay longer in free Nature and let these things, for once, play around me.

Since childhood I have been a townie, a big-city dweller; at the age of fifteen, on a country outing, I saw my first cherry tree. To me it seemed ridiculous, romantic enthusiasm, vapid time-wasting to bother myself with the countryside. Prussian discipline, facts, sobriety, diligence: these were instilled in me at the Gymnasium in Berlin. I still remember my almost breathless joy when the first cables for Berlin's electric trams were being strung, and the mockery of my schoolmates when I went a half-dozen times to the Kroll Opera, not to a show but to stand by the basement entrance and gaze at a machine whose purpose I didn't know but which held me enthralled. Until recently I had something against Nature, I often said so and even wrote it. Even today I'm repelled by the search for aesthetically beautiful landscapes. It's pathetic to look at a bank of clouds and see nothing but nice shadows. The world is not there for gawping. Young ladies are not the measure of all things.

Then, as I have said, after the War it came over me. It began with the inconsequential full stop that concluded *Wallenstein*. Stones from the Arendsee[2]. It had me. The ascetic of the Prussian school receded. Or redeployed. Tears flowed, the Earth fetched me. I set down some essays on Nature: "Water", "Nature and her souls", "Buddha and Nature". Wanted to make a little book of them, but didn't, couldn't. The maxim of these ideas was "I – am – not".

I experienced Nature as a secret. Physics as the surface, begging for explanations. I noticed I was not the only one lacking an attitude towards Nature, the World Being; there were many others. Puzzled, I now viewed textbooks, for which I once had respect, quite differently. I sought and found nothing. They knew nothing of the secret. Every day I saw, I experienced Nature as the World Being, meaning: weight, colour, light, dark, its countless materials, as a cornucopia of processes that quietly mingled and criss-crossed. It happened that I would sit over my coffee and be unable to find my way to what was happening there: the white sugar grains vanished in the brown liquid, dissolved. Now how was that possible: "dissolve"? What was something flowing, fluid, hot doing to the solid to make it give way, snuggle up? I know I often became frightened, physically frightened, giddy in the face of these things – and sometimes, I confess, even now I feel uneasy.

For some months the pressure of these things was so strong that I deliberately turned away from them. I had to. I had to write something to be rid of them. Something different, quite different. Resolutely I set to. Best would be something epic.

[1] Döblin's play *The Nuns of Kemnade*, written in mid-1921, was performed in Leipzig in April 1923.

[2] Large lake in Saxony-Anhalt.

I could throw myself into that most easily, it would carry me far away. – What happened was strange.

Critics had reproached me for always painting some grand historical canvas. So they were challenging my imagination. This annoyed me. This time I would steer well clear of history. And anyway I'd just put behind me my Abbess Judith from the Middle Ages. I wanted something of the present time. Something pointed, active, to counter the "happening" of Nature. Me against my Nothing. And nothing could be more epic, more in motion, than: drive the present time out beyond itself. Nothing could be done with the present as such: I'm no Zola or Balzac. I needed an empty space, beyond the present. Thus, the future. That would be the most fertile field for activity and phantasy. When I found it I was glad.

I sent out a couple of feelers. The first part I wrote was the voyage of the Negro Mutumbo, later incorporated in the Greenland section. Here someone is crossing the sea, burning holes in it, has a magic cloak, the sea has to put a stop to it. Then came a plan for a huge expedition, at first I didn't know where to. But I didn't want to take off to the stars, this would be an adventure on the Earth, wrestling with the Earth. So: these people, nothing more than a kind of bacteria on the Earth's skin, become over-mighty from brains and cleverness. They take up the proud imperious struggle with the Earth. Soon, at the end of 1921, I had my goal: Greenland: icy waste, the volcanoes of Iceland trained on it. I had an image of glowing ovens: volcanoes as ovens, equipped with huge chimneys, heat-conveyors, heat-channels, reaching across the sea to Greenland. The volcanoes massively reshaped, the Earth loosened in its depths.

At the end of 1921 I felt my way, borne along by an idea that gladdened me with its scale, its boundlessness, it made me proud and cocky like a rider racing his horse across the steppe. I felt my way over the terrain: Atlantic Ocean, Iceland, Greenland. In the National Library, City Library I devoured atlases, geography books, specialist maps, wandered through the Museum of Oceanography, Museum of Natural History. Meanwhile the background was becoming clearer. I pinned it down in the big clothbound notebook in which I sketched plans for my novels: "The big city. Development of its industry and technology. It's prodigious, more prodigious than Nature. First there were kings. Song of the knights. History of this Earth. Wars. Science. Then came the workers. The big city: Berlin. What lived there. Struggle of Nature with Technology. Erotic types. How finally a volcano is opened up. Or how buildings are left empty. They won't let buildings rule over them. Alienation of people from nature." Epic and Hymn. Hymn to the city.

By the beginning of 1922 I was so impatient I abandoned my professional work for four weeks to make a start. It revolved around the Iceland-Greenland venture. I drew special maps of Iceland, delved into volcanology and the science of earthquakes. It went swiftly into geology and mineralogy/petrography. As always I wrote and researched at the same time. I lived from hand to mouth. At first, anyway. Gradually as I work I gain an overview of my needs, and put my materials in order. The collection grows to a substantial volume as I work, sorted in my file-box alphabetically according

to key words. In the first quarter of 1922 the Iceland-Greenland section was put to bed. I knew roughly where the momentum came from, not yet where it would lead.

But I soon noticed something during this beginning. I had moved out in order to evade the terrible mystical Nature-complex. And – was sat in the middle of it. In the middle. In my hands I held books on mineralogy, petrography, geography, looked at rocks in the museum! I was deep in it again from another direction. Sunk. It had reared its head again. The strongest weapon I had raised against this heavy, chest-tightening concept was of no use. I myself was engaged in the Theme: human strength vs. Nature's power, the impotence of human strength. Without knowing or wanting it, I had made a mirror-image of my little special effort. Yet I was not the same now as I had been before starting the book. I keep saying "Nature". It's not the same thing as "God". It's darker, huger than God. The complete whirling secret of the world. But still something of "God". It seems right to me that people approach this intimidating riddle with shoes in the hand, and only seldom. Now as I wrote I found that the way I felt about the secret had changed. I found myself facing a secure, strong power that demanded expression, and my novel had a specific task: to praise the World Being.

I – prayed. That was the transformation. I prayed and let go. I resisted as meekly as one resists in prayer. My novel was no longer a gigantic struggle among city-states, but an affirmation: a comforting and celebratory song to the great Mother Powers. Around May 1922, while I was in seclusion in Zehlendorf for several months, I gave voice to this in the "Dedication". I laid down my arms before the autonomous Will in me. And knew and know: an autonomous Power was making use of me.

Around this time I set aside the basically finished Iceland-Greenland Parts, and began to write systematically from the beginning. My plan read:

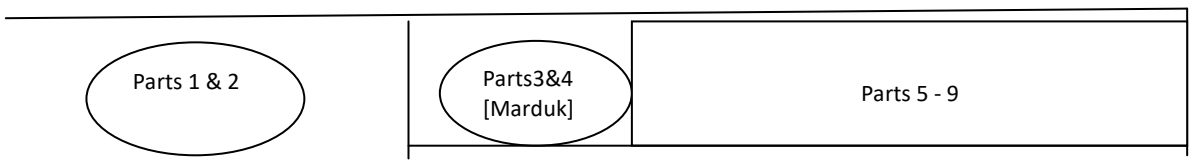
> "In the first book, the conquest of the world is over. Plan for de-icing Greenland. There are districts in cities with remnants of nationalities that hate each other. A Negro from the Gold Coast. The machine-lords make use of the man of violence. A scene: the mowing down of excess people, then the machine-lords themselves. Corpses of those shot, embalmed, hung from pillars for decades but were not silent. At specified times moved their arms, screamed harshly. This was Mutumbo's clock. – Frenzy following the de-icing of Greenland. They want to lay waste all the city-states. Then the transformation of the pleasure-city, city of bronze.
>
> A figure: lanky very young man with deepset eyes, a megalomaniac. He claims descent from gods, and orders their worship. Has himself worshipped in the form of animals. He constructs a hill, and there in a bowlshaped depression his palace with its towers. The Greenland campaign conceived and crushed by him.
>
> Spread of this regime across the whole Earth. Shattering images of the flight and retreat of African and Arab hordes out of the cities.
>
> The last people have the capacity to rejuvenate themselves. They cannot die.

The rejuvenation process, or maintenance of a particular age. Sleeplike trance. These contrasted with the Naturals, the older peoples. Their last battle."

This was distributed and planned over and around the Iceland-Greenland Parts. That I distributed so much and always more in this central section had the secret advantage that I kept – withdrawing from it, that at least temporarily I – ducked out.

The first two Parts are this undermining, an introduction. I was swiftly captivated, had to follow on, to see and set down vividly how, under the flourishing onward march of technology, mankind as a social organism and as the human animal conducts itself. It wasn't possible to expand further on this; but everything I touched on was at risk of growing into an entire book. I constantly had to cut back and apply the brakes. To give myself respite and keep coming up for air, from time to time I broadened out the report – whole sections could only be a report – to an oasis-like tale, allowed events to spread. Hence Melise of Bordeaux and the whole Urals War and other smaller passages. After the synthetic food and the Urals War, at first no more progress was possible, no way over the ridge. Another register was needed. After the masses and density of the first books I had to let in something lighter and more personal. I am an enemy of the personal. It's nothing but swindle and lyricism. The epic has no use for individual persons and their so-called fate. Here they become the voice of the mass, which is the real and natural (hence epic) person. The individual fate of a city-state, Berlin as a representative one, now developed; Marduk, the second Consul, his friend Jonathan and the woman Elina accompanied and unfolded and gave voice to the events. These two books, the third and fourth, became a novel in themselves. There the theme of the whole work was taken to its bitter end, even surpassing the Iceland-Greenland adventure. Marduk and Elena were the first to lay down the arms used against Nature and really against themselves. Marduk was dismembered, melted down by Elena and returned to the Earth. Behind and under his life of violence, he found himself.

And so I had run right past my Greenland obstacle. Had shot right over it. What to do with it. No problem: it had been the individual fate, insular, menaced, of one city-state. All of technology, the monstrous apparatus of power of western humanity was still alive. They would have to follow Marduk's path. The scheme looks like this:



Parts 1 and 2 reach the point where technology breaks down, and stay there. Marduk, over two Parts, leads us to the goal of the whole novel. Humanity as a whole must take a long enormously sweeping path in order, much later, to reach the same goal. This from Part 5 to the end.

After the Marduk sections I had to feel my way via a transitional Part, the fifth, towards the two colossal Parts of the Iceland-Greenland adventure. Now a quite new song started up. The really big one. A new spirit knocked the stuffing out of the original sketch. It was the Urals War again, not brief and ending inconclusively, but full-width and working out all the consequences. Now the whole of humanity would meet its fate.

In general I was steered by a plan that I'd sketched thus: "Marduk's empire. Meanwhile the terrible further growth of discoveries. The discoveries attack even the empire. That's part I. Part II: war against Nature. Greenland the high point. Nature falls on the attackers, failure of the enterprise. Part III: gentle coming together. Troubadours."

But this was only a general direction of growth. The details were created in the moment, developed according to circumstances. And great Nature never moved against the humans. Humans assailed her. Those who opened their hearts and their eyes met a richer fate than Marduk. Kylin and Vaneska are not continuations of Marduk and Elina. The characters in the later parts have no independent existence, are very close to Nature. Vaneska in particular is never released from the (geographical and epic) landscape.

Just as I had hesitated long over the last chapter of *Wallenstein*, so here with the last Part. After the collapse there was really no more to say. But in the months while I was writing the later books I was long since done with much of what I wrote. The inner drive had been lifted. At first I'd been impatient to get to grips with these things; now, to be free of them. For a while I'd often been asking: "Where are you at now?" It was a happy feeling when in May 1923 I dealt with Vaneska's fate: the suffering yearning soul sinks itself in the horrible rampaging Giants, calls them her brother, and they die willingly. We are not lost to the other powers. We can have agency. The mighty realm of natural "souls". It's no longer this book –

In some respects this was a peculiar book for me. Its style, for one. Normally I relish conciseness, objectivity. Here I was unable to resist impulses of a purely linguistic kind. It went wide and colourful. It was as if everything wanted to be autonomous, and I had to be on my guard. The lofty plane of several parts, their solemn hymn-like character, contributed to this. I also confess that I had the feeling I was no longer in the region of my own prose or normal prose, in the purely linguistic. Where the journey's going I don't know. The old verse-forms seem to me impossible.[3] You shouldn't force anything, should not want, let it all become.

Then the women. Before this I had never beaten about the bush. They just weren't important enough to me. All too easy, when women pop up, to go idyllic, or psychological, or private; they sterilise the epic. You must treat them in a different way if you want to draw them into your epic. You have to defang them, demolish all that is sweet, self-important, catty, interesting about them. The true Female is what's left

[3] Döblin's next major work, written in 1925-26, would be the verse-epic *Manas*.

over. No longer the solitary Outsider-thing, but the simple elementary minx, that other human species, the Man-Woman. For you must realise that the woman, unlike those degenerate females who only "love", does other things besides; namely, just like a man, guzzles, drinks, falls ill, is nasty or docile. During the writing I managed mostly to leave women out. I had to guard my male characters from being made ridiculous and silly by them, as generally happens with a "loving creature". Now in connection with my theme, in the emotional space of this work, I had women in my grasp. That wonderful phenomenon, the Female, was there. That manifestation of Nature, Nature as the Female. She was not so different from the male. It was merely a variation of Nature in the context of the Human. It was not clear to me that there could be only Male and Female. There must be a third, a fourth kind. These were the varied species of the later books. The boundaries between Male and Female kept dissolving away from me. But this blurring of the boundaries lent an enormous charm to human relationships. I stepped beyond normal / perverse. Its "sense" became clear to me from my underlying feeling.

I've said enough. I don't like spending time on old works, partly – as I've mentioned – because I'm already somewhere else, and what's the point of looking backwards. On top of that this latest book is for me something singular, frightening. Does it help anyone, what I've said here? I don't know. All in all you have to learn to see the unfamiliar. A riddle is no longer a riddle after the tenth repetition. The books I write are neither hard nor easy. I provide data – some, it seems, new and strange. How "hard" or "easy" the data are is irrelevant, a private matter.

Farewell and a long life, Balladeuse, Marduk, Icelandic volcanoes, Greenland's glaciers, Venaska, Giants. By our fruits shall you know us. You are all me and not-me. I am glad that I'm no voyeur, that I welcomed you like a good host when you came into my house. I never asked you whence and whither. We understood each other by a handshake and a glance, even now, as I show you dear lovely creatures to the door.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE EPIC WORK
Die neue Rundschau (1929)

W F Schoeller's 2011 biography *Döblin* , p. 326-7 provides background to this lecture:

> *In 1928 he took on the task of bringing literature into another public space: he sought to link the Academy to the University, wanting to bring literary praxis and Germanistic research into confrontation with one another, guide students to works currently being written, and open for discussion that fraction of literature that is teachable. […] In mid-December Döblin read his poetological essay "Construction of the epic work". Döblin took his announced goal much further. At the end of May 1929 he proposed a Writing School on the lines of master classes for musicians and graphic artists, linked to the Academy.)*
>
> *On 10 December 1928 he read his own magnificent text before an audience of a more than a thousand in the Audimax of Berlin University. In it, he extolled yet again poetry as a valid form of expression about writing, literature, and their relationship. He sought a connection with the occidental epic, and in a magisterial marking-off from current fiction which only touches on reality, he projected a concept of the epic work of art and the complications that ensue when it seeks to restore the ancient alliance between narrator and audience. This work of language strives as closely as possible to reality as it conceives it, is not satisfied with any image, but pierces through that sphere. Walter Benjamin thought the essay a "masterly documentary contribution on the crisis of the novel that sets in with the resurgence of the epic that we encounter everywhere, including in the theatre." Among the audience from the side of the university were professors Petersen, Herrmann and Dessoir, and also some students who later pursued careers in academic German Studies…. Probably no one from these circles, who after the Second World War became the greats of German Studies, ever wrote later about Döblin. This discipline only much later began to approach the literary modern. The essay offers a theoretical foundation for* Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and can be understood as a counterpart to Brecht's epic theatre. Reader and author both move in the dark zone of creation, try to orient themselves, come to sense the current and the strokes necessary for swimming in the epic flood. …[Tr. CDG]*

1. The epic work is a report of a hyper-reality

I begin with the question: Is the basic form of the epic the report, or what in fact **is** the distinguishing feature of the epic? We know that for the drama, or so at least it seems, the underlying distinctive feature is dialogue.

I pick a novel at random and read:

> When Colonel Spring von Springgenau, having achieved the status of pensioner in his final posting at Rathenow, took up residence, not in Wiesbaden like most of his colleagues, but in Partenkirchen, Friederike had just turned seventeen. It was spring, the windows of the house into which the family moved gave a view across roofs to the Bavarian mountains, and every day, even at breakfast, the Colonel told his wife and children how lucky he felt that it had been granted to him, while still in sound health at the age of sixty, to escape the call of duty, the

> smoke and torpor of the big city, and be able to enjoy to his heart's content the delights of Nature, for which he had yearned ever since the days of his youth.

Well, there's no doubt that this is something like reportage. Something like.

I pick up a newspaper, and in the local news I find:

> Motorcycle accident involving two policemen. Early today two policemen from the barracks on Wrangel Street collided on their motorcycle with a street sweeper's cart. One, 25-year-old Constable Wichert, sustained a broken collarbone; the other, 20-year-old Constable Willy Wolf, received serious head injuries and concussion. Both were taken to the hospital on Friedrichshain.

This too is a report, delivered in the simple past tense. Clearly the first report differs from the second in that the second is a factual report, i.e. announces something that happened, while the first just imitates a report. For sure the colonel did not announce every breakfast-time how lucky he felt to be able to give himself over to Nature, and I may also doubt that Friederike was seventeen years old. It may be she was not even called Friederike, and was only sixteen. In any case, these are assertions which I don't believe even when they are presented in the simple past tense. But of course we all know that this colonel did not utter such words at breakfast and every reader knows that Friederike was not seventeen, the author merely writes it thus, but nevertheless – the author writes it, and we accept it!

Really, what does it mean: the man deceives no one with his report, intends no deception, and yet he imitates a genuine report. I'm opposed to imitations on principle: but here I would like to clarify the meaning of an imitation such as this. I have no doubt: a calm sensible man who reads the daily news on the front page of his newspaper in the simple past tense will quite rightfully balk when below the fold something is reported in the same form as above, but clearly not a syllable of it is factually correct; and he will quite rightfully regard such doings as foolish and a malpractice, and will avoid reading below the fold. So what can I say about such novel-reports where the one reporting doesn't believe it, and no one hearing it believes it either. It's a scam with pre-assigned roles. Someone will tell me: it's "Art", but I regret to have to say that for me it has the all the characteristics of a quite stupid scam. Someone whispers energetically: It's you who are stupid, a novel only pretends to be reporting, we're in the realm of old Vaihinger and his As If, neither side has to believe, the theatre audience don't need to believe either, only children and peasants sometimes fall for it, it's all appearance, illusion.[1] All this I hear, and it's the correct explanation, and there we have, life-size, our pseudo-rationalist imbecilic age [there

[1] Hans Vaihinger (1852-1933): The starting point of his *Philosophy of the As-If* reads: "How do we often arrive at what is correct, using assumptions which we know to be false?" Vaihinger addresses this point: "The human conception of the world is an enormous web of fictions, replete with logical contradictions all the way from scientific fabrications to practical goals, and from inadequate, subjective, pictorial modes of conception, whose encounter with reality is ruled out from the start." *Philosophie des Als Ob,* 1911, p. 14. [Tr. CDG]

does exist a wonderful rationality; our epoch is not rational]. This explanation with its appearance, its illusions, its As If, puts the whole of creative literature on ice. If it is supposed that Art and the fundamental form of the Epic must rest on the self-deceit of both parties – writer and reader – and if we are all clear about the matter in advance, then there's no point in writing even a syllable.

But the report mode is something quite different. When Miss Amelia Calf-Lambkin reads to me from her latest novel and it's narrating something, nah, I don't believe it. I don't believe a word this lady author says, and that's clear to both of us from the start. *But what happens then when Homer starts up, when Dante goes through Hell, when Don Quixote sets off on his horse and Sancho Panza rides behind on his donkey – are these merely formal reports, really?*

The aestheticians of old say: yes indeed, these are, formally, mere reports, Don Quixote is not attested in the records, and of course a donkey was riding across Spain, donkeys ride across every landscape in every age; but this particular donkey, with Sancho Panza on its back, is not historically attested.

What makes this particular donkey believable above all other donkeys? Here I come to the nub of the matter. Clearly, outside the sphere of historically attested facts there is a sphere of existence about which one can make formal reports, using the simple past tense, and any such report demands of me, the reader or listener, a belief – so that under such circumstances it becomes once again worthwhile to write, since now an honourable relationship, resting on a well-founded trust, is once more established between author and audience.

What lifts one or other invented action in report-mode out of the domain of the merely concocted and written-down and places it in a sphere of truth – the truth of the specifically epic report – is *the exemplary nature of the action and the characters* depicted and communicated in report-mode. Here we have stark fundamental situations, elemental situations of human existence to be worked through; it is elemental human situations that appear in this sphere and, because they are real in a thousandfold fragmented ways, may be reported as such. Yes, these characters, who are no Platonic ideals, this Odysseus, Don Quixote, Dante the wayfarer, and these primal human situations in their primal originality, truth and potency stand above the fragmented reality of the everyday. And so a whole range of characters, no great number, rise above reality; of them, new yarns may ever and again be spun.

I have no particular need to point out that the attainment of this exemplary and simple sphere separates the epic artist from the novelist, novel-writing being a solid, bourgeois, commercially useful occupation; it imitates some superficialities without penetrating into reality, or even breaking through its surface. The really productive act requires two steps: it must approach very close to reality, its solidity, its blood, its smells, and then must pierce through it; this is its specific task. The first step is taken by every decent writer, and you can see: every epic author is first and foremost a good writer. And today there are everywhere, including among the epicists, middling to

good literary talents, but the writer necessary to deliver the epic is weak. And so of course we never find a literary epic. For how can someone pierce through reality when he has made no provision, and often lacks the capacity, for grappling with reality. Secondly, there are enough, actually not yet enough, enlightening and descriptive novels which flourish only in the world of letters, where the authors have no wider ambition or, like their public, know of none. But thirdly, we have the adverse example of literary constructs, tedious things because everyone can see: this is no true author of epics, he has no love for reality, takes not the slightest trouble to grapple with it, he phantasizes into thin air. Homer for sure was blind, but only when he started to sing: before that his vision was clear-eyed and incorruptible, he had the Greek and Trojan background and societies down to a T.

I have just shown how I would justify the use of the report mode in the epic, and would like to demonstrate it in a hypothetical historical sequence:

Obviously in earliest times the report, the formal report, was all there was of literature and humanity in general, and what was reported really was believed, always. Belief depended on reports; reporting meant "reporting the truth". At that time reality and dream and phantasy were not kept so much apart as today, and so obscurity, curiosity and fear led men to believe everything that was said and reported. We come across this sad primal condition among primitive peoples even now, and in the realm of law courts dealing with oaths and perjury even today we find in a number of simple people this childish primal condition that confuses dreams, phantasy and reality. But I would assert that at the time when Homer sang, the things that he reported possessed credibility to an even higher degree: Odysseus really did sit with Calypso on the island, the Sirens really did sing and, between ourselves, we have recently become aware that much more truth, even historical truth, underlies these myths and sagas than was once suspected. But where we are now, these things are not believed; reality, phantasy and wish-fulfilment are kept strictly and soberly separate.

And as for Art, this is what we have achieved: we have pushed works of art out of reality into the realm of illusion, or, let's be blunt, into the realm of deception. We call it "life", seriously, and reserve a very sketchy and amusing enthusiasm for Art. As serious busy people we allow Art into our lives in the hours of leisure between eight and ten in the evening, in the theatre, or now and then in our daily bus ride. We've done the same with religion. We have instituted Sundays and holy days and employ a number of officials to manage them. We do still approach these matters with a modicum of piety. But the fact remains that in religion, as in art, a few people see through the situation, and view it very differently from their official contemporaries. Just as a pious Sunday is not the last word in religion, so old Vaihinger is not the last word in Art. Art is and remains something rare. A work of art does two things: it *discerns* (yes, discerns, whatever the philosophers say), and it *creates*.

I end my historical sequence with these words:

Works of art have to do with truth.

The epic artist can still, today, in all seriousness, employ the report mode.

2. The epic work repudiates reality

Now that I've spouted a justification for the use of the report-mode in the epic, I'll set this point aside, and as I do so and glance around behind it I am surprised, I stand there and come to another conclusion that contradicts the first. So I read a few sentences from *Don Quixote* and see that what is said there is – consciously – untrue, for both sides, for the author as well as the reader! *And despite this, no, precisely because of this, the form chosen is that of the report!* I suddenly notice the "precisely because of this". The author chooses the report-mode, which is only permitted in the realm of so-called facts, he employs it for his notorious non-facts, for now it is something highly arousing and pleasing, with a huge pleasure-rating. Here we have a characteristic transformation of Art in a materialistic-scientific age. Here we have the state of affairs, wonderful, unbounded, of free fabulation. What is fabulation, the bold unfettered reporting of non-facts, of notorious non-facts? It is a playing with reality, in Nietzsche's words a *laugh of superiority* over facts, even over reality as such. Hence the knowledge: it is not true, and nonetheless I employ the report-mode. Here one is in competition with stony firm solid reality, and performs magic with it and blows soap bubbles made of the same material that the creator of the world used to make the whole heavy Earth, the heavens and all the animals and their fates. We are in the proud and humane region of free phantasy.

The report-mode points to the sovereign will of the human being, of the author at least, to play with reality in despite of all knowledge and science. Now everything is possible that can be thought, gravity is swept aside, all physical laws are swept aside – but at the same moment there is the knowledge: gravity and all the laws exist, but we, we can do anything, we use the report-mode to tell of a quite other world. Poetic writing is more than a dream. A dream too plays with reality, but to our mind still has a fatal and irksome bond with reality. In poetic writing the levity and mocking of reality are complete. This is the huge gain in pleasure – for author as well as reader – imparted by fabulation in the report-mode.

Place against this levity the gaucherie and ponderousness of most current and earlier novels. Most of their authors have no idea what sort of instrument has been given to their hands. They are the victims of rationalism and the era of the natural sciences. It has slit the throat of poetic writing. Authors think they must sniff around reality rather than play with it or fling it aside. They think they have done their best when they are as accurate and as close to nature as possible. As if anyone could be. Nature does not let itself creep into a belly, and has no need of train-bearers. Authors boast that they have handed down most truthfully and almost as a documentary the history of an era or a family or an individual, as accurately as possible, as close to reality as possible. Maybe using the methods of a theoretician, a historian. If you compare this – this striving and its results – with the sphere of the hyper-real to which I first alluded as one of the pillars of the report mode, and the sphere of the phantastic,

of fabulation, as the second pillar, how paltry, wretched, even burlesque are these naturalists who think they must take the report-mode at face value. You now see clearly the relationship between the two spheres of Art that coincide in the report-mode epic, as I showed just now: the sphere of phantasy and fabulation is simply the negation of the sphere of reality, and guarantees a playing with reality – the sphere of hyper-reality is the sphere of a new truth and a quite special reality.

And now one is again permitted to speak in report-mode. This mode regains its truth in the sphere of the epic work of art, and there is no more talk of scams, of fancy; poetic writing is no longer a dishonourable, confused and implausible matter, poetic writing is no longer degraded to a subjective plaything, and if truly epic writing employs the simple past tense and makes a proud report, it is showing that it knows what it is and that it knows its place and its rank in the life of the spirit.

3. The epic does not narrate the past, but represents

Now I have answered the question: Is the report the fundamental mode of the epic? I have affirmed it and given reasons when and why the report is allowed to be the fundamental mode of the epic. I need to make one incidental point. I spoke of the simple past tense and of the report, and it may seem as if the form of the past is the form in which the epic must construct its verbal artwork. This is by no means the case. It is quite irrelevant, and a purely technical question, whether the epicist writes in the present, simple past or perfect tense, he will change tenses as he deems appropriate. The decisive point, which is not incidental, is that what one often reads – that the *dramatist* presents a plot unfolding in the present, the *epicist* narrates a plot that is already completed – is incorrect. It's superficial and laughable. For everyone who reads an epic work, the reported events are happening *now*, the reader experiences them now; whether present, simple past or perfect tense are used, the things are just as present to the reader and are received no differently than the performance of a play. Both are a representation, a setting-forth. All setting-forth is in the present, however it is formally composed. The difference between the epicist and the dramatist consists in this: the dramatist allows the action to proceed through the sense-organs of the eyes and ears, while for the epicist the organ of representation is the imagination. Only the spiritual location – the stage, or the imagination – distinguishes the two forms of writing. I shall soon have more to say about the close kinship of epic and drama.

4. Towards the epic of the future

Having talked about the report as the basic mode of the epic, I must make a practical observation, which may surprise you and may provide a hint to authors, in direct contradiction to what I have said. I do not recommend employing the report as the only mode of the epic work. You know that Homer, Dante, Cervantes, the three greatest epic names, chose only the report-mode; and all the novels in Germany today, as far as I know, animate themselves only in this mode: they set forth in a reporting,

narrative mode. I do not advocate this. They are two different things: the epic work of art, and the epic method, i.e. the report mode. It is nowhere written that the epicist must only report. In the ancient theatre, in old dramas, there are sections that have nothing to do with the ongoing action, the chorus for example. Shakespeare too, somewhat shamefacedly, sometimes allows a figure to step before the curtain and tell us something. And rightly so. There is also a dogma, one ready to be broken, that the drama may unfold only via dialogue. I can attest with pleasure that the cinema – narrative through pictures – has already penetrated the theatre in an experimental way, and is hammering at the door of the worn-out mode of the dialogue drama, of the players up there on the stage talking among themselves without reference to me.

You'll throw your hands up in horror when I advise authors in their epic works to be decidedly lyrical, dramatic, even reflective. But I shall persevere. In our epic works we have no need to surrender our freedom to some particular heritage in which tradition presents itself as dogma, and we shall make such use of the novel as seems good to us. Germany is a land of pedantic epic realism. Realism: I mean you want to report on realities or pseudo-realities. In France writing is lighter on its feet, has for a long time been more elastic. There are but few stable laws of art for the artist; mostly the artist makes up his own laws of art. The epic work of art is not a fixed artistic form; like the drama it is constantly evolving, actually in direct resistance to tradition and its representatives. Just as today's theatre is fossilised in the dialogue of the characters up there – and we are denied the benefits of reflection, of lyrical or mocking intervention, of freely variable artistic action, even of speech directed at us, we are not made part enough of what is happening up there – so it is with the epic, where the report-mode is an iron curtain which separates the reader and the author from one another.

I confess: I have paid endless homage to the report, to the dogma of the iron curtain. Nothing seemed more important to me than the so-called objectivity of the narrator. I admit that even today communications about facts, documents, make me happy, but facts, documents, I mean, why? Now that great epicist Nature speaks to me, and I, so small, stand before her and rejoice, just like my older brother. And it happened, as I wrote this or that historical book, that I could hardly stop myself from transcribing verbatim whole sections from the archives; sometimes I even collapsed over the documents and said to myself: I can't improve on this. And when I was writing a work that depicted a battle between giant humans and great Nature, I could hardly restrain myself from transcribing whole articles on geography; the course of the Rhone, how it breaks out of the mountains, the names of the various valleys, the names of the tributary rivers, what cities lie along them, it's all so wonderful, and communicating it is so epic, I felt quite superfluous.

But you can't hold to this stance your whole life long. Some day you discover other things besides the Rhone, the valleys and the tributaries: you discover yourself. I myself – this is the craziest and most bewildering experience an epicist can have. At first it feels like the experience that will wring his neck. But he sees himself in danger and difficulties only for a short time before he sees that a work of art is a matter for

the artist, it's not the past that fixes laws, I make my own laws, and now an epic work of art for me means something else. Is the author allowed a voice in an epic work, is he allowed to jump into that world? Answer: yes, he may and should and must. And now I recall what it is that Dante has done in the *Divine Comedy*: he has himself wandered through his poem, he has tapped his characters on the shoulder, he has mixed himself into the action, and not in a playful way but in all seriousness, everyone in his time understood him in the main point of the poem. He took part in his characters' lives. He danced like King David before the victorious army of his characters.

When I say we want the epic to be lyrical, dramatic and reflective, I'm not advocating a merging of forms. We must move on to a fresh core of the epic work of art, where the epic is not fossilised in the particular stance of today, which we quite wrongly take to be the normal stance of the epicist. In my view this means going even behind Homer.

In this splendid and risky moment, however, we need two things: ability, and being. This primal form of poetry will refresh everyone who approaches it, but it will cause much grief. Only those who come from a mother may go to the mother. So I see an epic work coming one day which, having succeeded in blowing up tradition and the role of the report, will honestly say something to us. I would like to tell authors, again and again, not to serve the form, whatever it may be, but to make the form serve them.

And with this we set aside a particular, and today very serious, difficulty. I propose that the epic form be made quite free, so that the author can pursue all the possibilities of representation that his material demands. If his subject feels like dancing a lyrical dance, he must let her dance. Authors are constantly assailed by calls for Relevance, for a literature of the present day. Quite honestly, it can even be said: you don't really want literature, it's had its time, art is boring, you want facts and facts. To this I say: bravo, and three times bravo. You should not make any assumptions about me. Colonel Springgenau bores me at once. *The true writer has at all times been himself a fact*. A writer's task is to show and to demonstrate that he is a fact and a piece of reality and always just as good and factual as the square on the hypotenuse or the cathode ray. Authors should not lift facts from the newspaper and incorporate them in their works, it's not enough. Ambulance-chasing and photography are not enough. To be oneself a fact and create space for this in one's works: this makes a good author, and that's why I urge him today to let drop the constricting mask of reportage in the epic and set himself moving in his work to the extent that he sees necessary.

5. Contrasting today's individualistic with the earlier collective mode of production

I have no intention of doing away entirely with the problem of the epic form, in fact I don't intend to touch on and name all the essentials. I shall do no more than skirt the defensive works around this castle, study the forward defences and make for the point of entry. I am speaking now entirely of the externals: which influences shape the epic

work? Once the epicist was a bard, bringing among the people his fables and farces and sagas which were already current among the people and to which he brought at most only a little reworking, maybe introducing variations here and there, or a new way of singing. The man had a specific task: he had to hack his way past Life, his audience were stern judges, if what he brought did not please them, the man would go hungry. This was a very obvious influence on the shaping of his work, it was the liveliest and most productive form of criticism, you can come straight out and call it a collective work of author and public; bread and money were the most pressing arguments for the author, and indirectly a solid factor in regards to the shaping.

What about today? Now an author sits in his study, clutches a pencil or pen, and something is supposed to occur to him. He too wants to earn money, but in this respect the bards and minstrels of old had it much better: they were in contact with their public, quickly noticed what they needed to deliver. Now the author can go down the street, can talk with his publisher, read the papers, listen here and there; but "connection" with an audience is out of the question. We all sit on an insulating stool, which without doubt is an unpleasant situation and not supportive of creativity. The present situation in cultured countries is conducive to the nurturing of individualistic authors, for in our countries the great coalitions, the great collectives are entirely political and economic, there are no ideal powerful collectives, at least for the majority of authors; not in general a healthy atmosphere for great drama or the great epic.

Today's author groans under the misfortune of the printed book. A book is endlessly long, you can always make a book longer, make two books, three books, how is an author supposed to know when to stop? At bottom he should only stop when the supply of paper is exhausted. And this is the missing condition for an external form for us today. And *how* should we speak, who regulates our voice – suddenly we have no voice, they take our voice away and give us a waste of print. How can print influence the rhythm of our voices, when it is actual speaking, actual inhaling and exhaling, the cadence of intonation according to the sense, that constructs the sentence, and lines the sentences up one after the other. And *what* should the author of today write, who is he writing for? He has no idea where the books will end up, maybe they'll stay in Leipzig in the publisher's warehouse, he doesn't speak for anyone, he's speaking into the void, no longer is there any general folk-thinking, machines and the economy have torn it all to pieces. An utterly catastrophic state of affairs.

There are no plots any more that everyone wants to hear, there is no longer any tangible folk-thinking, or only in a rudimentary sense. So here we have the poor author of today, it's a quite unhealthy condition, almost an anachronism, he too wants to earn money, his poverty is no anachronism. So how today, when authors go about by themselves, even if part of a social circle, how can the shaping process of an epic work be achieved, does the author feel he is something of a functionary, does his work consist of a task, is someone perhaps looking over his shoulder? Let me describe a present-day shaping process.

6. Outline of the incubation stage in the current mode of epic production

While you're going about your daily work, while you attend to all quotidian matters, in a favourable age something separates out in the author's interior and clumps together, if I may use so graphic an image. An inward preoccupation is occurring. It is, to be more exact, thinking without thoughts. Things are moving there covertly, you feel something is emerging, or has emerged. The entire organism, the soul stands in a state of preparedness, and always following a period of tension or melancholy or frenzy. I say always, and this is an important point, for the frenzy or sadness or tension points to the fundamental stance of what is coming, what is to be revealed, it signals the inward process and reaches out beyond the author's normal bearing, not always, but at some moments, and betrays itself in mimicry and other ways. Here the author is identical with the work and it is the prodromal stage, the incubation stage of production, an unresolved situation where the work which is preparing itself overflows into the author, it is not yet set apart enough from him, where the work is clearly taking and draining essentially all the energy from him.

And now there comes the point which I must allude to and lead to and which is of decisive importance, and it is not a personal moment but is valid more or less generally. At first as a rule the incubation stage proceeds for a variable length of time, you feel you are being drawn along by something you need to nurture. I don't normally hold much with the simile: author and work are like mother and child, but here in the incubation stage we have something like a maternal situation. There are two entities: one that bears, observes, becomes slightly uneasy and grabs at all kinds of nourishment, and one that is borne. The thinking conscious Ego has at this time taken on a quite specific function, I'm speaking of epic authors, those of the present day: you lead yourself like a beast to a manger and watch to see if the fodder is to your taste. You receive rebuffs, you can go hugely astray, and now and then with an epic work I have the impression that there is here something good and right, but the author has not quite grasped the substance, he has an unlucky hand, for luck is needed to find the right sustenance. Indeed, it can happen that you are still slogging along and the inner situation is already defunct. You're like a hen that's failed to incubate her egg. And then suddenly, I mean suddenly, what do we have?

I am struck dumb, I have read that and heard that and forgotten it already, and now suddenly something jumps out and without knowing why I am seized or senselessly snared, no, fascinated, by an image. It's not a vision, not a hallucination, but a lot of things together, a soul-condition of peculiar brightness, not vague, but of an abnormal spiritual clarity in which all riddles are solved and you feel like Siegfried when he licked the dragon's blood: you understand every language and everything. For example, when I started on a historical novel, *Wallenstein*: I could ruffle in a pile of dusty files, flick through an exchange of correspondence, delve into it, delve into it. That which is preparing itself in me sips from it, sips from it, and suddenly there stands before me the image of a fleet, not a vision, something more encompassing, Gustavus Adolphus sailing across the sea. But how is he sailing across the sea? There

are ships, cogs, frigates, high over the grey-green water with the white combs of its waves, across the Baltic, the ships ride the sea like horsemen, the ships jog through the waves like men on horseback, they are laden with old-fashioned cannon and people, the sea rocks under them, they are sailing to Pomerania. And it's a wonderful picture, totally fascinating. I feel it happening to me; it's like turning a tangled ball of twine in my hand and finding the end. For the sake of this splendid situation I come to a firm decision, and know: I shall write about this and report; to celebrate and praise and make known this situation, I shall write a book.

This image-blessed enlightenment, this knowledge-laden moment is experienced by the author as the first conception. I mean: what has come before is the incubation stage, but has reached the point where it has crossed some threshold value and has emerged to his sight. To his sight, to whose sight? And here two points are important for us in the conception stage.

The first point is: the whole has reached a certain temperature, has taken on a certain breadth; the nourishment was good, the beast has stretched its tongue out to a particular fodder, a picture becomes possible, the picture shimmers in a certain brightness. And now the Ego, which up till now has nursed only tentatively, takes on another function, another task, and that is the second point. Now the Ego can see what is there before it, so to speak, can see the one it has been nursing at its breast. It regards this entity, and – assumes a stance in relation to it. To make it quite clear: *at this moment the author is no longer alone in his study* thinking and brooding. Of course he does not, like the bards and balladeers of old, go among the people and sing what they bring to him and adjust to their wishes. But the author, from this moment, carries the people within him.

That observing Ego has taken over in our time the role and function the people played for those bards of old. *The Ego becomes the public, becomes the audience, and what's more a participant audience.* [Please don't confuse this with Goethe's "ideal audience".] From this moment on there exists a co-operative, a collaboration between the Ego and the entity that writes. This observant, thinking and evaluating Ego stands in a lasting relationship to the entity that writes, goads him on, nourishes him and leads him on for good or ill, acts as a regulator. And so for the epic author – and the same must go for the dramatist – there is no question of a blind unfettered drive, an unconsciousness, that does the writing. Only the incubation stage is unconscious, whereas in a strange way the second stage is permeated by consciousness, drenched in thoughts, in the values of the whole milieu: status, class, social standing, ethnicity. And now all these things, thoughts, values construct the work in a collective struggle with the entity, the individual, that writes.

Here as well (just to make the picture of the production process a bit more complete), something quite remarkable usually happens. The conscious thinking Ego does not always keep to the role of the public, the spectator and collaborator; in a strange way it is drawn into the work process itself; the work in progress, at several points which invite an unleashing, exercises a fascination over the Ego, bewitches the

Ego, and now, without removing the thinking and collaborating, two situations arise: the Ego, the collaborator, loses its guiding role in respect of the work, it puts on masks, it suffers its work, dances around its work. The Ego is drawn into the game-situation of the work in progress and to some extent has lost control. So now the author is even deeper into a murky literary creation. [Think here of the future "epic" and speak the voices of all profundity! Have courage, dare, set to!] Although the general clarity persists, its reaction to the work has become less transparent, the work itself now threatens to become shapeless, which is merely to say that it shrugs off the formula we have hastily applied, but deeper forms appear, the work becomes a deeper creation.

And then comes the second situation, the second stage of this fascination, the moment when the author can no longer stand upright before his work, where the work devours the author and his conscious Ego: we are at the stage of a prolonged anonymous conception.

And so the production process goes back and forth: long stretches of rational clarity and perceptible shaping line up at a first conception, these are calm stretches, filled out by the imagination, and then there follows the pounding of the conception, this pillar looms up like an island in an earthquake, and again we have a culmination and a new beginning. There are many types of author; not all will understand what I mean. Creative writing, you see, is not merely, in Ibsen's words, holding judgement over oneself, nor does it mean, as moralists and politicians among the authors think, holding judgement over oneself and others; it is much more: for example letting oneself go, playing, for example having the courage to undergo inward bewitchings and sacrifice oneself to them in form and substance.

7. Details of the mode of production

a. The epic work exists in statu nascendi[2]

I want to glance at further shaping processes, and describe the effect of some shaping factors. You embark on an epic rather like a swimmer plunging into the sea. You don't know yet how wide the sea is, but you trust your strength and enjoy the swim. It matters not whether you start writing at once or, to keep your powers in balance, make an outline. You have an initial conception and a vague shadowy underlying feeling; all you can do now is forward march and go stalking after the central situation, which is not yet at all clear. Ladies and gentlemen, most epic works are undertaken in such an obscure urging, and the work shows its face only as you labour. You believe the writer is making you a report and writing down what he knows. No, he knows nothing, or almost nothing, he's following an intuition and a sense of his powers to plunge into an adventure. You write to your theme. And so *the reader joins the author in the process of production*. All epic works deal with Becoming and Happening, and so, I would say, it is appropriate that the epic report is not laid out all complete and buzzing like a shot from a pistol, but the reader experiences it *in statu nascendi*.

[2] In a state of being born.

With any epic of some size, you must know, what is presented is not a rounded, closed, thoroughly circumnavigated work of art, rather you attend at the creation, development and growth of the work, in contrast to works of the plastic arts and probably some dramatic works. But even these have something of it, and not of the worst. The same goes for great works of the other temporal art, music: themes develop out of one another not only musically but also in real time, they just now come into existence. And this gives to them, as to an epic performance, not just a special charm but also a peculiar truth and verisimilitude and perspicacity, for when we see how something comes into existence before our eyes, we imbue it quite readily with the character of a truth, and it convinces us. This is the specific law of causality in the epic.

This *flowing before our eyes* also has the advantage that it leads author as well as audience from surprise to surprise and from delight to unforced delight. It has the advantage that every situation produces the next, unforced. And there's a reason why this mode of creation is necessary: you can never scan far enough ahead in an aesthetic sense, never know where possibilities for raising or reducing tension will arise; you can stake out very roughly the outlines of the whole thing, but if you plant the stakes too close together you spoil the conception, because these stakes don't correspond to the place you're working towards.

b. The epic work is constitutionally unbounded

I shall mention a further attribute of the epic work of art: its unboundedness. It's the strangest attribute for an art form, this law of unboundedness, but there it is, won't be brushed aside, and you should look closely at it because it is a quite essential characteristic and we stand on the most solid epic ground when we stick to it. Externally we have the current situation: the epicist has at his disposal the book-form, but a book is a start though never an end. So I have to make a start, and may the good Lord help me to come at some point to an ending. If someone tells me I have one hour to speak, I can adapt to that and am forced to a particular outline. But today the epicist is faced with only one possibility for achieving an externally bounded form: namely, if the publisher rations the number of pages.

But the same attribute of unbounded form also applied, if one may put it like this, to the era of the early story-tellers. It is really an internal attribute of the epic. Even the early epics hardly had a beginning, and certainly no ending. A man stopped narrating today, and tomorrow narrated some more, the people want to hear something new, and because you don't have much material, and interest always grows when you can link to something old, you end up with an episodic work, a continuing story, additions without end. In drama, a man dies promptly after two hours. The epicist is more relaxed, he lets him die today but he may rise again tomorrow. This is the correct epic method, the fruitfulness of the situations and characters is symptomatic, and you the reader must not let yourself be deceived by our modern pseudo-epics, novels that try stupidly to imitate the drama – most modern novels could be turned into something like a stage play, and that is a sign of their false formal

underlying principle. The situation and the characters are exhausted in two hundred pages. Look at Cervantes' Don Quixote: you might be able to make a stage play out of Don Quixote's fight with the windmills, not easily, but still. But the whole epic work, the book *Don Quixote*, can never be adapted as a stage play, for the same thing happens a hundred times with some new variation, Don Quixote ever and again fights against some new species of windmill, and Cervantes is happy with that, and it is a matter of chance, something tagged on from outside, that Don Quixote at some point dies. For Cervantes the matter was at an end, he allowed Don Quixote to die, Cervantes was already an individualist, but successors could easily have continued writing this splendid story. And so this is, externally and internally, the attribute of unboundedness that has imposed itself on us as a shaping process.

c. Dynamic and proportion as shaping laws and co-creators of content

I now want at the same time to pin down a contrary tendency, another law of many epic works: I want to touch on the closed form. But only from a certain perspective do these two attributes stand side by side. For each particular epic production wants, like Don Quixote, to achieve a conclusion, an ending, and hence formal closure. Though epic is unbounded, formless, a particular work brings an unbounded epic to an end and invents special shaping rules and principles just for this particular concrete case. So, for example, I plan to depict a revolutionary ferment in a population, and a vivid scene forces itself on me as a beginning, an attack on a leading state official, a night scene. This is felt completely as an introduction, a kind of muffled drum-roll, a single harsh discharge, then silence. Specific points are worked up from the character of this tempestuous and unsettling introduction. Now I am entangled in what follows. There must be a gigantic story-line, or else the proportions don't match, and a particular dynamic is called for. I must start slowly, broadly, perhaps with one person, in order to achieve a massive crescendo. These proportions and this dynamic, the formative tendencies, are felt quite vividly, and if now the imagination sets to work and tirelessly pulls in material, the highest law and the headquarters from which the authoritative directives emanate is this formal law prescribing a broad, slow advance. And now, having pulled along a single person as if on a thread, I throw person after person into the process until a certain height is reached. I started a Chinese novel with such a drumbeat and such a muffled drumroll of subterranean revolution.[3]

It begins for purely formal, I could say musical, reasons, with a report on one particular man, and this report is then spun wide and this man must become the red thread to which I attach other threads, and so people group around him, force him to actions which gather ever more people around him, and so I make him my hero, the mover of this movement, to broaden the canvas I add a few more episodes and now, purely artistically, I have set down the beginning of my book. No, had to set it down. These characters, their gathering, and the characteristics of their progress required

[3] Döblin refers here to the Prologue to *The Three Leaps of Wang Lun* (1916), which was dropped from the text as published, to appear later as a short story: 'The Attack on Chao Lao-hsu'. My translation restores it. - CDG

and co-created this definite will to dynamic and proportion, a musical tendency, tendency to an architectonic music. The law of form, I have to say, actually created the content that is solidly there. But the epic theme was: someone struggles in vain, powerless against violence, a weak hero, truly powerless.

Let's look at another place. The revolutionary movement has reached a terrible level. The colours of this scenery are already unbearably harsh, calm stately tones are needed. Now I've no more use for my hero. I have him make an inward change of direction, he abandons his sect, disappears into the countryside. But for the grand stately tones I must seek out other people and actions. So the Tibetan Pope appears, a quite different very bleak scenery is sought and depicted, monasteries, Tibet the land of ice, and the stately progress of the Pope to China, to the great Manchu Emperor. The structure of this section stands firm before all the details. It is the ground plan.

Within this section itself, in the details, the same formal schema is at work. Whole stretches are experienced beforehand from particular starting points, but devoid of content, only in their dynamic and a rough idea of their length. Into this empty skin now imagination pours and fills it up. I'd like to speak of a network of tension, of a dynamic network that spreads itself gradually over the whole work, tethered to specific conceptions; and actions and people are embedded in this network. And you can see that an epic work of this kind resembles neither the boundless old epic-type nor the wretched modern dramatic novel-type. I speak here of a self-developing type of modern epic works of art that bear within them quite specific laws of form. I have given easily analysed examples in my own books.

If you ask, what then do these works, works with these laws of form, resemble, the above analyses has already made it clear: symphonic works. It is understandable if the two temporal arts, music and literature, considered from their artistic character, share a number of common features.

8. Language in the production process

Finally, I shall depict the role of language in the production process.

As soon as the conception has occurred, there is a bewildering situation, a situation of bewilderment. The author must speak or write, as the case may be, he would like to speak or write, and something astonishing happens, which has often been observed: you notice that at the moment when you speak or write, you step into a completely different world, we can say into a different spiritual plane. Conception is no longer conception, or so at any rate a number of authors have asserted. In the speaking, in the writing, the thing has changed, and the affair, though still quite nice, is no longer overwhelmingly imposing. Thus, the embodiment of the conception in a body of language has an essentially transformative effect, even, we say calmly, partly destructive. These authors now find themselves bereft of what is unique, what is quite special about their conception, and are no longer satisfied with "language". Perhaps

these authors have a special kind of conception and intuition. With other authors, myself among them, the matter goes differently.

I am content with language. It provides me with extraordinarily useful services, and is the most valuable helpmeet in my work. There are several connections and links between the conception and language. For those who are disillusioned by the conception once it is written down, language is clearly an instrument, a tool, material upon which they can set down the ideas and phantasies that have come to them from elsewhere. But language can also be experienced in another way and can be something else. The following example comes from my personal observation.

Some ideas are without language. You must be careful not to write them down too quickly, or you too will feel that sense of disillusion. Things want to ripen, the idea will form its language-body soon enough. And then a moment will come when out of this situation you have a single sentence, and to some extent you have caught the beast by the tail and now it can't get away. Now the situation as written down is no longer identical with the conception, but it is – richer, more concrete, more alive! And first and foremost in the epic: it presses on ahead. Momentum can already be latent in the conception, but the writing, the succession of sentences, the melody that is now being spun, allows no rest. How much richer and more valuable is this written version than the conception, which in the end is no more than a constant bass drone.

But it may also happen, strange as it may sound, that an ideal conception is accompanied by a specific form of language. This is nothing supernatural, but lies close to the realm of dreams in which one hears some particular words and sentences.

And thirdly, it may be that you have no ideal conception, rather some sentences occur to you, God knows out of what context, and for an author this is the happiest of all situations. I mentioned earlier the voyage of Gustavus Adolphus across the Baltic. This conception remained dumb and yielded no fruit. I was reluctant to give it expression. Then while I was immersed in some work, reading about dignitaries at the court of Emperor Ferdinand the Second, a sentence came to me, and this was a *conception in language*. And this kind of conception in language is just as good as a merely ideal conception, and for the epic author, the practitioner of language, is all-important. That sentence read: "When the Bohemians were defeated, no one was better pleased than the Emperor. Never before had..." It went no further. But it was excellent, it was the beginning of my book, there were the melody and the rhythm, I could begin, nothing more could happen to me. If I must depict the relationship between conception and language, I shall say: the conception is merely the text of a song, language is the song, the music. With language you add immeasurably to the "conception", and the song is not complete without the right melody.

But just as for the librettist everything depends on the correct scoring of his words, so for the author everything depends on the intimacy of the relationship between his ideas, fancies, and language. Just as poorly aimed language can spoil his concept, so well-chosen language, well-conceived language, can relieve him of half the work, even

the phantasising and inventing. For well-aimed language leads in the right direction, leads the initial conception towards new ideas, is itself a *productive force*. The greatest formal danger for the epic author arises when he jumps into the wrong register of language. It would be a blessing for authors and readers if the philologists would produce a dictionary of German linguistic styles and registers. Such a work would be important in the training of authors and in scaring off dilettantes. In German we have no great number of clearly distinct speech styles and speech levels. There's conversational speech, which varies with the various social classes, and in the provinces crystallises differently, not just in terms of accent. There's the register of newspaper people, stockbrokers and other professions. But for authors these unfortunately don't have much weight. It would be desirable for them to dive more intensively into this full human life. What is important for them is the written styles: for example, the style of the Bible translator Luther. This style has outlasted whole generations, at present occupies a particular literary level, a particular spiritual plane, and anyone stepping onto this level must know where he is headed, must know where this language is leading him on to, and that adopting it coerces him not just to follow up a few sentences with other sentences from the same level, but also limits thoughts and concepts to this level. In other words: *In every style of language there lurks both a productive force and a coercive character* – in terms of both form and ideas.

Dilettantes exploit this and can easily write at this level, they do not notice that they are barely in the game, that it's a matter of autonomy in language and ideas, they need only insert their little coin into the machine and it grinds into action. But even the true author is at risk, but he knows what I have said: you think you are speaking and you are spoken, you think you are writing and you are written.

To continue on the subject of our dictionary, of linguistic style and the related spiritual values, we have Schiller's iambic style; Goethe's contemporary prose; the prose of Heinrich Heine, whose successors can be traced in today's feuilletonists; the classical style of Platen[4]; and others. All these linguistic styles possess their own spiritual level which makes them fruitful, formative – and on the other hand, especially for the independent author, catastrophically domineering and hampering. Only a layman thinks that there is just one German language and you can think in it as you like. The cognoscenti know that there are several registers in which everything must set itself in motion. Whoever wants to be spiritually independent, whoever wants to say something of his own as a writer, is at great risk. He does well to know this risk, and it is no novelty that anyone who wants to speak his own mind must first push away old ways of speaking in order to call a spade a spade.

As far as the formative power of language is concerned, as I have already shown I have to speak of a general productive power of both form and ideas, and it reveals itself in thoughtful writing and written thought as an urging on from one sentence to the next, one paragraph to the next. Now and then more rhythmical laws come to the

[4] Count August von Platen Lyric poet (1796-1835).

fore, now and then alliterations take the lead, now and then more assonances. Ideas on this level struggle with the linguistic at every level. The victor – in the case of the good writer – is always language. Anyone who has not experienced this does not know the fundamental fact of the *living language*, which is not the language of philology and dictionaries. It is rather a blooming concrete phenomenon, it knows no "words" any more than the world knows individual objects, it flows in words and sentences vivid and filled with thought, experienced and deeply felt. More could be said about the very banal separation of prose from poetry, prosaic and poetic language. In the truly epic those with sharper eyes see that this separation cannot stand.

Now I must stop speaking of language, of its productive power in the formal and spiritual realms, of its coercive character. I shall not discuss how I see the liberation of the epic work from the book as a difficult but useful task, useful particularly as regards language. The book is the death of actual language. The most important shaping powers of language elude the epicist who only writes. For a long time my motto has been: away from the book, but I see no clear road for the epicist of today, unless it is the road to a new kind of theatre. And this jibes with what I have said above about the renaissance and regeneration of the epic work.

What makes an epic work? The ability of its creator to press hard up against reality and pierce through it in order to attain the simple great elementary fundamental situations and characters of human existence. In addition, in order to create through the art of words a living work, the writer's jaunty art of fabulation. And thirdly everything surges in the stream of the living language on which the author floats.

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL AND US
Das Wort, 4 (Moscow 1936)

Every novel needs a foundation of reality

How does a historical novel differ from any other? Here's the start of a typical novel:

> Night had fallen on the garden. From the mighty wall of treetops behind the house, above whose densely tangled branches it had for hours been slowly climbing, now, with a reddish glow, emerged the Moon. Klaus opened the window and leaned out over the dark garden. As always, the silent calm magic took hold of his senses.
> Ruth, who at his request had remained behind at the piano, slammed the lid with a decisive movement, annoyed that suddenly he was ignoring her. Klaus turned around... etc. etc.

Everyone who reads this knows: it didn't happen; even the author never for a moment intended us to believe that this Klaus and this Ruth actually lived and that on this moonlit night, a night with a specific date, the events he's beginning to relate actually took place. For we're in a novel, in the realm of invention, even if – how strange – the events are made to proceed as if they'd really happened and were historical. That's how matters stand, and it's extraordinarily strange, but important, and must give rise to reflection: if in an ordinary novel things are not narrated as if they actually happened, if they're not narrated as if they could have happened, if the plot proceeds implausibly or improbably (compared with reality), then we reject it: it's a bad novel.

In our case, with Klaus and Ruth making an entrance, we are ready to play along, and why? Such nights, when the moon slowly climbs above the treetops – a clear tangible image – really do occur. And a Klaus, any old Klaus, note, leaning out like that – he might be called Max or Erich – could also exist. And we are not in the least astonished in these circumstances to find a Ruth there, at the piano and becoming annoyed with him for looking out of the window. We play along because it's all possible, and doesn't have to have really happened at all. We accept the rules of the game, but we let it proceed under one condition: it must at least be possible.

So the ordinary invented novel, in order that we find it acceptable, already requires a foundation of reality. And if we ask where this comes from, and why we can't just set out a totally improbable game, a 100 per cent *jeu d'esprit*, the answer is: this is how our novel of today reveals its provenance. It is a relic, better said a stage of development of a form of narrative that *did* report on events that actually occurred. Once upon a time the epic was *the* format for informing, for spreading news, and *the* format for preserving what had actually happened. This was a time when people had no writing, no newspapers. Since information was passed on by word of mouth, elements of fable could creep in. To enhance preservation, the information was fixed in verse; the verse-form made repetition easier and fixed the content as far as possible, and these two aspects, rather than any "aesthetic intention" is the real reason for the emergence of the early epics and tales told in verse.

A clear break between truth and poetry occurred only later, made possible by new formats for transmission and preservation, most notably writing and the book, following which our own prose of narrative and reporting was able to develop. Despite this development, long after the spread of writing and printing, there appear in our present-day novels ancient – to some extent prehistoric – traces; we just mentioned one: we want to be able to believe the events in the admittedly invented novel, and things, if they are not historical, must at least be possible.

So a double task falls to today's author: at one moment to present reality recognisably and convincingly, even without a specified time and place; and at another to make of these reality-components something whereby the whole thing becomes a novel. You have to admit, this has a curious consequence. Author and audience sit themselves down with a secret understanding, and the author begins to satisfy the listener's desire, presents facts about the world, interesting and important, but mostly commonplace and in no respect accurate as to how they actually happened in some sense, but in a way that pleases the listener. Author and listener in their respective roles do what dreaming does, every night everywhere, though more tidily and robustly, in the one person who is at the same time author and listener, i.e. within the dreamer.

There is no mode of narration, of epic composition, that fails to offer an appearance of reality such as we find in the modern novel. When Hansel and Gretel in the fairytale go into the wood and meet the witch, the events and characters, the whole situation, are totally impossible. Not a trace of history. The situation is replete with errors. Things happen that contravene well-known laws of nature. But even here, in the purest form of creative writing, we find, if the tale is not purposely stupid and inane, a certain remnant of reality clearly shining through. The theme of the children, their childish behaviour, simple actions, their desires: these are real. The encounter with wicked people who lure the children and abuse their innocence: this is real. And, mute but looming in the background, stand our own will and our feelings, plugging us into the plot so we can help carry the whole thing along: we see how the children behave, we note how it goes, and we want to help the children, that's how the plot should proceed. And in this way the plot, the narrative, this genre of writing form reality out of ourselves. In fairytales we see even better than in the novel (which is stuffed full of reality-relics) why we swallow and welcome the whole genre. The action thus presented satisfies us. We need these relics of reality in order to have the world before us, as representers of the world, as its representatives; but only in order from now on, after true reality has been suppressed, after all the mishaps and failings of everyday life, to plug ourselves in freely and independently, autonomously. In the end what we apply is the law of our needs, not the laws of the physical world.

The novel is the contemporary form of the fairytale. [Of course this does not mean that the novel is a kind of 'fairytale' and that we ought to orient ourselves to actual fairytales to know how it should be done today. Dimwits and pranksters who do this should not be disturbed in their creations – yet these are our 'creative writers'.] Our whole causal view of the world is different from that of children and primitives. We

cannot stand magic, contraventions of natural science. We demand even of the novel a verisimilitude and plausibility that meets our needs. Our requirement for reality encompasses an enormous amount, not just a physical and causal rightness or possibility, but also a political, social and psychological rightness or possibility. And if these conditions are met, the narrator can start, and his realm begins, with an understanding between author and reader after a certain compromise: the realm of an As If [1], a pretend reality that amuses us, thrills us, fortifies and enhances us.

Reality is ubiquitous in the novel

And so we construct in the novel a reality of this kind, a pretend-reality, pervasive and total. But the reality of the novel has, in any specific case, another characteristic that I shall point out here. It's as well to pin this down before we come to the historical novel.

Let's stick with the example of the Klaus and Ruth we cited earlier. As we said, it's some Klaus or other, some Ruth or other, that are spoken of here. So there before us, in the foreground of the novel, we see persons, and events connected with them, of a general sort. The generality of persons and events that we find in the foreground: this is the characteristic we point to here, and want to look at more closely.

We have to ask the meaning of this generality. Why does one, why does one *want* to, place some Klaus or other, some Ruth or other, in the foreground along with their actions? Here's the answer: even earlier, in the age of oral transmission, the reality being reported was only transmissible *in general*. Understandably so: oral transmission simplifies, impoverishes the content, deletions occur, to make the main plot easier to recall. And there we are, impelled along the path followed by all forms of thinking, even Philosophy: the path of Abstraction. Specifics are allowed to fall away, specifics are brought to the fore. When later we find generalities like some Klaus or other, some Ruth or other, we have no concept to explain how these are engendered by philosophy, only intermediate products and approximations. We can formulate it thus: figures and events in the epic are on a path between concrete individual Reality, and the Concept. And so even long ago there existed the necessity – arising from the way memory works and the oral mode of transmission – that led to impoverishment and simplification in the guise of Generality. Along with this came at the same time another force, with the same meaning, but positive. For you must not only, but also, allow specifics to fall away and bring others to the fore. This is no academic matter. Transmission involves a praxis: you want to orient yourself and take up a stance, prepare yourself for action. This is achieved by creating ideal figures and representative actions.

These two venerable forces, the drive to leave out and the desire to bring to the fore, to create generalities, are the heritage of the novel today. The drive to leave out no longer arises from the same cause that operated in the age of oral transmission – for we can fix data in writing and print – but from new conditions that have the exact

[1] See note on page 212 above.

same effect. You're forced to dispense with concrete, individual, total and complete accuracy, because this cannot be a matter for the novel. The novel, firstly, is not so equipped. It can't compete with photography or newspapers; its technical means are inadequate to the task. Secondly, the novel participates openly and systematically in this ideal-creation and generalising. And here a very active force is put to work by the writer: his individual imagination, the inclination to invent and combine, pleasure in the free play of notions. (But let's not overestimate the 'freedom' of these notions.)

The generality we have spoken of applies mainly to certain figures and events, namely those that stand in the foreground, those on which the author lets loose his fabulations and imagination. The whole is embedded in an absolutely genuine reality, all the time, and we do not take this as a joke. If an ordinary novel generally constructs a pretend-reality, this must rest on a solid, verifiable basis: the reality of the social environment. The foregrounded events, the plot can be general, and are in the hand of the fabulator, but they too are underpinned by the laws of reality, in that they have to unfold and pass muster in the light of a completely real background.

The historical novel is firstly a novel, and secondly no history

Where do matters stand now with the historical novel? I offer two test cases.

> No, I will not quaff this goblet! Jost Fritz shouted into the landscape, and if a companion had been at his side – but Jost was running alone, his brow furrowed – the companion would have been hard put on this bright day to arrive at the thought that Jost, stamping along in his knight's garb, was struggling with an imaginary heavenly counterpart, perhaps an angel, approaching him with an unpleasant potion. As he ran Jost stared at the stones, etc., etc.

That's from the pretty novel *The Seed*, by Regler[2]. Or the beginning of the original and powerful book by Hermann Kesten, *Ferdinand and Isabella*:

> King John was suspicious. He had been reflecting on his life. Fifty years he had been here on this good and pleasant earth. He had reigned for thirty-six years as John the Second. Or was it not Alvarado, decapitated today in Valladolid, who reigned in the king's heart, Alvarado the First? As the dreadful light of dawn slipped in through the window, the king left his bedchamber unobserved, etc.

We read this and know at once (we of today, maybe not a savage or someone from another epoch): this is a novel and nothing like that happened. The same applies to the events and characters that we demonstrated with our examination of the novel *per se*: a pretend-reality is presented, generally plausible and probable – only added to it is something special: the writer makes use of historical persons and events. After our earlier remarks we don't find it odd that a writer has drawn on historical data. It's simply the old movement of the epicist towards the events of reality, especially big, striking events. And we see here the old inherent ineradicable function of the novel: to

[2] *The Seed: a novel of the German Peasant Wars* (1936) by Gustav Regler (1898-1963), ardent Communist until the mid-1930s, then disillusioned.

fix, preserve, and convey great events into the consciousness of the masses, the collective. However, what can we say about this truly atavistic movement appearing thousands of years after writing was invented, when there's no need for preservation.

There are people now who, for this very reason (the use of historical events and persons to represent a pretend-reality) reject the historical novel and consider the whole genre rotten. They are wrong. Only a bastard genre is bad, because unclean and misleading: like those widely distributed and beloved biographies, works neither fish nor fowl, whose authors can't make up their minds to define the nature of their territory. You can actually see more clearly here what the author does not achieve than what he achieves. He does not deliver a clean documentary historical picture, and does not deliver a historical novel. Of course such a mangling and demeaning of historical material is found distasteful. But the situation of the historical novel is otherwise. For there exists in principle no difference between an ordinary novel and a historical novel. The historical novel is firstly a novel and secondly no history.

It is a novel. Why? It relates from beginning to end things that can never be attested historically to have transpired like that, and for which the author has no documentary evidence. He lends it the appearance of a reality. And finally he works under tension, wants to arouse our interest, amuse us, shock us, grip us and challenge us. So he plays with us like any other novelist, like an artist, and to do so develops the charm of his material: his language. So, it is a novel.

And the history that the novel is not? For sure the novel contains enough history, for sure the author has pored over lots of books, but the novel butchers history, it falsifies, suppresses, even more than biography. Compared to our novelist the biographer is a man of honour. So why should the historical novel be subject to more censure than a biography? You have to admit: the only thing that can meet the enormous demand for purity that many make today, their decisive will to truth and verifiability, is genuine history, pure and unadulterated, the naked representation of things that are documented. We demand that they be represented without additions or deletions, exactly as they occurred. Even the interposing of an arranger we find ridiculous, even shameless. We want the events, not the author. At the most we permit a clearly demarcated discussion of events. But 'art'? We reject such art. We are not children. The truth of historical things – we thirst for it, thirst in the face of every unspeakable swindle that surrounds us. I'd like to believe that such a stance is totally justified. Assuming it allows any art at all to remain, it would condemn the historical novel as a stupid deception.

Whoever makes such a judgement doesn't have to give it up, but may temper it on inspecting two things closely: one regarding history *per se*, and one related to the role of history in the novel.

What is history? People want something from history

Let us speak of history *per se*.

History itself, the writing of history, is not at all the unambiguous naked transmission of what happened. It is not at all a pure representation of actual events. We pore over the historians – Pliny, Tacitus, Caesar, on to Burckhardt, Taine, Ranke, Treitschke – and massive tomes of history. Indisputable: no one here has the slightest intention of mixing genres. The data are in order, mostly at least. The events are in order – hold on, what am I saying? The events are in order? Scholars disagree among themselves! You see: this one reports events quite differently from that one. Schiller, in the Prologue to his *Wallenstein*, says of the historical figure of his hero: "Confused by partisan hatred and favour, his historical character fluctuates." He says: fluctuates. Schiller, the history professor, who has read the history books of his time. Historians generally have access to the same records, but excavate them differently. There are gaps in what has come down to them, which they fill in different ways. Representing without judging is impossible, judgement is involved even in the way the materials are organised. But judgement originates in the person of the historian, his class, his times.

And so not only the historical figure of Wallenstein fluctuates; many figures, maybe all, do so. Recently a study appeared on the Roman emperor Nero, who is always presented to us as the apogee of Caesarian madness. But suddenly we hear that the old sources are worthless, Tacitus and his gang, with their reactionary mindset, lied and distorted and so on, Nero was a progressive, no worse than others of his time. So, what do we make of that. No one can guarantee that tomorrow even the sturdiest statue won't wobble. History-writing in general always wobbles when a new class rises. And anyone seeking refuge from the lies and falsifications of biographers and novelists by heading for solid and verifiable History comes out of the frying pan into the fire. Despair overwhelms you, unless you decide to stay with just one book! In fact this is the best advice; stay with one book and declare that this book transmits the Truth. For two are an irritation and three destroy all perspective. That two or three books are even possible is the true evil of cultural Bolshevism. The churches always knew this, and permitted only the one Book. So when we look into the writing of history, we ascertain: the only honest thing is chronology. The manoeuvres begin with the lining up of dates. And say it out loud: people want something from history. And here in all modesty we approach the historical novel.

The historian, for the most part, does not know his own mind, or does not acknowledge it; the novelist does know his mind. The historian, if he is no mere chronologist, wants to conjure up a picture of bygone reality; the novelist too, albeit a smaller one, but fuller and more concrete. So what distinguishes the historian from the author of a historical novel? Robustly formulated: the artist works decisively and consciously, leaps about as lord and master of his little bit of material. The historian scrabbles around in his material, searches through it, is handicapped and has a bad conscience. For he pursues a mad ideal of Truth, a mad ideal of Objectivity, that contradicts every one of his classifications and fundamental conceptions. The author is not out to fool himself or us; but the historian puts on a white beard and mimes: world history is the judgement of the world.

So we have this dreadful threat: you sin against history! – maybe a little watered down. Not more than a little watered down. You can always assert: if even the history of the historian is a historical novel, then that, and that alone, is what meets our needs.

But if the novelist does in fact intend to compete with the writer of histories, is he guided by the same intentions, or by others? I've already stated clearly: the historical novel is firstly a novel and secondly no history. I must now say more sharply: the historical novel is firstly a novel, and secondly and as often as you like, a novel.

But, you say, this is terrible, then what is history doing in a novel, what role does it play there, do you really not want authenticity? Some authors do strive for a visible 'authenticity', with a huge investment of erudition. Think of Flaubert's *Salammbô*. Does this set out to embellish the surface of an ordinary novel with the particular gleam and allure of a historically distant landscape, mere 'exoticism'? We must clarify the concept 'authenticity in the historical novel'. This is the central question. The whole framework stand or falls on it.

The novel's new function: reporting on society and the individual.
Every good novel is a historical novel.

I repeat: the author, for the purposes of his novel, makes use of certain materials from history available to him in exactly the same way that he makes use of certain newspaper articles or certain events from his own experience. He intends to play, on himself and his audience, his readers, the same game we described earlier.

But we soon see that the ordinary novel of today distinguishes itself from the fairytale *inter alia* by the quite enormous emphasising and hypertrophy of the materials taken up and dragged along. We see that regions of material, spaces of reality that we never find elsewhere in written literature, are given a place in the novel, and only there. Things of the most intimate and personal dialogic and social life, things about the individual, gender relations, love, marriage, friendship. No newspaper, no history book can orient us so accurately and penetratingly to all such highly important and powerful things. And the fame of a good author of today rests not coincidentally but in all seriousness on how true-to-life are his depictions of such personal and social phenomena. And this is not a demand from us, rather the acknowledgement of a state of affairs that every reader can confirm and of which the author is aware, although the author reserves to himself somehow a certain freedom of movement towards or away from the region of the fairytale.

And so we find, after the report-function has fallen away from the ordinary novel, a *new specific function of a reporting kind* has devolved upon it: to present special reports from the region of personal and social reality. *From this starting point, a quite characteristic authenticity begins to accrue to the novel*. I mean authenticity that is directly experienced and observed, which attaches for example to Flaubert's Madame Bovary or Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov or Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, to say nothing of many

of Zola's books or Maupassant's novellas. They all attest to exactly this kind of authenticity. And readers are just as merciless as critics on this point, and we see from this that we have here an important attribute of the novel.

As matters stand, what are important and deserving of being written down are not only the brute obvious historical facts, peak history if I can call it that, but also deep history, the history of individuals and the social conditions that surround them. *In the sense of such a deep history, every good ordinary novel is a historical novel, and it is undoubtedly – for we can check it out – authentic*.

We must follow these thoughts further. We have revealed a decisively new characteristic state of affairs. Although the novel is for sure just a novel, this form is burdened and, if you will, destroyed and blown up by another tendency, by the drive towards reportage from the realities we have mentioned. A turning point has arrived. Even after the invention of writing and printing, the novel was not confine d, impoverished, crippled to the status of fairytale.

If we view the ancient epics as the broad trunk of a mighty tree, in the course of ages the tree has spread a number of branches. After the newspaper and the discipline of History spread their branches, the fairytale developed independently. But alongside newspapers, the discipline of History and the fairytale, the novel found its own special place on the tree, it was no offshoot of the fairytale. We have before us a new, specific, original entity which, like the others, also attests to reality.

We therefore notice criss-crossing directions in the novel today. The novel is in a struggle of competing tendencies: fairytale entities with a maximum of processing and a minimum of material; and novel-entities with a maximum of material and a minimum of processing.

While it is a special task of the novel to attest to reality, and in particular personal and social reality, a completely new twig was able to sprout from the novel, a form that has almost abandoned the old processing aspect: namely, reportage.

Today's novel is in a situation full of contradictions. And whoever tries to discern how the novel is torn between these two tendencies notices one single trait of the novel, which I here name. A great number of readers say and demand: the book should not concern me overly much. My interest in it should be optional. Events and characters must relate to us, we must notice that we and our situation can be identified more or less with what we read there. But we must also notice: that's not exactly how it is with us. A distance must be maintained. We, I mean a great number of readers, allow ourselves only with provisos into a situation that seems somewhat risky. We allow ourselves to be enticed into situations that in some way are exciting and frightening, but in the background we know: that can't happen to us, it's just a game, and it's not us. According to aesthetic theories we have a sense of release, relief and liberation at the end of many literary works, among them novels. I believe honestly that behind it there's a certain Schadenfreude and smug satisfaction: it's not us who are played with in that way, who suffer this and that. You could also say that

now and then we feel ourselves participating, carried away, but we allow the author to sacrifice some imaginary individuals in our place.

The author is a special kind of scientist. Literature is never a form of idiocy.

After this exposition, you can see there are many points that merit discussion. Is the novel a form of art, of literature, is the novelist a poet or 'merely' a writer? In the moment when the novel attains its new function of discovering and representing reality in a special way, it's hard to define the author as either poet or writer, rather he is *a special kind of scientist*. He is a special alloy of psychologist, philosopher, social observer. I would add that, in Germany, rather few authors deserve to be called 'scientist' in this sense. Mostly they content themselves with cannibalising old observations, and one book lives off another, if you can call it living, and it's written in an overwrought and at its worst a contrived language. I am not prepared to accord the name of poet to someone on the basis that he has no relationship to reality. Apart from self-observed and self-experienced reality, it is the processing, the imagination and the authentic way with language that makes the poet.

Moreover it can be seen that a certain number of other authors allow themselves to be overpowered by the old form of the novel. They cannot find an appropriate form for the autonomy of their experiences and observations as such, in the embrace of the old novel. The new scientist struggles against the novelist. Brute externalities, the positioning of the novel in the marketplace, tip the balance. And it's not by chance that ever and again experimental novels pop up to announce the dissatisfaction of their authors with the old form.

We can check and control for the truth of what we have said by taking a look at authors. What is certain: they are separated into the awakened and the sleeping. The awakened – it is these alone I shall speak of – have a close and natural relationship to reality. They do not at all float in the clouds, as the age of overstuffed furniture would wish. Several serious writers have taken advantage of this wish, sleep has descended upon their eyes, and of course during the whole capitalist age nothing weighed so heavily on their heart as the concealment of the basis of their existence and their embarrassing background. Blinkers and hot air were needed for that, sweet-talkers, at best versifiers, poets in the clouds, daydreamers, at worst idiots. For every better sort of bourgeois it was self-evident that serious writing is a form of idiocy. If the writer is not an idiot, he is driven in that direction by not being paid. But it is romantic, to put it mildly, when Schiller – the busiest of all court officials *par excellence* – when Schiller asserts that in the division of the Earth, all that remained for the poet was Heaven. This was just sucking up to the Duke of Weimar. The bourgeoisie has certainly always paid its lackeys badly. But it has put them to intensive use, i.e. misuse, here on Earth, just as it misuses religions and has killed off all their credibility. Serious writers and poets, I say again, are a particular kind of scientist, and so have their feet planted firmly on the ground. Because of their science they have more access to reality, and

access to more reality, than many others for whom the only reality is their little bit of politicising, wheeler-dealing and haggling.

If I make any claim at all for a creative artist of today, it is this: he is totally at home on the Earth. A mystical gift? Not at all. Nor is it a mystical or neurotic weakness. A more complex seeing and thinking, a deeper empathy, a more nimble combining. What's more, it is my view that the artist in general does not represent degeneracy, but normality in respect of a humanity richly encumbered with other problems.

If you place an artist – a real one, not stupid – in front of some reality, or if he places himself before it or in some historical material, do you imagine, do you fear that he will write what people call writing, i.e. fantasize out of the blue? No trace of it, the fellow is cold, incorruptible, and has a penetrating gaze. And he sticks with it. The concept of resonance helps us understand this. He possesses an uncommonly delicate and well-developed resonator. And when certain congenial historical things [they must be congenial to him] crowd in on him enough, the resonator begins to oscillate, and he, the scientist, is a writer or poet if only he can now transform the resonance into language and images. It is not the mastery of a new or old form, but intimacy with reality that makes a good or better author, i.e. his resonator. With every successful work the world is again enlarged, our wealth is increased, a new Columbus voyage has reached land, a new Indies discovered.

It's impossible here once again to express adequately my distaste for the inauthentic, the abusers, those who play at art, who play with art, the art-artists, those who carry stylistic fads to the extreme and make powerful things of Nature and Art fit for the bourgeois salon. Nothing has paved the way for the lamentable slide of Art into opportunism more than its preceding degeneration into the 'artistic'.

The peculiar development process of a historical novel

We can now, I think, learn more clearly about several important matters – the question of reality in the novel, and especially authenticity – if we trace the process by which a particular historical novel developed.

Something founded in his personal situation and his social position brings the author face to face with a mass of material. He is caught up in it, in ancient Carthage and Salammbô, in Spain and the expulsion of the Jews, in the Peasant Wars, Wallenstein. That resonance I mentioned has started twitching, an affinity between the author and that bygone age is revealed or created, and becomes firmer the more the facts that stream to him. It seems to the author that he 'understands' the age intimately, he can conjure it up. He has no intention of digging around in these trenches like an archaeologist to enhance a museum, rather he wants to make forgotten things live again in the world, open the mouths of the dead, set their dry bones in motion.

The more he goes into the details, the more competent he feels. He s in a stage of enthusiasm, a condition like that of Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied* when he tasted dragon's blood: he knows the language of the birds. So it seems to him he 'knows' this age and he will set it down in the world – he almost thinks he will make it live again. In this stage he is, despite everything, no fool, but enormously clear-sighted, sharp-eared. Now he makes an initial characteristic selection from the material, and this will more or less determine the line of the book. That's how it appears at the start: the author feels he can board the boat and set off. And he does. Now something happens that is not too different from Columbus' voyage, though in the novel, alas, no goldmines appear on the horizon. Off he rows, all jolly, and look: everything changes. It turns out in a way he never imagined. Everything has changed, he brought along certain guidelines, history has written this or that, but many points don't fit, and others are not needed. Huge amounts are cast overboard. And now what does he bring into the world? Does he really bring back that bygone age that engendered such enthusiasm? The author seemed to have Wallenstein, King Philipp, the Peasant Wars down to a T. And now, when all that was needed was 'merely' to flesh it out, 'merely' bring it to life, Wallenstein and the others transform themselves. They are no longer those who were fixed in your reading, whom you had in view for your project.

What is this? The transition from one reality to another. The transition from a commandeered reality, a quite shadowy heritage, into a genuine, purposeful and affect-laden reality. The initiation of mere material into a fixed form and at the same time its specific transformation. Here comes the actual moment of the novel.

And if we ask: what's going on? we see: here something is in train that cannot happen to the historian. The historian's commandment: leave all the facts alone. He author is under different orders: he thinks thorugh and feels his way through his material step by step, and if he wants to set to and does set to, he is driven not by a mad urge to objectivity, but by the only authenticity available to individuals on this Earth: *the partisan nature of the actor*.

The author's passionate nearness to his material exists and will not be toyed with. In facing his material the author becomes aware, maybe not very clearly, what this material means to him and what's happening here: *an argument* of a particular kind, one *not separated from the material itself* but *appearing in the figures and unfolding of the action*. We know that in a dream, the argument in and with the dream-material proceeds just like this. The author never becomes completely aware what the material means to him, why he's sinking his teeth into it, why he gives this or that figure a voice, why he lives in this or that remarkable situation. The better and more appropriate the choice of material, the more, and more fully, he can weave into it his own self, his whole active humanity. The bits of history, the parts he has taken over, become bits of himself, exposed one after the other, and this makes a living ongoing world.

And a second consequence arises from this bringing-alive once author and material become merged. For if the author is an open and complete person, he has not conducted a private argument with the chosen material, but has conveyed into a

bygone age the fire of a present-day situation. Now we have what we were always seeking: the reality and authenticity of the historical novel. The more this bygone age has truly found in him its husband and key-bearer, the more willingly it yields to him. Events line up unforced, it's as if blindly scattered stones were waiting only for this wand, the wand of the living, suffering, acting, to rebuild themselves into a column.

To the extent that humanity is there, human thinking, feeling, social life, to that extent is authenticity, i.e. real access, possible in literature. For we are of no different timber than those out there in their graves, and the conditions and arrangements under which we live make it possible, at times, for the seemingly quite different conditions over there to accommodate us as well.

Two contradictory driving forces in the modern novel and its practitioners

I return to the assertion I made at the beginning: underlying the novel of today, not just the historical novel, are two currents, one flowing from the fairytale, the other from the report. These currents do not originate in the air of an aesthetics, but from the reality of our lives. We carry within us, to a greater or lesser degree, an inclination to both currents. But we do not deceive ourselves when we say: the active, progressing strata push these days towards the report side, the non-active, calmed and satiated strata to the fairytale side. This is certainly a gross generalisation, a simplification, but by and large it meshes with our observations. Who would relish the pleasant mix of novels and rave about misty azure poesy, delight in traditional styles and modes of speech and yet have no interest in reality – who else but one for whom all goes well and who likes his comfort? Probably too the unimprovable, for whom everything goes badly and who also want their comfort. They want dreams, soothing, consolation. There's nothing to say against it. But they want nothing further. And there's a lot to say about that. And so the ever more bourgeois masses consume the pretend-novel, and the active among the proletarian classes like the warriors of the bourgeois classes want reports and arguments from the realmof our personal and social lives.

The historical novel in our exile literature: to what party do the active belong?

It's time finally to ask, how did discussion of the historical novel arise just at this point?

Many of us are living in exile, no longer surrounded by the society whose fate we grew up with and whose language was ours. We are, physically at least, beyond the magnetic field of the society we lived in, rejected and not yet hitched to a new one. There the active writer finds few things that he can use, that sustain his *joie de vivre*. Most of the everyday that surrounds him remains for a long time silent to him, This is so in every emigration. Here there arises in the storyteller a specific drive towards the historical novel. It's an emergency situation. In itself the historical novel is obviously not the product of an emergency. But wherever writers are exiled, there you find the historical novel. Understandably so, for apart from the lack of a present there is the

desire to find parallels in history, to locate and justify oneself in history, the need to reflect, the inclination to console oneself and, at least in imagination, to take revenge.

Even before the time of our exile, we were emigrants in our own country. You can be an emigrant in your own country. And not only writers, but whole portions of the population were such emigrants, namely those who lived in voluntary or compelled political abstinence. In Germany we had a large quantity of mystical, religious and fairytale literature, the literature of romanticisers, sceptics, the inactive, many pretend-objective representations. We had little active literature, emanating from the partisanship of the active and offering a newly discovered present of a personal or social kind, or an argument with it. Germany had many historical novels, by people who were not exiles, but who were they? We had the best-selling novels of the Egyptologist Ebers, then Felix Dahn's novels of the Roman and Gothic periods, then the historical series of Gustav Freytag, *The Ancestors*.[3] Why are these books so musty? Not because of any literary incompetence of their authors, for some of them were distinguished masters. But because the authors were incapable, given the political castration of the Germans, of mobilising their masses of historical material. They could not press on to the only true authenticity that enables this, namely to the powerful partisanship of the active, to the will of the suffering and the aggressive, they wanted only to endorse and glorify. They were complicit.

We are not complicit. I have spoken of the historical novel. My theme is: the historical novel and us. Now I bring the 'us' to the fore.

The reader, the audience, sits down to a novel, and it's *his own* concerns he wants to experience. It's about him, more or less explicitly. The author appeals insofar as he reveals *his own* concerns. What today are the concerns of reader and author, what are the principles by which one selects historical materials, pierces through and actively shapes them? We only have to glance around a moment and the answer is clear.

Back there in the country we have left behind, how we observed not just the economic anarchy, the stupid struggle of all against all, but along with that the bewilderment and instability of the people, their inner emptiness, the dreadful nihilism that seeped into everything and led everyone to live as best they could, unconcerned about the next man, lazy, comfortable in their solitude. And with it this immense stirring up of great and powerful masses of people, full of the best but cut off not only from real political life but also from participation in the culture and poisoned by the tormenting sense that they'd been disinherited and would remain hopelessly disinherited. So all that could grow is hatred and vengeance. And facing this terrible but natural hatred, the stance of superiority still lived. The moribund master class hurled its insolent and arrogant judgements over the middle-class masses, the bourgeoisie, so that the judgements were happily appropriated as their own. The

[3] **Georg Ebers** (1837-98); **Felix Dahn** (1834-1912): hugely popular national-liberal, social-Darwinist writer. **Gustav Freytag** (1816-95): dramatist, novelist, popular historian.

masses never experienced what a society really is, neither at school nor outside. Instead they were snared and enchanted by images from the realm of masters and serfs, images of violence, war, technology, of success, of world records. The natural love of every human for the land on which he lives for the people he grew up with, was falsified into hatred for the neighbour, into a possessive madness over frontiers.

To unveil and pillory this monstrous degeneracy: this is the only thing that anyone who wants to write today can take with him along the way – as a task, a strength that can move the magic wand. That is the negative.

The positive: authors must distance themselves from the sphere of violence, contempt for humanity and cruelty. They must avoid cowardice and cosy obfuscations. The terrible is not to be sought for its own sake but depicted as disgusting, degenerate. The tireless struggle of all humanity – especially the poor and oppressed –for freedom, peace, genuine society and harmony with nature provides enough examples of courage, strength and heroism. And whoever seeks this will find in every epoch more than ever suspected by the dead people back there, the miserable vehicles of violence.

GERMAN LITERATURE [abroad since 1933]
A dialogue between Politics and Art[1]
(Paris, 1938)

State of German Literature before 1933

Since 1933 German literature has been torn in two: one part continues to exist within the frontiers of the German Reich and to create, or attempt to create; and the other part outside the frontiers. One shouldn't presume to name the latter "emigration literature". It would be more appropriate, as we shall see, to label those productions within the country as "emigration literature". What does contemporary German literature look like now? The fifth anniversary of this dual existence inland and abroad invites commentary. How and where was it sundered by the political intrusion of 1933?

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It's not easy to classify the expansive character of German literature in the period from 1900. We shall hold to a natural, i.e. historical, standpoint. Now we see three great contemporary streams side by side, three streams that correspond to three major historical development paths:

- the Conservatives, with feudal, agrarian and upper-bourgeois indicia, a group that looks backwards and inclines to Classicism;
- a central Humanistic group with a progressive tendency, conciliatory towards the bourgeoisie;
- a group of Revolutionaries of the spirit, very up to date, now political now unpolitical, now rationalistic now mystical.

To the *Conservative* group with its old-feudal, aristocratic and upper-bourgeois traits belong authors such as Wilhelm von Scholz, Hermann [sic] Stucken, Binding, Walter von Molo, Carossa, Hermann Stehr. As prose writers they follow in the wake of, let's say, the older Goethe or Heinrich von Kleist as novelist, or the Austrian storyteller Adalbert Stifter. Here I name too Paul Ernst, Josef Ponten [2]. Certainly, all too certainly we can also locate with them Wilhelm Schäfer, and less certainly, Kolbenheyer.[3] Preferences here are for idylls, history of the Fatherland, pathos, the heroic. They love a picture of early mediaeval Germany, the Staufens,[4] the age of Guilds and Estates, overall patriarchal, feudal-agrarian, cloistered, but also self-satisfied and self-assured.

[1] See also 'The German Utopia of 1933' in Part 2.

[2] Von Scholz, Stucken, Binding, Stehr and Ponten all members of Prussian Academy of Arts, remained members after 1933. **Scholz** (1874-1969): upper-class Prussian lyricist, dramatist; **Eduard** [not Hermann] **Stucken** (1865-1936): palaeologist, historian, novelist, poet; **Rudolf G Binding** (1867-1938): conservative-national writer of stories and legends; **von Molo** (1880-1958): popular national writer, opposed anti-Semitism; **Hans Carossa** (1878-1956): popular author before, during and after the Nazis; **Stehr** (1864-1940): from a poor rural family, favoured "Blood and Soil" politics. **Ernst** (1866-1933): prolific writer in Naturalist and later Neo-classical modes; in 1933 filled a vacancy in the Academy left by expelled members; **Ponten** (1883-1940): novelist.

[3] **Schäfer** (1868-1952): folk-national writer; **Erwin Kolbenheyer**(1878-1962): social Darwinist, mystic Germanist.

[4] South German noble lineage from 12th to 17th C.

A borderline stratum includes Ricarda Huch.[5] A well-known representative of this group, bolstered by links to the Revolutionary stream, is Stefan George.[6] The whole group shares the quirk of a certain derivative epigonism. It lives, in its weaker examples, completely in memories, retrospects, without actually separating these from the world around them and the present day. It busies itself, in its deepest strata, with churning out good, accredited literature. Its house has reliable supports. Often it's pleased with simple imitations of what corresponds to educated taste, and is without further ado guaranteed attention. Normalised beauty is revered. It's unnecessary for me to point out the difference between art-creation and art-arranging.

Next, the *Humanists*. These are bourgeois authors who value the continuation of traditional education. Of course they easily fall into the danger of imitation and the production of literary literature, but this appears only now and then. Unlike the feudalists they don't hurl themselves head over heels into reverence for the past, and can savour periods other than the dramatic and historic epochs of German history. To enjoy these you might don a top hat, and move about in the salon. But the surroundings must be decent and well tended. Hence they're no heralds of war, but civilian. They're a long way from bothering with the all too superannuated patriarchal state structure. In place of this doubtless wonderful ideal and mummery they prefer a progressive Germany and Europe. They've foresworn the humanistic ideal as developed by Classicism. This is the place for Heinrich Mann, who draws pugnacious help and support for his humanistic ideal from France as well. Here we must also include Gerhart Hauptmann, despite his formal-naturalistic plays and despite the petit-bourgeois and proletarian milieu of many of his works. Here we meet Thomas Mann, Jakob Wassermann, Bruno Frank[7] and many others. This is the home of the best writers of the cultivated Vienna and Prague Schools, with Hofmannsthal and Schnitzler at their head. They all grow out of the well-tempered German middle classes, at their backs the progressive, but definitely not too progressive, bourgeoisie. They have to respect certain political boundaries, and show consideration. This isn't hard for them. The German cultural heritage has flowed to them, they hold it in trust.

Now we hit on the stream I've called *Revolutionaries of the spirit*, where there can be no talk of concern for boundaries. Finding a unifying label for the many authors in this group is particularly difficult. In any case they belong together, even though in some respects they repel one another even more than writers usually do. They constitute a completely spiritual generation-gap from the contemporary Feudalists, and from the Humanists who often stand not far from them. *Their sense of the world is different, and new*. Common to all these authors is a more or less open and conscious attitude of disruption, rejection of the past, denial that the past is to be revered. Among them are many who've absorbed no less of the cultural heritage than the Humanists or even the Feudalists, but they understand it differently. And if you speak

[5] **Huch** (1864-1947): poet, philosopher, historian, feminist; first woman appointed to the Academy.

[6] **George** (1868-1933): prophet of "art for art's sake" cult; declined Nazi honours, died in Switzerland in 1933.

[7] **Wassermann** (1873-1934); **Frank** (1887-1945): popular and prolific writers of Jewish background.

to them of the glories of the Middle Ages, or even of Classicism, they all begin in their own way to turn up their noses, make puzzled or mocking remarks, all the way to roars of laughter. This attitude is found among all examples of this literary species, and allows them to be easily recognised. The revolution of the spirit began two or three decades ago in Europe under various names: Futurism, Expressionism, New Objectivity etc.; it revelled in rejection by philistines and educated bourgeoisie alike. Their great scepticism with regard to traditional education, which can extend to rejection and iconoclasm, reveals an original and positive stance towards the reality of the present. They behave in different ways. Now they endorse and glorify technology, industry, economic and political development, and throw themselves into political or class struggle on one or other side; now on the contrary they descend into mysticism, to the Mothers, just as many here actually love the abyss and confusion, swear by the primal powers of dark drives and emotions, and so approach to the Romantic; often they reject all commitment and simply strive for chaos. To name a few Germans who probably belong here, as dramatists and lyricists I note Georg Kaiser, Carl Sternheim, Unruh, Brecht, Toller, Lasker-Schüler, Wolfenstein, also Werfel;[8] as novelists Kafka, Weiss, Leonhard Frank,[9] and include myself. Among the younger ones – Kesten, Roth, Seghers, Regler[10] – the character of this movement is already changing. Also belonging to this group, with well-known political nuances, are Ernst Jünger, Bronnen, Salomon[11].

Literature sundered: 1933

So, this was literature in 1933. Where was it sundered? Where was the fault line? Did this literature divide according to an inner law? In part. It's understandable that members of our conservative and feudalistic groups are inclined to welcome the Nazis, for they'll find there much they find comforting, e.g. Hohenstaufen dreams, inclination towards social Estates, ideas of fraternity, orders of chivalry and other things. And they will stay home – as long as they're allowed to. Nevertheless they'll be heartily astonished by the Caliban-manners of Nazism. The dictatorship is directed at them too, the new state posture appeals to them for its totality, but their conception of it was different. Many had imagined the whole thing as decorative, like the festive

[8] **Kaiser** (1878-1945): during Weimar the most-performed German dramatist; **Sternheim** (1878-1942): J, controversial satirist of the bourgeoisie, **Fritz von Unruh** (1885-1970): scion of Old Prussian nobility, popular dramatist and novelist; in exile from 1933; **Ernst Toller** (1893-1939): J, left-socialist, member of Munich Soviet, popular dramatist; in exile from 1933; **Else Lasker-Schüler** (1869-1945): J, pioneer and central figure of Expressionism; **Alfred Wolfenstein** (1883-1945): J, poet, dramatist, publisher; **Franz Werfel** (1890-1945): Expressionist poet, then internationally popular novelist, married Mahler's widow.

[9] **Ernst Weiss** (1882-1940): Prague doctor, Expressionist writer. **Frank** (1882-1961): popular writer, pacifist.

[10] **Hermann Kesten** (1900-1996): leading exponent of New Objectivity school; promoted several writers, in exile strove to help emigres; **Joseph Roth** (1894-1939): J. Austrian novelist; **Anna Seghers** (1900-1983): J. Communist writer, in exile in Mexico; world famous for 1944 film of her novel *The Seventh Cross*; **Gustav Regler** (1898-1963): passionately Communist novelist.

[11] **Jünger** (1895-1998): conservative-revolutionary writer and activist, broke with Nazis as not anti-bourgeois enough; **Arnold Bronnen** (1895-1959): controversial dramatist, collaborated with Brecht; **Ernst von Salomon** (1902-72): novelist, terrorist, Freikorps member.

meadow in Act 3 of the Meistersinger, or à la Parsifal with or without flower-girls. They notice their dream has been overtaken. And a figure like Stefan George will experience a desire to go into exile and die in Switzerland.

For internal reasons the Humanist group are most sharply affected by the sundering. Here there are no ties to ideals of social Estates. Totalitarian and dictatorial notions are strenuously rejected. For here everyone is genuinely individualistic, democratic, progressive, and there can be no question of acquiescing in an exclusive view of the state, in co-optation [*Gleichschaltung*]. But their roots are in the well-off bourgeoisie, they cultivate its ideals, and so prefer to stay home too, they swallow a lot out of comfort and weakness, they learn to keep quiet, hide away, they're long past the serious effort needed for an honourable antagonism. Those who don't succumb but are under close watch will, even without expressing their opinions too clearly, be swept aside as unloved by the Nazis, stamped with the label of liberal, reactionary, Jew-lackey. We actually find a lot of these authors from the educated bourgeoisie outside Germany. One third left voluntarily, one third were nudged out, one third forcibly expelled. Of course, to name one, the right place for Hauptmann the dramatist would be outside. But for a long time he's grown used to his quite extensive comforts. He became long ago a superman of complacency and tepidness. He was right to stay home. The old, vain, over-praised writer who's been so long coddled by his clique wouldn't come away to where he'd smell better, if it cost him anything.

The third group too has been sundered. The following reason is decisive: there's a connection between the grandfatherly feudal group and the third, the revolutionaries of the spirit. They're at one in despising liberal and humanistic ideas grown limp; many young people find in today's "democracy" little cause for enthusiasm. Another link is mysticism. Grandfather and grandson have some affinity for it. They have, in part at least, decidedly anti-rationalistic inclinations. Au fond, both take a stance against the nineteenth century. To understand the rift that the Nazis have nevertheless made through the third group, you must know that in the world of politics there are left-radicals and right-radicals. Both tendencies are represented among the young, so politics tears the group apart.

It's unnecessary to point out that in all three groups the question "Aryan or non-Aryan" is ever present, inside and outside Germany.

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Some people have made a big deal of the case of lyricist and essayist Gottfried Benn.[12] This Revolutionary of the spirit, a sworn nihilist trailing in Nietzsche's coat-tails, was always pathologically decrepit and a worshiper of power. The split in the camp of the youngsters that led to both Left and Right radicals centred on Nietzsche. One crew turned away from him early on to the pacifists, socialists, opponents of power. Others allowed precisely Nietzsche's amoral theory of power to entice them and were ripe for

[12] Benn (1886-1956): dermatologist; as a writer at first Expressionist and later a detached aesthete. Elected to the Academy in 1932.

convergence with the conservative feudalists, and then with Nazism. Benn didn't turn to the Nazis, he remained in the sphere of the disengaged writer; but he didn't join the exiles, those who turned their back on the Nazis. He, wrongly like many others, saw exile as a movement of the moribund Left. For sure he sees things differently today; but now he sits captured by a power celebrated as Dionysian, and celebrates no more.

In wartime the muses fall silent

Co-opting literature to a political tendency, whether already in power or aiming at power, is not possible. Every such dogmatism sooner or later ends in fiasco. We see it now in the Soviet Union, where some thought to tame literature; one prescription after another was rendered inoperative because damaging, and after such a venture all they want as they tumble head over heels is to reconnect with the old cultural heritage.

And German literature within the Reich frontiers, which since we came away have expanded so enormously? What is it? *During a political Gleichschaltung, all literature, as in wartime, finds itself in exile*. Even within the Reich frontiers, literature exists only in the form of exile literature, i.e. clandestine and illegal. What more closely resembles existence within the Reich frontiers since 1933 than a state of war, such as we older writers experienced with censorship, threats, regulations, surveillance twenty years ago? But in wartime, the muses stay silent. Not out of wilfulness, but because wartime discipline requires and enforces "silence in the ranks". And so, nonsensically, they've busied themselves in the Reich for years, uselessly of course, with prizes, positions, official encouragement – things we strove for sincerely and in vain in peaceful democratic Germany – to make literature grow, bloom and prosper. But it doesn't, because it can't. You cannot have both things at once: wartime conditions, and art.

Hence the remnants of literature that stayed behind in the country are condemned to an unnatural vegetating. Let no one retort that a bellicose state like that of Louis XIV managed to produce lofty literature, or that Michelangelo and others simply and unhesitatingly undertook mighty commissions from their rulers and executed them wonderfully. *Here the spirit of the artists and the general spirit of the age were in conformity with the commissioning rulers*. Nazism – and it knows this – is not in conformity with the spirit of the German people. It hopes to become so, but that's another topic; now it is not, and so cannot bring forth literature and must be satisfied with dilettantism. But it's not merely warlike and dictatorial; it's provincial – and for art that's the worst thing, to have country bumpkins in charge of censorship.

Not emigration literature, but German literature abroad

And so since 1933 we've had back there within the frontiers conservatives, feudalists, with right-radical revolutionaries and a few humanists to be named in private. Over here, meaning abroad, alongside a scattering of Conservative and outsiders we have the mass of Humanists, and a majority of the Revolutionaries of the spirit.

However unsettled and restricted the emigrant authors may be in terms of readers and stimuli and influences, yet they manage to develop under normal conditions. We're not talking of a "torso" of German literature flung over the wall. We shouldn't even call authors living outside "free authors with political nuances". They are not "Leftist" just because they want to work autonomously. Freedom is so much the essence of artistic creation and literary production that when it falls away one can no longer talk of art or literature. Emigrant means simply: banned in the Third Reich. But when a normal person, citizen, man in the street is labelled as not in the army, not in hospital, not wounded, not crippled, not imprisoned, all it means is he's living under normal conditions and is a regular person and citizen of the state. That's the condition of the literature for which some have found the phrase "emigration literature".

The hard fate of German writing abroad

It's very difficult from abroad to follow the fate of that atrophied remnant of German literature that has remained within the frontiers of the Reich. I must therefore limit myself to considering that part which lives on under new conditions abroad. The highly peculiar and unnatural situation of contemporary German literary creation is obvious to everyone. It's even more unnatural than the situation of Germany's liberal, still privately owned economy that has been incorporated into the state regime without being nationalised from the ground up. German literature has been sundered by politics into two parts, one of which, within the country, atrophies under compressed air, while the other may be free, but has little motive force.

Let's hear from a German writer abroad:[13]

> One can compare everything that has happened to us to the transfer of a bacillus strain from one culture medium to another. How does it thrive after the transfer? Well, since we're already seen as bacilli: we haven't actually been placed in a new culture medium. We've brought along our heads and our language, and our nourishment is to be provided by what's left of the German-speaking region, namely German-speaking Switzerland, German-speaking Russia, and to the extent that people in Scandinavia, Holland and the USA understand German. "My Fatherland must bigger grow" says the old song, but just what is the German Fatherland? Our Fatherland has grown fearfully big and extensive, but it's not really the Fatherland and can never be, for one simple reason: these regions, apart from anything else, harbour other cultural strata than those from whose spiritual tensions we have emerged. It may be fortunate for the emigration of German writers that these countries remain open to them. But emigration is more than a material theme. For the writer to have lost the country from which he sprang means severe damage. Because in that old country we absorbed, consciously and unconsciously, a myriad tensions and stimuli; we caught spiritual waves from the great open public world as well as from our own narrower circle, and these myriad strong and weak oscillations meant for us a force-field. And so we lived, whether we belonged to a political party or not, among a great

[13] Assumed to be Döblin himself.

complex of humanity, and grew and thrived by means of it. And it's totally changed, even for those who came away with their own narrower life-circle, friends, family, acquaintances. For who would deny that even this narrower circle adapts in a foreign country in order to adjust to the new circumstances.

So our external and internal life-milieu has changed, and when one thinks about it one is inclined to fear a growing enfeeblement, a slow anaemia, and despite all courage and resistance an increasing spiritual and moral contraction, as in a fortress under siege when food supplies are cut off.

But not at all. So little of anaemia, enfeeblement, spiritual and moral contraction is seen among the writers abroad that, based on their most important works, later literary historians will probably search in vain for marks of "exile". They proceed with courage and justified rectitude, each in his manner, his own way, the young seed and the older. We must acknowledge the terrible material deprivation among them. The disaster inflicts itself pitilessly on most, especially those, not few, who live without companions, gnawed by solitude. What should we say about the many writers, including the most famous, who survive on the most pitiful incomes and compel themselves to produce book after book; it's no fault of the publishers, whom we can only praise. Authors, who are after all artists, are thus robbed of the necessary artistic pauses, and their work borders on exploitation. At all times, even in so-called peace, they have worked under pressure; who doesn't know the way Balzac and Dostoevsky were chivvied, but they managed to find time to breathe, and they were in the midst of life, which challenges and tones you up.

Here I sing the praises of those who don't lose courage, who remain honest and true to themselves. Tucholsky's suicide was a proud deed.[14] He held fast, saw his life's work in tatters, considered it hopeless to go on working, and drew the consequences. But it's never hopeless to go on! One mustn't less this evil penetrate to the substance. Emigration is not just a blow of Fate, but also a test of fire. The longer it lasts, the more it becomes a wandering in the wilderness. It affects and batters more the characters than the talents.

Thus far the song of suffering and power of German literature cast abroad.

We have to remark that whatever the condition of this literature, it presents a quite ghostly aspect overall. These dozens of strong, well-read, even celebrated and highly gifted authors abroad, this profligacy, all this apparatus torn loose, big enough to serve an educated population of millions, thrown into a small space! An entire warship dumped in a puddle. Who can stoke this machine in the long term? Who should its efforts serve? We can't answer the material part of this terrible question. We shall deal with the spiritual side of the problem of German literature under Nazi rule.

Onslaught of politicians: dialogue between the artist and the man in the street

We touch on a much discussed question, one that illuminates the condition of German literature, when we tackle the onslaught of "politicians" on this literature.

[14] Kurt Tucholsky (1890-1935): J. influential leftist, pacifist writer, journalist and publisher; in exile in Denmark.

The man in the street says: "They all write merrily away! Write about their Henri of France, their Joseph in Egypt, Philipp of Spain, three hundred, four hundred, three thousand years ago.[15] What, for the love of God, is going on here? Who's writing for *us*, today's generation, the fate we're enduring? Are we not here, and all that's going on in Germany, does no one have eyes to see, are all these Homers blind? They romp around in Egypt, in Spain, in South America, Dreamland – do these gentlemen not know where and how we live and what looms over us? Is it nothing to do with them?"

If we give the old answer: that in literature we can very well go to Egypt or Spain or anywhere else and set our plot in the year 1550 or 1200 or even two or three thousand years B.C. and still report on the most up-to-date today – the politicians won't listen. They refuse to accept it. And they formulate ever more bitterly the accusation flung at authors: that they spin their old threads unchanged, each in his own cell, and those old threads were no good even back then.

People protest at the disengaged nature of this literature, its inability to unfurl a flag. What they want from literature in general, especially this one, especially now, is not just aesthetic and psychological but also – no, firstly – political and social works.

It's the old challenge of politics and society, the old domineering demand from art.

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Hear the embattled artist and writer: "We produce, and do what we can. If a tree stands there and produces apples and pears, is that enough for you? It's not enough. You demand beef from it. Which it cannot produce." The artist and writer continues:

> Yes indeed, we go on in the same way unchanged, each for himself, exactly as in the homeland. Each spins his own thread. For even emigration and the deepest misery can change nothing of the fundamental facts, of the conditions and preconditions for art and literature. But you refuse to acknowledge actually what we are and what we always, even now, provide: the special excitements and joys that emanate from a work of art, the forms and cadences of language, of pictures, phantasies, this glimpse into nature, everything we're able to offer to refine and uplift the soul. You demand practical, immediately visible political and social impact. This we cannot provide. Art doesn't create bread where there is none (not even for the artist); but it shapes and enriches your Ego. We work with a longer view. Precisely this distance from the practical is a mark of our species. We give much more than you demand. We affirm within you the deepest things brought to light only in your dreams. We have nothing to do with the practical, not with clothing or food, nor with politics. Please leave us the whole person and the whole world.

The practical man, the politician, is enraged: "You are writers, artists. You have an excellent weapon in your hands: the word. You know how to wield it, and yet satisfy yourselves with instructing, distracting, diverting us. You want to make works of art, you like doing that. But we don't want diverting, Mister Artist, we want guiding. You

[15] Heinrich Mann published his two volume novel on Henri IV in 1935 and 1938; Thomas Mann began his tetralogy *Joseph and his Brothers* in 1926 but wrote most in exile; the parts were published in 1933, 1934, 1936 and 1943. Alfred Döblin's *Amazonas Trilogy* (published 1937-38) includes colourful depictions of Philipp II.

enjoy your games, and meanwhile we and the world go to ruin. If that's art, we wish you joy of it and bid you go jump in the lake."

In deepest solitude, the artist carries society with him

An exaggerated exchange. But I assert: in war the muses are silent, and here, in emigration as well, they are denied a mouth. The whole exchange has a metaphysical character, if you take a peek at why there's misunderstanding on both sides. For what the artist thinks and says is of course correct. On the other hand, the demand of the "politicians" – that one must attend to their conditions and the artist has a duty to his surroundings – can't simply be dismissed. But what about the artist's assertion that *primo* he deals with the Eternal in the human, and *secundo* with his own creative drive? And that nothing beyond this is his concern?

Let's assume it's true: what does it mean? So Hans can lie in Gretel's arms for an hour's loving in the most private of feelings under some juniper bush, but look: a little boy is the result – and if they hadn't by chance seen each other at the haymaking and taken great joy in the sunset (lots of personal feelings to which they yield), then this little boy wouldn't have come into the world, yet fifteen years later he has a quite different and irrelevant impact, for he caused the reform school no end of trouble and forced the supervising authority to a humiliating review of the institution leading to an old director being pensioned off early and dismissal of a third of the staff. *This was the impersonal, factual impact of a completely private impulse*. Feelings and opinions do their thing, and the world does its thing. Philosophers have long noted this, and Hegel called it the "cunning of the idea".[16] He means the peculiar, unremarked or merely suspected appropriation of "our" deeds by the world (so they thereby lose their character of being ours). We do what we can how we can – as for the world, people take it as they wish and make of it what they like. That's the song of Fate.

And the conclusion? The artist can, as he says, sit quietly brooding on something he believes to be the Primal Egg, others look on sympathetically and check the egg, which for them is not at all a Primal Egg – for weight and eatability!

Already the artist must content himself with a certain, shall we say metaphysical, curtailment of his arrogance. But more even than this is owed to the politician and practical person (even though his approach is clumsy, as is typical of this type of person). Say the artist's claim of "isolation" actually rings true, then is it actually true that a work of art is formed and written in genuine isolation? Answer – No! And this is a decisive point, and here we must all resolve, especially in the German case, to align with the practical person. For the situation is this: *Into his isolation, however deep, every artist, every writer carries with him the society he lives in. This society writes and shapes along with him, in language, in judgements, images and concepts that he brings with him. The writer in his isolation is not dumb. He conducts a myriad conversations on all sides and into them brings his intuition.*

[16] Actually "the cunning of reason".

If it is so, we can see more clearly. The question is not hard and almost insoluble (Is the artist isolated, or is he sociable?); rather, *which* society do you bring with you into your loneliness and separation, *how much* of it do you bring along, and not to forget: how do you approach it, how do you interact with it, hence: who are you, yourself?

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Everything the writer said remains true: about the things hidden in us of which he makes use, about the emotional drivers he follows. But the function of the artist is twofold: to preserve the primal flame within, and to pass it on. For he himself spoke of enriching the Ego of others through art. Our Earth emerged once from fire, it solidified and cooled and we with it, and we seep away more and more into a cold frugal utility. Here art is the great protecting mother. Here you can't ask: artist for oneself or for others? The artist holds within him a society in miniature, and in consequence of his mental structure (he speaks of a drive to create) he must undertake in silence, in isolation, the process I mentioned of conveying to others the primal flame, and that means: in complete independence and without restraint. He has no need to go along streets, into salons, gatherings; he is there already.

Imagination is there for him. Without that, and only without that, would he be alone – but then, no longer an artist. So we can leave him in peace, when he's working for himself, to think what he likes of his activity – contact with the world is there. The work itself has as much and as little to do with himself as a child with its mother.

Through the pruned-down society within him that mobilises his imagination, the artist is able to achieve what we expect of him – if he is an artist. To lovers and the loveless he gives love; to the frigid, yearning; to the ambitious, triumph; to the criminal, a sense of guilt and a path to contrition. Of his stance in relation to daily politics, which the man in the street also demands of him, we'll have more to say later.

The nub of the matter

The studiously desiccated German artist and writer – and now we've arrived happily at the nub of the matter – brings with him the problem that he has in his solitude only a miserable miniature edition of society, and that his organ for handing on the flame is weak. And from this arises all the rancour and misunderstanding. For unlike earlier storytellers and actors who were at the same time dramatists, he's not concerned to head for the market and the stage. Eliciting smiles and tears and excitement in the audience below doesn't attract him enough. He places himself self-righteously in the pulpit, at the lectern, harrumphs with aplomb, lectures and proclaims. He – confesses, clothes himself brazenly as a prophet. And what is he? Look: a literary functionary! Here is art of the same kind as his state: authorised art. *We have before us a negation of whole big swathes and hunting grounds of art, a flattening and plating over, a kind of deflating and salarifying of poets and writers.*

There are and will always be some kinds of writing that are inaccessible to many. There are other kinds of art to which larger numbers find their way. But most can

become generally accessible, and this is a characteristic of strong works that endure because they comprise a varied content for the many, that they use many means to penetrate and ingratiate. The studiously desiccated kind of writing lacks this. We know where it comes from and what it comes down to: slough off the academic and the officially sanctioned, throw out the schoolteacher and the corporal. (This, by the way, is why women, who have been less affected by salarifying, have recently slipped so noticeably and successfully into literature.)

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We're now at the nub of the problem. We have before us a psychological fact, a mindset among German writers, from which the wretchedness of our prose literature largely stems: as social beings, they are feeble.

What distinguishes a German from a French writer? The same thing that distinguishes a German from a French citizen: the low level of sociability. All those French novels, because their authors are themselves participants, seize on themes from the French society laid out before them. No one will claim they've thereby diminished their art and, through a turn towards society and its problems, have relinquished their right to imagination and invention.

These authors, who may externally live in deepest solitude, totally remote and isolated, are bound up with their society, not monks and savants like the Germans. Not occasionally, but constantly and throughout their works – which remain art – they are helpers, campaigners, fighters, warriors for the humane. Their efforts work on the social organism, and most are happy so, it enlivens them. This goes even for Proust's psychological refinements. And when the demand is raised for someone, Mallarmé say, to leave the "ivory tower", all it does is summon the writer who's become too much lost in the world to pull himself together, demand of him more and higher truth, distance from the banal, rigour, self-development, artistic shaping of his work.

Short-circuit into mysticism

But the German – oh the boundless calamity of his development! It stands dreadfully under the sign of contempt and denial of the "everyday", of "private matters". In the head they have very "lofty" matters, and these were abstractions. The concrete was kept at arm's length, even when they set about narrating. The ordinary was "vulgar", unworthy of treatment, as earlier with sexual diseases. To sexual prudery was added social prudery. Whole spheres of life, for example touching on money, on means of subsistence, everything that was bourgeois and not noble, not replete with Feeling, lay under a taboo. Psychologically they were retarded, morally haughty and stupid. The world was narrow and boring, any daily newspaper contained more of it. Nevertheless a few strong authors broke through without losing face: we think of Gottfried Keller.[17]

[17] Gottfried Keller (1819-90): Swiss writer and activist, considered one of the great figures of Naturalism.

The trouble Goethe took. He knew and called out: "Just engage with human life in its fullness, and wherever you tackle it, it will be interesting." He chided Heinrich von Kleist – less all-encompassing than Goethe but a much stronger poet – accusing him of not "simply" giving himself and writing plays suitable for any fairground stage. And then it had to happen with Goethe that following this appeal he dragged the public through Heaven and Hell. Once again it was about "eternal problems" (but these are problems of clerics and a few philosophers). *The short-circuit into mysticism*.

Current German literature is replete with enthusiasts and ecstatics, who carry in their trouser pockets moral or historical, metaphysical, demands of some kind. From poetry they have lurched their way into the novel (which often shows in the style). In novels by living authors we encounter blind maidens and saints (Hermann Stehr), a saint representing a successor to Christ (Hauptmann's *Emanuel Quint*), a hundred-fold idiosyncratic other-worldliness, many bizarre half-beings and schemes. What this literature characterises is the whiff, a positive one, of German mysticism, but on the other hand its scant connection to real people, their plights, their desires (for the human is a microcosm), and their backgrounds.

Slowly, endlessly slowly it proceeds, the secularisation of German literature – in parallel with the closing of the political barrier.

Short-circuit into politics

What can one do to counter this evil? We're invited to politicise ("incite" is a feeble word, we're enticed, urged, forced). And what happens there is Beelzebub driving out the Devil. A second short-circuit occurs, the one in everyday party politics. Did I say that artists carry no politics with them into their isolation and their works suffer for it? I spoke of "society", of the great living human and natural environment. That is missing. *But politics? What's that? More mysticism!* Bad, misplaced, disguised mysticism and metaphysics, the metaphysics of the little man in the street. Short-circuit into Party programmes (with also afflict French and English literature now) has been rampant in literature for several decades; it's little enough progress against the pale, faded, phrase-flailing mysticism that preceded it.

But this was a mistake. Abstractness cannot be cured by abstractness. Now we have no enthusiasts or saints, instead political saviours and martyrs; religious fantasising replaced by party blether. How does this make the true "mindset" of the author?

I read a page of Maxim Gorky. A pitiable fate is depicted , a village prostitute with a crippled child in the house, the mother's visitors, scenes witnessed by the child. A human world in miniature, quite submerged and secluded, shocking and true and acknowledged as true by every reader, because you can see that here a heart is speaking. No dogma has guided the heart to feel such and such, and all dogma could achieve here is to compromise the truth and completeness of the picture and weaken the value of the tale.

Look into Keller's *Seldwyla Tales*, into stories by Tolstoy in his old age, into *Madame Bovary*, and – I could mention other outstanding works – you will understand.

It is not right for authors to sit with members of some party in order to grant them an insight into their efforts and let them discuss. This happens! It's ridiculous and a provocation when theoreticians and authors take up a position and animate themselves to produce "anti-fascist" works.

We should be left to work in peace. We are *German literature abroad* and will not be lectured about our task by any politician. We are a continuation of *free* German literature and will take care not to fall into forced conceptions. For a long time now we've given the Nazis no such joy. It's irresponsible and disgusting, the cliquiness of the German parties which even abroad encroaches on literary criticism and breeds "friendly" and "hostile" authors and those to be silenced. How is this a sensible stance?

Real politics wants the continued secularisation of German literature. The point is to allow a spirit to arise unhindered among German writers that attaches itself more closely than in the past to society and community. They must find a deeper satisfaction in digging into human beings and their background.

Authors will not be changed by a political programme, only by the slow impetus of experience. I would advise those authors who have a parallel desire to engage in politics to keep these things well apart. Political formulae and demands, brainy abstractions in art are merely labels.

The gentle mighty power of art

If various people complain today: why since 1918 was more not done, so that we now have to raise this question – we openly and those back there dumb but no less suffering – the answer comes: to set this rigid, almost mechanically compact mass of people more in flux, the fourteen years after 1918 did achieve something, with little support from the power holders of the day, while the stance of the authorities, for so long a thorn in the flesh, did nothing but hinder. Such dreadful scepticism and lack of faith and courage on the part of the democratic leaders! They were flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood of those who should have overthrown them.

Twenty years ago I experienced the war, before that politics had left me rather cold, the little world in which I lived was my society – and then out there we got to know catastrophe, the hundreds of corpses, the poor fellows who passed through our hands in the military hospital, we saw pilots fight and crash, bombs explode, epidemics carried people off in unimaginable numbers.

Then I understood what war means, and have never forgotten, and wouldn't have believed that a time would come when I would have to remember all of that and the helpless outrage of those times: "What is it actually, how does it all come about, who has the right to treat us so, who has his hand in the game?" It's in plain sight, this senselessness and frenzy and unleashing of every brutality and squashing of the most

primitive emotions between people, and it's outrageous, no intolerable, to let it roll irresistibly over us. And now once again war is near, the same war, exactly the same!

Oh a fearsome world is this world, and if we cannot renounce what we are, unimprovable glorifiers and lovers of life, and cannot renounce what we know of its deeps and enchantments, *we shall for better or worse have to deal more than before with that same face of the world called war, severity and wickedness, which is the face of a tiger.* We shall recall, although we are not lute-players, the legend of Orpheus, who tamed savage beasts; we shall have to tame and compel.

And so however insignificant we feel ourselves to be, we must trust more than before in the power of art and the shaped word. Indeed, we are preserving a flame.

Significant theoreticians and critics, under whom we suffered much back there, lectured us day in, day out (and still do so, to those who even today have any desire to lend them an ear): the economy, the sacred economy! Economy alone rules the world! It's a matter of inputs and outputs, of capital and the market and sales, and that's the true ABC! And what could we poor writers do there? All we could do was beg the lords of the sacred economy and stern capital to allow themselves to be entertained by us in their pauses from governing, and plead with these high gods to throw us a few crumbs from their table. And then I stumble upon a French historian, Elie Halévy, who toiled in the English war archives. He said once that in England there reigns a despotism of custom that makes the despotism of laws superfluous, that here people are led not so much by interests as by convictions and passions. This is a remarkable observation – and about England. The Frenchman says: after perusing a great amount of material on the war, he has become convinced that the economic conflicts around 1914 could have resulted in accommodations and arrangements, had national passions not become drawn in. Overall, he believes, English politics have more an emotional than an economic character, more a patriotic than a utilitarian.

And so it seems that we do indeed have more place in the world than just in the salons of the (actually not so) powerful of the world. We cannot join in the battle for the oilfields, but whatever of it that streams into public and governmental and above all into private life is not withheld from us.

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And now I've reached the end. And when I look over what I have said, a shiver runs through me. I feel: *at last – the artist must speak one more time*.

Secularising German literature: does this not mean driving out its own particular spirit? So I want to give much to real historical development, but as for art, it should follow along in its wake, and art itself? But what is "real historical" development, if art lands up in its wake? What conception does this reveal of our so dreadfully unsettled existence, compelled to face questions of principle? No, I must confess: *religion, mysticism, art belong in the creating centre of a new humanity*. Let the present day rage and rage against it. It rages because all spirit has moved to the periphery. Literature will contribute to a cure only to the extent that it dives into the old humanity-

constructing centre. What I denounced was only the contempt for reality and a human community, and the clinging to a bloodless phantom, to abstractions that pass themselves off as mystical and are actually signs of hollowing-out, disenchantment, desiccation, even degeneration.

EPILOGUE (Final version) 1948

It's probably about time to write an Epilogue.

Here lies a pile of books – "here" is the wrong word, I should say: there exist, there have been written in the last five decades, but not "here". Some re-appear, most have gone missing. Would I feel pride if they all stood before me, and like a cherished author I was honoured with a "Collected Works"? I think not. This is not the time for collected works, such puffed-up ostentation. Let no one these days fool himself.

When cities lie in ruins, when all are doing their best to scrape along, everyone is sick of the past and no one knows what tomorrow will bring and no one is stirred to hope (or can be stirred), then the times call for a "selection": fragments, torsos laid side by side on a trolley. Where to start, where will it end? Don't ask.

*

What did these books want? I still remember. I, who still feel myself as "I", wanted nothing to do with them. There were in these things no aims, desires, intentions. But at some point I was seized by a message, a report. On each occasion there must have been some news item or story, for when it sparked and connected and I held it fast, it proved to be the seed in a mother liquor, a supersaturated solution: now crystals grew.

I could also say that a string came into my hand, it turned out to be the end of a ball, and I began to unroll it till I reached the other end. But what I unrolled, what flowed out of me in pictures, of course, was I myself, my state at that time, and even more: something that worked in me impersonally, as Nature, and loved to take on spiritual, fantastical forms, a meteor, a stone statue, precipitating out of my substance.

When it came to an end, every time I was glad it was over.

This happened to me often, at intervals of years, and such things belong (you can read about it) to the everyday psychology of "production". Afterwards I had no wish to see the offspring, my "product", and if it came into my hands I hardly recognised it and pushed it away. It repelled me a little.

Such a strange self-consciousness, such an "aura", during those periods. It lent a peculiar knowingness, a clairvoyance. What did I know of China or the Thirty Years War? I lived in this atmosphere only for the short span of the writing. Importunate, harshly lit vivid scenes placed themselves before me. I scooped them up, wrote them down, and brushed them off. There they lay in black and white. I was glad to have no more to do with them.

*

My obsession with writing began early. My first pieces were written at age 14, in a little blue notebook. And what did I note down at that time? God is good. He is Goodness in the world. This was the solution to the riddle of "God".

I noticed early on that I had succumbed to religion and metaphysics – and tried to extricate myself. I read a huge amount, not so much *belles lettres* as philosophy (while

still at the Gymnasium, around 1900), Spinoza, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Spinoza most intensively.

Why did I try to extricate myself from metaphysics and religion? Perhaps because they were splitting me in half. I had little chance to talk about things that bothered me. There were discussions galore during my schooldays, but nothing and nobody I came across was capable of acting as a spiritual midwife. And I remained in that state while living my life in bourgeois society, a medical man and one with a deep interest and involvement in things of the world, moving among them (untidily, without discipline, without guidance) as best he could. But inside, this entity carried around a strange character that quarrelled with the man outside, the medical man, the one living in society, and never reached an understanding. It never could reach an understanding.

*

When I wrote I took care not to compete with Nature. It was clear to me from the start that one is faced with this reality. The task, after all kinds of naturalistic principles were proclaimed as challenges, was to depict this confrontation.

Around 1900, when I left school, at the start of my student career, I came into contact with Herwarth Walden[11] (he too lived in the east of Berlin, in Holzmarkt Strasse, his father was a medical consultant). We made fun of the current idol of the bourgeoisie, Gerhart Hauptmann[2] and his inauthentic fairy-tale feyness, and the cramped classicism of Stefan George[3]. The author of *Buddenbrooks* [4]was already there; we ignored him.

One came across Else Lasker-Schüler[5], Peter Hille[6] in the Café des Westens[7], occasionally at Dalbelli's[8] on the Potsdam Bridge. We had close contact with Richard Dehmel[9], with Wedekind[10], Scheerbart[11].

Around that time (1905) I wrote a play *Lydia und Mäxchen – a deep bow in one act* [12] which was performed in a matinee alongside a piece by Scheerbart at the Residenz

[1] Herwarth Walden (1878-1941): major figure in the early 20th C Berlin avant-garde.

[2] Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946): leading exponent of German Naturalism.

[3] Stefan George (1868-1933): Symbolist poet, exponent of 'art for art's sake'.

[4] *Buddenbrooks*: Thomas Mann's first major novel, published 1901. Apart from general hostility between bourgeois naturalism and the avant-garde, Mann and Döblin were personally at odds several times later.

[5] Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945): leading Expressionist poet, married to Walden 1901-11.

[6] Peter Hille (1854-1904): Bohemian, often homeless writer, in 1902 set up a literary cabaret in Berlin with several leading lights of the avant-garde.

[7] Café des Westens: also known as Café Grossenwahn (Megalomania). Gathering ground for Modernist artists and writers and their hangers-on.

[8] Dalbelli: Italian café, another major meeting-place for the avant-garde.

[9] Richard Dehmel (1863-1920): Expressionist writer; became one of the best known WW1 German poets.

[10] In a 1947 letter Döblin wrote warmly of the playwright Wedekind (1864-1918), having earlier been critical: "During his life he never achieved the position he deserved. He wasn't seen aright, not properly appreciated."

[11] Paul Scheerbart 1863-1915: poet, sketcher, wrote phantastical fictions; a forerunner of the Expressionists.

[12] *Lydia*…: first performed 1 Dec 2005 at Walden's Salon for the Friends of the Art Union (not at the Residenz).

Theatre in Berlin in 1906. It was the protest of a written and acted play against its author. Characters and scenery come alive and make themselves independent. They speak and act differently from what the author felt himself able to require. During the performance they drive author and director from the stage and in an impudent and provoking manner bring the tamely composed script to a gory conclusion.

Around that time I worked in Regensburg as an assistant doctor in the local mental asylum, and wrote a long abstract piece reflecting on music (I no longer know why I did this), with the title *Conversations with Calypso on Music and Love*. Parts of it were printed in *Der Sturm*. That journal also took my early short stories, fantastical, burlesque and grotesque pieces that I later collected in the volume titled *The Daffodil Murder*. The worthies around *Der Sturm*...[13] enjoyed these pieces, which seemed to them "expressionistic", flesh of their flesh and blood of their blood. But when I raised my visor and let rip with *Wang Lun* (1912), the game was up – now was my true beginning. Neither Walden nor any of the others from the circle of the orthodox said a word about the novel. But we maintained friendly relations. They developed (with Stramm and Nebel [14] in the lead) into pure word-artists, artists anyway. I followed other paths. I understood that lot well, they never understood me.

*

Expressionism and the genres associated with it remind one of the East Asian philosophy of Zen. Just as the latter thaws out a logic and wisdom considered "normal" but in fact frozen, so Expressionist art turns its back on the smoothness and shallowness of "beauty", which it attacks and demolishes. This is not a merely formalistic turn, even if the fights around it focus on form.

But this was not enough for me. I turned my back even more than the Expressionists on the kind of "beauty" we had inherited, and was for that reason deemed by them an apostate. I never took literature and art very seriously. My view was that one should make use of values and literature for other purposes, important purposes. What were these?

I saw how the world – Nature, society – rolls over people, rolls over the person, like a heavy iron tank. Wang Lun, the hero of my first extensive fiction, experienced this. Along with other casualties he withdraws, still alive, from this violent misanthropic world, and without attacking it poses a challenge. It rolls over him and his friends anyway. In this case it proves to be the stronger. Nothing else is proven.

I couldn't stand still at this point, the process was too weighty and sombre. I had to pursue things farther. And I didn't want to be fettered by the weight and the sombreness. So I turned smartly about and arrived, quite unintentionally, in fact completely against my will, in daylight, fresh air, and burlesque. *Wadzeks Kampf mit*

[13] worthies: Döblin namechecks **Rudolf Blümler** (who staged several *Sturm* events); **Lothar Schreyer** (edited *Der Sturm* 1916-26); **August Schramm** (senior postal official and Expressionist wordsmith); **Franz Marc** (painter and writer from Munich); **Oscar Kokoschka** (painter and writer).

[14] Otto Wilhelm Nebel 1892-1973: painter, actor, Expressionist poet.

dem Dampfturbine (*Wadzek's Struggle with the Steam Turbine*) was to have been followed with a *Kampf mit dem Ölmotor* (*Struggle with the Petrol Engine*). But war came just as I wrote the *Steam Turbine*, I served as a military doctor in Lorraine and Alsace, and was surrounded by the noise of war and the misery of wartime ailments. For weeks on end the thunder of cannon fire from Verdun.

So I leapt down from my *Wadzek* steed and mounted another nag, *Wallenstein*. In *Wadzek*, the man floundered breathlessly along in the wake of technology, he kicked out, cried, stumbled, went down on all fours, and then another came running along wheezing. But in *Wallenstein* someone stood there and did not budge. The book should really have been called *Ferdinand the Other*. I knew this. But *Wallenstein* denoted the time and the circumstances. Here I let myself go. I was awash in facts. I was in love, excited by these documents and reports. I would have liked to deploy them verbatim. Insofar as events in history occurred, they were authentic and complete.

Among them, as ringleader and commander of facts, as their motor, stood the man of facts, the scene-shifter of history: Wallenstein, wood of their wood, iron of their iron, granite of their granite, certainly not flesh of their flesh, for there was no flesh. And if I had left this man to his own devices, it would have meant thirty years of war. But why depict this and conjure up the memories, with the thunder of Verdun in the background? Neither the Thirty Years War not the thunder of Verdun spoke to me.

And so to Ferdinand the Other, the Emperor (whom I had to create). I set him conversing with the almighty facts. He answered the thunder. Result? He gives up.

That's how I saw things at the time. Like Wang Lun, Ferdinand faded from the "world".

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No, there's nothing left to do but give up. That was my general insight at the time. Openly and furtively I took a Spinozan pleasure in grandiose phenomena. No doubt I saw humanity, its Ego, its suffering. But to it, and to myself, I showed no mercy.

So here I was, led back to the same place. For however prettily the historical events were packaged, I was not deceived as to the weakness of the position, the indecisiveness, lack of courage of this suicidal opposite number.

So my next venture was not an isolated historical event, but Technology, the power latent in Man, and I embarked on *Mountains Oceans Giants*. This time a quite general theme: What will become of Man if he continues living this way? (The years that followed provided some examples.) It was as if I called myself to order.

In a book that sweeps over epochs and spaces, I was able to report on the development and misuse of technology, to the point that it embraces biological praxis, undertakes alterations even in humanity, its own originator, and how it leads humanity back to the Cretaceous. The horrified remnants of humanity now bend the knee and sacrifice humbly to primal powers.

"Sacrifice" and "humility" were my inventions, this insight, but not yet the inner power. Now I was at the end of the road with masses and enormous collective forces. Yes, up to the *Giants* book I had clung to the sublimity of the created world and been on its side. With the exhausting efforts on the Giants book, enough had now been done to me.

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There was a pause – and then I set off again to see where I stood. Some people undertake such exploratory journeys through reading, others through conversation and lengthy, penetrating introspection. Something of the sort precedes my books. But the real process of introspection and discovery occurs during the writing itself. The peculiar, bitter, fatal fact is that – each of my books ends (for me) with a question mark. Each book throws the ball to a new one.

After reaching the end of the "mass road", I was led to the individual human, the person. I did not consciously draw this conclusion from what had gone before; my unconscious, which I usually left alone to do its work for me, did so.

Once I found (in Berlin, in the city library on the Marstall) a travelogue from India with many pictures and lots of history.[15] This was a new area for me, and it was fantastically, tropically bountiful. I was enthralled by reports of Hinduism, of Shiva the God, of a Realm of the Dead. I saw a man intruding there, someone from our world, prepared to be torn to pieces by the sorrow he finds there in the world of the dead. He wants to be assailed by all earthly pain, bind himself to all the pain, because he knows, having returned from war, that we are all one and the same, all brothers, the murderer and the murdered, the executioner and his victim.

He dares the terrible journey and breaks down. But Savitri, a woman (a Goddess, divine love) raises him again; he returns as a new man, a demi-god. Thus, written in free verse, was *Manas*, an epic poem.

Up till then my books had had a kind of success of attention. The actual book market was occupied by other authors. There you could find tales of love, marriage, crime, lots of psychology, and the educated public also liked their education to be served up in novels; they were served with contemporary issues, cultural problems with a dollop of philosophy. This is the essayistic, Sunday supplement degeneration of the novel.

My books could not join in. I presented images, and everything was dense, too dense for newspaper readers.

Added to this was the distinct style of each of my books, which was not laid over it from the outside. I had no style "of my own" that I carried around with me all the time as mine ("the style maketh the man"), rather I allowed the style to emerge from the substance.

[15] travelogue: possibly E Schlagintweit: *Indien in Wort und Bild*, 2 vols 1880-81.

So here, in *Manas*, free rhythms and an Indian world: it was too much. This book was spurned.

"How on earth did you light on this?" asked my publisher, old Fischer, in dismay once the disaster had unfolded.

For me, the book was all right. From this point on came books which pivot on the individual human and the mode of his existence.

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Manas: even he let me go, unsatisfied, though I let him return to his mythical landscape as a demi-god. The question Manas threw to me was: What happens to a good man in our society? Let's see how he behaves, and what our existence looks like from his angle. This became *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (a title that my publisher absolutely did not want to accept, it's just a railway station, and I had to append a sub-title: *The Story of Franz Biberkopf*). Of course I didn't write this book – rather, it didn't write itself – in free verse, but in the accents of Berlin. But blindly – these being the critics of our age – they made short shrift of the book: "successor to Joyce." Even if I should be beholden to someone and follow them (something I have absolutely no need of, I manage both style and substance quite well for myself; my motto is: "I live in a house of my own, and have never copied anyone else, and always laugh at any master who does not laugh at himself") – if I did have to follow someone and borrow from them, why go to Joyce, the Irishman, given that I became familiar with the style and methods he used (which I much admired) at the same place he did, among the Expressionists, Dadaists and so on.

Alexanderplatz has a style suited to it, as did *Manas* and *Wallenstein* (admittedly you need some acquaintance with these to see it).

This book (misunderstood as a depiction of the Berlin underworld) was a success with the public, and I was nailed fast to it. This didn't stop me from proceeding farther down my road, and disappointing those who want a consistent template.

"Sacrifice" was the theme of *Alexanderplatz*. Depictions of the slaughterhouse, the sacrifice of Isaac, the recurrent refrain: "There is a Reaper whose name is Death", should have made this clear. The "good" Franz Biberkopf, with his claims on life, endures unbroken right up to his death. But he was supposed to be broken, he had to give up, not just externally. But I had no idea how. Facts leap out at you, but paralysis doesn't save you.

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To run this problem to earth, to get behind the secret of a breakdown and what leads to it, I now set in motion a man similarly comfortable in his body, but this time excessively arrogant, a Babylonian god. This god "Conrad" was burdened with crimes, a much more serious criminal than Franz Biberkopf, the simple transport worker from Berlin. But he was even less inclined to work on and with himself.

This book, *Babylonische Wandrung (Babylonian Exile)*, makes a shocking mockery of the idea of sacrifice in *Alexanderplatz*. The god Conrad has not the slightest thought of atoning, he never even acknowledges that he has abdicated, lost his throne, and maintains this stance throughout. I've no idea how my plan skidded away from me as I wrote. A mischievous imp played a trick on me. It was a setback. I struggled with his comings and goings.

So I went into exile in 1933 carrying this book. It got me no farther, and indicated a resistance, an obstacle and rigidity in me. It's as if I felt something coming close, and barricaded myself against it.

*

1934, in the Paris suburb of Maisons-Laffitte[16], (in exile I had a lot of time to think) I tinkered around with a little Berlin novel *Pardon wird nicht gegeben*[17]. A family story with an autobiographical topping. I say "autobiographical". This is progress. I dared to approach the hearth. Earlier I had declared haughtily: "The epicist has eyes in order to see into the distance." I was not fond of lyricism, I wanted events, incidents, figures, a stone façade – and no psychology. (In those days I did a lot of observing, and my profession was Psychotherapy – of others.)

*

Very soon after this excursion in the form of a novel, I encountered Kierkegaard in the National Library in Paris, and browsed, at first without much enjoyment, in the two volumes of his *Don Juan*. But the book would not let go of me. For the first time in ages I read with attention. I made notes.

But there, in the same great library, I stumbled on something else: atlases. And then ethnographies with marvellous pictures. I was caught, lured away from Kierkegaard. Maps of South America with its mighty Amazon river: what a joy. I always had time for water, for the element of rivers and seas. I wrote about water in *Ego above Nature*, and celebrated oceans in the Utopian book.

Now, the Amazon. I immersed myself in its character, this marvellous being, river-ocean, age-old thing. Its banks, its animals and people belonged to it.

One thing led to another. I read about indigenous peoples, stepped into their history, read how the White Man invaded. Where had I come to? Again the same old story, hymns to Nature, praise the wonder and glory of this world? Same old dead end?

Soon I began writing, really with one idea: to give to this river-ocean what was the river-ocean's, and show its people, and not let the Whites near. This was the first volume: *Land without Death.* (Oh what slow progress one makes.)

But in the end Las Casas butted in. The man began to complain. His voice would not be drowned out by the rushing of this marvellous river. I allowed people to enter

[16] Maisons-Lafitte: Döblin lived at 4 Ave. Talma from November 1933 to December 1934.

[17] Translated as *Men without Mercy* by T and P Blewitt, Gollancz, 1937.

alongside the hymns to Nature, and the next volume was done, the ball flew on. Las Casas' appearance at the end of the first volume turned the rest into prologue. It was no dead end.

And now it became the magnificent humanitarian effort: the Jesuit Republic on the Paraná. Christianity in a struggle with Nature, and in a struggle with inadequate Christians. A new theme, I wanted to learn from it and test myself. I couldn't evade the theme, it pursued me, apprehended me just when, at the end of the first volume, I was acting as if I'd outrun it.

And yet I did evade it, I extracted myself as smoothly as I could. That accounts for the vibrancy and shimmer of the style, also for the cheerfulness (of Conrad, who would not atone), for the worship of the primal powers of Nature. But within it there stood unmoving a reserved profound reverence. Religion stands there in silence –

The swan-song of this South American novel (*A New Jungle*) could not help but depict the terrible inconsolable scorching sense of loss that still remains.

After that, Kierkegaard came to the fore and now, 1936, I devoured one volume after the other. (Oh, at that time my eyes were good, I could read and read.)

I excerpted large parts, filled notebooks. He shook me. He was honest, alert and true. His results did not interest me as much as his style, his direction and will. He pushed me towards, not Truth, but Honesty.

And after I had satisfied my desire for adventure with my South American book, I returned to my native shores. I thought of Berlin, that distant city, and examined in my thoughts, as I had done in 1934 with *Men without Mercy,* how it had all come about. I wanted to lay out the old landscape and in it place a man, a kind of Manas and Franz Biberkopf (the test probe) so that he could test and experience himself/myself.

First I erected the landscape, set the scene (in the first volume of the narrative work *November 1918* [18]) in a military hospital in Alsace, where I had worked as a doctor in the latter part of the war, 1917-18. And soon the man came towards me, a patient whom I shaped and fixed on to carry his and my burden in the novel.

Two things ran alongside each other and together: the tragic fizzling-out of the German revolution in 1918 and the obscure motives of this man. The question raises itself in his regard: how he should begin to act. But he wants to. From what starting point? On what basis? He has to decline to reach a decision. He cannot choose between two and three sandbanks as a foundation for the house he will build. The story becomes heaven-and-hellish. The man, Friedrich Becker, is surrounded by hallucinations. He must pass through the "gate of horror and despair". He stays alive. In the end he finds himself broken and transformed into a Christian. (This happens in volumes 2 and 3.)

[18] This first volume was omitted from. John E Woods' translation (Fromm 1987), having been censored from the first post-war German edition due to sensitivities regarding Alsace-Lorraine.

He carries the Christianity he has attained through the final volume (*Karl und Rosa*). Heaven and hell continue fighting in him. Outwardly squalid, inwardly he is eaten up. But – he is raised up.

The book *1918* floated on ahead of me. It was completed in 1941 in California. Between the third and fourth volumes lay the year 1940, the dreadful invasion of France. Later I wrote about a resulting "fateful journey" through that country.[19]

Then I myself was granted what had eluded my Conrad but not Friedrich Becker: an enlightenment. The enlightenment was complete. The standpoint was given. Another view of the world, another kind of thinking. I tested my new situation thoroughly in a book *Der unsterbliche Mensch (The Immortal Human).* I looked around the house I had entered. I strolled through the rooms, whose doors opened to me. I wanted to say nothing new, nothing invented, only to report what I found and how it looked here. Not a novel, no: a report, description, and a comparison with earlier: hence the dialogue and the appearance of the younger man.

*

After writing this and setting it aside, things did not go as they usually do when I finish a novel. Earlier, in between novels I used to start a bulky file of reflections by means of which I used my consciousness, in thoughts and not in images or characters, to capture what the person who bore my name said to himself and to existence. So, I once wrote (after *Mountains*) the book *Das Ich über der Natur (Ego above Nature)*, and after *Alexanderplatz*, *Unser Dasein* (*Our Existence).* With each such spring-cleaning I came a little bit farther, just a little bit. "I" found that the shaping and the encounter with a whole whirling world brought me farther, contact with this reality meant something. Now: how should I haul myself along in the face of things? How should I, the former worshiper of "the world", appear before it? It was out of the question. All my epic works up till then were tests. Now there was nothing more to "attempt". Now I must present myself to the "world". It was time to set myself more securely and firmly on the ground, which was no collapsing sandbank.

I hadn't lost myself, hadn't become a zombie. A couple of stories shot up, surprising me. I quickly wrote them down and admit: I've no clear idea how they came to me: goblins at work, again. These were *Der Oberst und der Dichter* (*The Colonel and the Writer*), and two comic stories, burlesque bits of fun, a mix of seriousness and clowning: *Märchen von Materialismus* (*Materialism: a fable*) and *Reiseverkehr mit dem Jenseits* (*Tourist Traffic with the Other Side*).

But as well as these little tales I had sketched other material. I had the idea of putting it together and completing it. They should, I thought formally, be narrated to someone, like the Arabian Nights. But how, and for whom?

As I asked this I was already writing, and already preparing the person the stories should be aimed at. He was ill in bed, was confused, torn apart – it was Edward,

[19] *Destiny's Journey*, tr. Edna McCown, Paragon House 1992.

coming home from the war and unable to find his bearings. He becomes a Hamlet, always questioning his surroundings. He does not want judgement, but seriousness and urgency: he wants to know what has made him and everyone else ill and bad.

And the situation is actually a dreadful one, and slowly he brings it into the light. Truth, only Truth can heal him. And throughout the diversions and sidetracks we indirectly, and ever more directly, receive information, and in the end confessions and admissions. A rotten sluggish situation is revealed, the family comes more and more into ferment. Finally tragedy strikes, but along with it, catharsis.[20]

The book might have been the first of a series, if I were younger. But all questions must cease sometime. The book was written mostly on German soil.

*

So all that was written over decades, and I can look at it and say: "That's me."

One kind of thinking is the Whole, sometimes (exceptionally) abstract, mostly tied to a thousand facts and events. Thinking does not go around naked, it draws to itself a throng of facts and pulls them like a hood over its head. I can ask questions, I can think thoughts. The Whole, however, this masquerade, and why this and not that masquerade, this mixture is something special. It is a thickening, compaction, growth, the formation of a growing thing, and belong sin the realm of spiritual germination, sprouting and formation of offshoots. (The word "Kunst" ('art') is obscure.)

Products of this kind break through the individual form. Just as in the physical world metastases grow from tumours, so the spirit turns out such products. The preceding abstract thinking can then be interpreted as the stimulus for bud formation.

Whether this there can exert any influence on others, on "the people", I have never enquired. But I was conscious that, even without looking around at the environment, it is always present. A person does not grow alone. Even when one is dead and puts forth no more buds, one is still an effect in the great spiritual web, and is present.

*

Maybe I'm dreaming it all.

What do I know, actually? I know that in this world-age, jostled, abandoned, spellbound in the bleak heavy circle of this eon, that we human beings have a hard time. We rub ourselves raw against the walls that surround us. We beat our fists on them and hear the smack of our hands and how we scream. We try to break out of the dungeon, and that is the other sense of the "thickening" of language in poetry, our intellectual poetical efforts to "create".

But we won't let it rest. We cannot decide. Our damnable spirit can never stay quiet. It's the heritage of Cain. Every one of our days is a reprise of the fall from grace. Yet our spirit dreams, and hopes that it will attain something, it knows not what.

[20] *Tales of a Long Night*, Fromm 1987.

Satan goes amongst us. Do not doubt it. Do not be fooled by the bright light of day. And electricity gives no true light, and the atom bomb blows nothing up.

But there exists the eternal, good and just God. Only in his presence is the horror comprehensible. How far we have loosened ourselves from him is evident. The trepidation, inconsolability, the misery here call to him.

Just as sun and joy are emblems and fragments of Heaven's completeness, so is the whole of Heaven there, and the eternal God – among us he's called Jesus – once descended into our flesh and in this desolate housing ignited the old fire.

All a person should do is glorify God, praise the heavenly, and first and foremost this action that protects us from nothingness: Jesus of Nazareth, born of the sweet mother of God, laid in the manger, he grew, bestower of mercies, miracle worker, teacher among people, who headed straight for the martyr's cross in order to remove from the world our ferment and rottenness, this human putrefaction. For he saw: we cannot help ourselves.

What can be the content of existence, what tasks does it set us, by which the gloomy nature of our existence can be justified, if not this: to obtain purification, uplifting, straightening out, prepare to free ourselves from evil, loosen ourselves from entanglements, from the shameful debasement that evil brings.

Blessed is he who has more than eyes, more than logic and mathematics. Blessed is he who can mature without toil. But blessed too are we who during our lifetime have enquired, sought and strayed, blessed are we even if we limp into harbour wrecked, and stand or lie at the foot of the lighthouse that our inner eye has always had in view.

GOETHE AND DOSTOEVSKY
Das goldene Tor, 4 (1949)

1.

"Overall he evinced a soberness and dignity possible only in the most complete courtier."

In his youth Goethe[1] went through a dandy stage. His numerous amours are well known. He allowed himself to become entangled, and always found his way back to himself. He sought to become master of his own life, and had the aptitude for it. He gained from these frequent entanglements with people and ideas. He had a blind compulsion to approach people and ideas, and a powerful erotic drive was granted him, but the passions – for people and for ideas – were not secondary to him but were and remained *his* passions.

He observed incessantly, he extended his gaze and his emotions. He sought Nature. He did not fight his way into Nature with abstractions and preconceived ideas, but it was deeply satisfying to him when word reached him that he was objective. In a hundred places he underlined the carefulness, attention, reticence, the patience one must apply in order to approach Nature. "One can never beware enough to avoid over-hasty deductions from experiment. For in the transition from experience to judgement, from insight to application, it is as if all one's inner enemies lie in ambush at a pass: fancies, impatience, self-satisfaction, rigidity, forms of thought, preconceived opinion, complacency, frivolity, changeability, and whatever the whole pack and its followers might be called."

Guided by such caution, he always observed more than experimented. He wants above all to find Nature undistorted. He directs attention only to objects around him that can be seen, heard, touched, that can be perceived directly through the senses.

His later great poise and formality fits with this picture. He is the man of the world, who stands in life and will never let it devour him.

2.

It was not from observation that Dostoevsky acquired his knowledge. His concern was not the distance to things, reticence in forming conclusions. The notion of an undisturbed untouched Nature was alien to him. His knowledge flowed from within. Even "the Russian people" that became his main theme stepped out from in him.

He didn't encounter the Russian people in the katorga[2] – far from it. His fate and the katorga shattered him. Tormented by suffering, in savagery and self-laceration he makes for himself, drawing on what he sees around him, a proud comforting image, the image of a primal and original human, a barbarian, who pushes through to Christ.

[1] Wolfgang von Goethe lived from 1749 to 1832.

[2] Penal colony. Dostoevsky (1821-81) spent 1849 to 1854 in hard-labour Siberian exile.

The acuity, the convincing power of this image is strengthened by antipathy, acquired from other sources, towards the West. This, he knows, is the Russian people: this immeasurably excitable entity, shredded by passions, whores, children, wastrels, drunkards, idiots, monks and the complete saints that move among them. It's the scholastic conception of humanity, but he has created it anew. And he decrees – so certain is he: this, his own original creation, is Russia, the Russian people.

Because he is a mighty storyteller, a composer of characters and situations, he succeeds in imprinting on outsiders this image that stems from his inner reality.

*

Did he love the Russian people? The story of his image of the Russian people already gives the answer: he had no close connection with the Russian people. There was no to and fro, no influence, no feeling from one side to the other. Dostoevsky knew and composed. It wasn't at all that he had merely a pretend-love, a writerly love for the Russian people, rather he was too tightly bound up in a genuine, proper and real love.

Martianov reports from the katorga: "His heavy fate seemed to turn Dostoevsky to stone. On his face one never saw a smile. His gaze was stubborn, unpleasantly tense, and directed mostly at the ground. The prisoners disliked him, but acknowledged his moral authority. They looked at him askance but without hate, and moved silently out of his way. He always looked like a wolf caught in a trap. The cadets saw with astonishment how Dostoevsky and Durov, his noble companion in sorrow, hated one another with all the power of their souls. They were never seen together." Of this Durov the same Martianov reports: "He was amiable and friendly towards all the prisoners, and all the prisoners loved him. But his sufferings had brought him dreadfully low and he could often hardly move his feet. Yet he remained always good-humoured and sought to deaden his physical pains with laughter and jokes."

That was Dostoevsky's attitude in the katorga. Later he "loved" the Russian people by giving to them something of his idea.

Which contributed to the development of his idea. What of penitence, god-importuning, transcendence, contrition and ecstasy there was in his Russian people was fed by his epilepsy. It is this which in its carriers builds the fortification of visions to the point of incorrigibility. The deep emotion, the genuine not thought-up anger, the sinning and guilt flow incessantly from this source, and if from this his basic stance can be grasped, so too numerous details of his character and the characters of his creations and the idiosyncrasies that are proffered as characteristics of the Russian people. His disposition produced for him extraordinary advantages of a writerly kind, opened up large and dark regions, preserved him from everything intellectualistic. The rational, the normal, the simply natural, the sobriety of Homer remained closed to him. That's why from the beginning he stood on a foundation of spontaneity. There is perhaps no more convincing example of the social value of the pathological.

The word “people” (Volk) is enormously misused. A mass of humanity, moving about within the Russian borders, such enormous borders covering Europe and Asia, can be or is a political state. Within this mass there are all kinds of distinctions: language – but they don’t all speak Russian; the Slavic race – but they don’t all belong to it; Russian is a mishmash, Dostoevsky himself uses Muscovite and Lithuanian, but the Lithuanians are linked maybe to the Normans, maybe to the Finno-Turks. Whatever: Dostoevsky sees and knows that the Russian people stand against the West. Why? Through the primal power that resides in the Russian, and because Europe will decay from tendencies inherent in it. This is his dogmatic certainty. The Russian people has no part in these tendencies and hence no part in the decay.

He once speaks of the old unnatural situation of the European states: “But how can they be natural, when unnaturalness resides already in their fundamental situation and has piled up over centuries. One small part of humanity cannot dominate all the rest of humanity as its slaves. But to this purpose alone, all real and for a long time no longer Christian institutions have come into being in a now totally heathen Europe.”

According to Dostoevsky the oldest Christian church formed immediately after Christ and sought its formula, which rests on the hope and the concept of rebirth and spiritual renewal. So Christian communities emerged at that time, and a nationality never before seen, which encompassed all humanity as brothers and sisters in the form of the ecumenical Church. After the heathen human came the Christian human. When the Roman Empire adopted Christianity, it paved the way for the end of the Church. For the Church gradually took the place of the Roman Imperium, and the Papacy became a continuation of the Roman state. But in Eastern Europe the state was destroyed by Mohammed, “and so the Church remained only Christ, a Christ completely separated from the state.” According to Dostoevsky.

Russia took on this Christ, via Byzantium.

Dostoevsky thought in a committed line of march. He didn’t march, he suffered a blow once in his life and stayed standing. He stood and raised his hand. His eyes showed inner light. The people could form itself and develop itself. So he was a true genuine teacher, a prophet. You see the matter of which you are made, see the flame, the candle on which the flame burns, the match that lit the candle, the darkness that it illuminates but into which it does not look.

Students in St Petersburg kept a night vigil over his coffin, in the Church of the Holy Spirit in the Alexander Nevski Monastery. They prayed, weeping and sobbing, on their knees. Monks wanted to read psalms at the foot of the coffin, but students removed the psalter from their hands and took turns to read with quavering voices.

3.

No students kept vigil over Goethe’s coffin and no psalms were read. He was almost forgotten by the time of his death. His Grand Duke led him with all imaginable pomp

to the ducal crypt. The man who died at such an age and was given such a princely burial was no creature torn and enslaved by his passions, visions and savageries. Rather it was given to him to hold his scales in balance – which often and in the end went so far that the scales didn't shift at all and he appeared hard and cold. But from, his very beginning you will find no trace that he ever slipped into crises of sorrow and suffering, or that he had to engage in wrestling matches of self-conquest. Some of what, written down, looks like that is literature, poetry. But even there, where crises, tempests, catastrophes show up in his writings, in parts of *Werther*, the *Iphegenia*, the *Tasso*,[3] alongside this red and framing this red is a broad wonderfully soothing blue. A heavenly blue. And what is this painful red anyway, compared with the dismally rusty, fiery, screaming hellish red of Raskolnikov and the Brothers Karamazov.

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To understand what constituted Goethe's inner balance and what regulated his internal thermostat, the concepts of breeding, cleverness schooling, favourable circumstances are by no means enough.

Goethe is an Oriental.

His great and original inclination to observe is well known, his incessant activities around Nature, but we don't adequately evaluate these findings, nor his particular way of seeing and the idiosyncratic line of his thinking. He rejected Newton, but not only Newton. You can't speak of him in the same breath as modern natural scientists. For he came out of a different landscape and homeland than these men who toiled with scales and reagent flasks and dug and drove shafts into the mine called "Nature".

He was in a kind of isolation in Europe, and for all his close encounters with Enlightenment figures and Progressives, he never belonged with them. His isolation was determined, as I said, by his membership of a spiritually foreign race.

Europe is a peninsula of Asia. On this peninsula people experiment, discover, think, speculate and rage. They are in motion, go out beyond themselves, and consider it necessary to go out from themselves. They are driven out of themselves and assail their surroundings, alter circumstances and march, march on ahead.

Against this the enormous hinterland, China, Japan, India remain calm. Europe can place a skin of fungi and parasites over it here and there, but it doesn't penetrate to the depths. Asia is no less cerebral than Europe, but in a different way. Its centre of feeling and willing has developed differently, its motions are regulated otherwise. So it stands no closer to plants and the vegetative, but Europe is nourished less well from the roots. From this gigantic hinterland of Asia there always live, as if windblown, a number of people scattered across the European peninsula. One of them was Goethe.

He wasn't suited to insular methods. He retreated from them. His move into aristocratic circles is a defence mechanism and already a consequence. Some say he wanted to turn himself into a model person, others deem him a progressive as his

[3] *Sorrows of Young Werther*: his first novel, 1774; *Iphegenia on Tauris*, play, 1786; *Torquato Tasso*, play, 1790.

century understood it, and still cite as evidence his phrase about a free people in a free space. But these were not his own ideas, but were what he heard from outside and followed others in writing down. One should also not identify him with Faust, whose nature was deeply alien to him, Goethe's *menetekel* on the wall, his critical repudiating image of Europe. Only to distance himself and brush it away from him did he busy himself with this contemporary worldly monster. Later the manuscript of Faust became a journal into which he, who lived after all in Europe and the Europe of the revolutions, Napoleonic wars etc., jotted every possible thing, whatever he thought, saw, and his judgements thereon, moulded or abstract.

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In his later years Goethe was able to talk a little about this. This teaches us better than many poems about his feeling for life and his attitude. He views the world as a peculiar moral apparition – whereby "moral" must be understood in a particular sense. He bows down in reverence to the person of Christ, from whom emanates a glow of majesty of such divinity as the Earth has never seen. He bows down before him as the divine revelation of the highest principle of morality. "If anyone asks whether it is my nature to worship the Sun, I reply again and again: of course! For the Sun is also a revelation of the Highest, and indeed the mightiest that is granted to us Earth children to perceive. I worship its light and the creative power of God, by which alone we live and have our being, and the plants and animals along with us."

Goethe once said: "After the imaginary six days of creation God did not in the least go into retirement, rather continues to be as active as on the first day." (Even here one hears no echo of Christian guilt, sin and the Fall.) "God" and "divine" for the Oriental Goethe are words he uses as a musician uses a key that seems suited to his musical chain of thought. So thoroughly has the concept "divine" evaporated into Goethe that he declares meaningless the question of whether that which people call God has any sense or reason. He said once: "God would have had much less fun putting this clumsy old world together out of simple elements and letting it roll around year in year out in the Sun's rays, if he had not also planned to cultivate a plant nursery for a world of minds." Hence God is continually at work and present in the great natures of the world we currently inhabit. "Great natures"? Who and what is that? He, the observer, the verifier, was able to understand even Napoleon as such, and others too.

*

But what light falls now from this "divine" upon the human, and how does the human being stand before this God? What is not said here and clearly not experienced, we see it at once, is – sin and guilt. And this is Dostoevsky's territory. Understandable that to him Christ is not the "divine" but the Lamb of God, the Redeemer. The real thrust of Christianity into truth, Christ God Son of man, is accepted by him. Human suffering is brought before him, deeply and terribly felt.

Dostoevsky really did experience sin, suffering and guilt, and feel Christ. He owned it, it was his centre. He was Christ, as Goethe was the Oriental pre-Christian.

Dostoevsky was able to, nay had to, help himself move from this centre. But because he linked Christianity to the merely imagined Russian people, he took the same wrong turning that in the "Grand Inquisitor" say causes him, following Solovyev, to rail against Roman Christianity, the wrong turning by which, according to Solovyev and his own opinion, Russian Christianity was rescued by Mohammed's victory and the separation of East an d West. Dostoevsky made not the Imperium but a single people, those among whom he lived and whose plight he knew, into the carriers of Christ.

What happened here, if viewed correctly, is a movement towards the Messianic belief in God behind Christ. A people chosen of God: we are in the time of pre-Christian Judaism.

And so both, each in his own way, are pre-Christian.

4·

As little as Europe and Germany suited Goethe, he suited Germany very well. Of course he could have little effect here. He confused and unsettled the mentality of his time, with which he was out of step. But for its part it felt compelled, generation after generation, to busy itself with him. He remained the man of non-participation. He was the man of the challenging Colour Theory,[4] the man one was never finished with, and in whose garden one nevertheless always strolled. Some finished with him in their own way, namely by not looking into him at all. They viewed him aesthetically and then simply shoved him aside. This was how he became a pillar of education in a Europe storming ahead. A pillar of their education – he stood so far from its dreadfully burning core.

Nevertheless this was, and is, his role, his function: to show his distance from the agitation and passions of the European everyday, to stream out a great general sedative – to provide a glimpse of the boon of reassurance, the boon of blandness.

Some things that are "beautiful" in our sense have been sought out in Goethe, and these are clung to. But the writing of many books does not help to overcome the fact that, transplanted to this European climate where he was unable to ripen, he was never absorbed and embraced in a way that would make of him a force for growth in Europe. He never came close to Europe, not Europe to him.

Europeans are never happy dealing with the Chinese.

ADDENDUM: The experience of two forces. *Der Feuerreiter* 2/1 (Dec 1922)

I was still at school when Dostoevsky first landed on me. I vividly remember visits to the small reading room of a Berlin Society for Ethical Culture. Raskolnikov I read

[4] Goethe published his *Theory of Colours* in 1810.

evening after evening in Schönhauser Strasse,[5] by day I had to swot up on Goethe and Schiller. My detestation for the over-disciplined enslaving school was extreme. Every day there were hopeless embittering battles. Goethe was shoved at me in an atmosphere of aversion. Dimly I recall an incidental delight in *Tasso*.[6] An aesthetic kind of delight, such as with Sophocles and Homer: it didn't last. It sank noiselessly beneath the mighty agitations that Dostoevsky poured forth. Nothing could challenge the power of these agitations. Here were resistance, energy, revolution. Compared to Wedekind[7], Dostoevsky was totally unliterary.

From my even earlier youth, or rather childhood, I recall the first serial adventure stories, delivered weekly to our home. Evenings reading in Schönhauser Strasse stirred the same almost dreadful, totally illicit excitement and unrest. They levered me definitively away from school and aesthetics. I was driven to a vague but strongly felt antipathy against the aesthetic clique. It wasn't the entire novel about Raskolnikov, really just a few scenes. I ignored the plot elements, for me there were too many characters. But individual pages fixed me to the spot as if they weighed hundred-weights. I simply absorbed the music of the book, baulked at going down into the details. In the same way, while in the Quarta [1893-94 school year], I was carried away by a performance of Kleist's *Prince of Homburg*, without really understanding the substance under the massiveness of the impression, and without wanting to approach any closer. For years I never let anything impinge on this impression, avoided reading the book, never spoke about the play to anyone. As for Raskolnikov, at that time I was not capable of reading the whole thing, meaning follow the course of the novel to its end. I opened it at random, carefully avoiding any page I'd already read. Only years later did I read the ending and many parts from the middle.

The tame classical ensemble disappeared for a long time completely from my sight. It became alien to me. I had no memory at all of Goethe. Slowly a connection formed between the classical ensemble, including school and teaching staff, and the doltish bourgeoisie. Those elements that bumped up against me nearby and from a distance, that conducted the politics of the state, published newspapers, collected pictures, built museums, went to concerts and the theatre, looked at photos of theatrical stars – boring, often despicable elements, that represent only resistance. The same bourgeois strata, I saw, that revered the classical ensemble.

In the same period the amoral Nietzschian wave broke over me. I read him with physical trembling. What struck me was not an ideal that he set up, but the encounter with a profoundly stirred-up human being. His unparalleled seriousness of life. At this time I also came to know Dostoevsky's *Idiot*. For years it was my favourite book that I never read through from first to last. I felt happy just to have it in my hand. I took it everywhere, kept dipping in, a quarter of some chapter, without understanding it

[5] The bookshop here had a lending library.

[6] 1790 play by Goethe about Torquato Tasso, 16th C. poet and courtier who descended into madness.

[7] Unclear how familiar schoolboy Döblin would have been with Wedekind, whose plays were not widely known until the turn of the century.

because I troubled myself not at all with how it all hung together. I must have read the ending several hundred times, word for word. But even now perhaps almost half the book is unknown to me. The usual method of reading, the profane *getting-it-done*, I could not apply to this book. Significantly greater was my familiarity with the "Karamazovs". I'm unable to give a reason for this. New, and unbookishly alive many parts of this work seemed to me. Nevertheless I must have been able at that time to keep Dostoevsky at a distance; at least I was able to read the "Karamazovs" tidily all the way through almost undisturbed, even if here and there dazzled and fixated week after week. I know and knew who the real murderer was; nothing of the sort would have struck me in the earlier books.

I still recall from the beginning of the War a vigorous conversational contrast between the living actively goading Dostoevsky, and Goethe the stuffy god of the educated , the desiccated, fallen away from the People. For me Tolstoy was too gentle, elegiacally Christian. Then for a long time I thought no more of Dostoevsky.

I grew older, observed, wrote. Now and then I recalled Dostoevsky as an enormous historical phenomenon, a spiritual power, but one that could no longer be of help to me. I still had the *Idiot* in my hands occasionally, read this or that page, and returned to my own affairs: it couldn't be of any help. A remarkable preference developed in me for Stendhal's book *The Red and the Black*, for everything sober, sceptical, observant, objective in it; I found his Romantic mumbo-jumbo antiquated. Its nature, its objectivity, attracted me at every turn. I had changed in all sorts of ways. More material had penetrated, the overview had become higher, the penetration more active, less captivating. I already had something to set against the material, something brittle and resolute. From there came a greater distancing from the material, reticence and scepticism. Whereas previously I had breathed in longer, now I breathed out longer and deeper.

After the War ended, as I unpacked my books again at home, I found Eckermann's *Conversations*[8] in my hands.

*

What moved Goethe:

Year after year, every winter he sighed about the gloomy time before the shortest day. He sits facing his friends, pours them wine, takes nothing himself. He entertains them with things old and new.

His passionate Marienbad love in old age.

He takes his geologist's hammer everywhere, probes the rocks.

When the Lisbon earthquake happened, when he was still young, he found his servant at the window at night observing the heavens, having been afflicted by a sense of a terrible event of a tellurian nature.

[8] Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854): *Conversations with Goethe in the last year of his life* (3 vols 1823-32).

He picks a bone up on the beach. It is an intermaxillary. The colours derived from a murky medium, and its brightness.

He was so longlived. His serious geriatric ailments, which he always overcame. His easy death.

His moodiness. The changes in his mental colouring.

His joy in thinking, in good ideas.

The breadth of his interests. The sense that a man must tackle everything. Behind everything, in everything, there's something hidden.

The juxtaposition of vigorous gestures and the greatest calm and dispassion.

His lack of embarrassment, his naturalness in relation to his urges. He challenges society, but doesn't want to.

How quickly he recovers from the death of others, for example of his son. Death is something worthless, he doesn't let the fact that someone's died bother him.

He likes a drink. Eats well. He has a high regard for knowledge, but not for punditry.

He was alive at the time of Mozart.

Lord Byron gave him lots to chew on. He gave him pleasure, but – Goethe doesn't say so – he rankled as well. Diabolical, seducer of girls, Parliamentary speechifier, adventurer, traveller to Greece: this is high style compared to Goethe's private life, his official post in Weimar. But he keeps this from others.

A person who has thoughts, many, and variable. He shakes them from him and sticks them on anew.

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Voltaire heads back to Switzerland and from there begins to bombard the world with topical thoughts. He *sets to*.

Goethe goes about in and around Weimar, takes strolls in his garden. Newspapers, pictures, books, stones arrive at his house; he reads, dictates. He grows and dies. Clearly he does not *set to* beyond his house. He regards himself as a Thing-in-Itself.

Dostoevsky, Voltaire, a few heroes and founders of religions were leaders. Goethe was simply Goethe. Accusations of this were already levelled at him during his lifetime.

It is not right when leadership is the concern of no one, especially not one who merits that mantle. There are two kinds of leadership. An age that suffers under rotten institutions is inclined to consider the struggle against rotten institutions the most important, the only important one. There is something slower than institutions, but which also changes, changes much more slowly, and must be tended: the very character of the human being – concepts, drives, ways of feeling. This is the foundation of the second, much rarer, type of leadership.

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Goethe wrote German. As our present age sees it, he was no German. Was German in the same way Dante was a Catholic: i.e. before there were any Protestants.

After a brief period knocking about in Germany, there came Italy.[9] He pushed along a thousand paths to leave Germany, in order to find nourishment and broaden himself. He extended his foundations.

Today: only one who is truly national can be of international importance. Then: only the Omni-national can claim to be national. Finally: he keeps the relationship to Nature upright in his thoughts and character.

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Two kinds: leaders, and word-leaders. The gentlemen of books, speaking platforms, the theatre, public opinion are word-leaders. As a rule they are led by other forces.

[9] 1786-88. The trip resulted in his *Italian Journey*.

WRITING MEANS SITTING IN JUDGEMENT ON ONESELF[1]
Der Sonntag im Bild, December 1949

ONCE AGAIN I'm in a strange situation. I sat over there in America for the longest time in lovely, hot, and for me somewhat too quiet Hollywood, wrote piece after piece and buried what I'd written and thereby brought into the world to lie silent and abandoned in my desk drawer, just like others around me did. And then when the war ended and we were able to return to Europe, it became possible slowly to unlock the cage – what did it shelter, dogs, cats and birds, or maybe nasty snakes? – and let its living contents out into the open, for they wanted to and ought to show themselves, and then this or that person who approached me directed his gaze not at my animals that I'd so carefully tended and transported across with me, but at the owner of this menagerie, i.e. me myself, and asked: "Who are you, tell us about yourself." In short, I was urged to look upon myself, direct my gaze not to the world but to me and my life and express myself autobiographically. "For you must have seen and experienced so much. So tell us something about it." Yes, a strange situation. I thought: I've written so much, pay attention to that, what am I to you. Am I a prima donna, to have everyone troubling themselves with my private life? I'll relate a .little episode, a parable:

A journalist once came to an astronomer and let himself be shown all the wonders of the starry firmament, and when the astronomer had finished he asked the visitor, who seemed to have been listening with interest: "So, Mr X, you've been struck dumb. It's overwhelming, isn't it?" The visitor replied: "I beg your pardon, professor, it sure is. You make it all very clear. But no offence, there's ink on your index finger."

Not to beat about the bush: I dislike autobiographies. I don't hold with so-called autobiographies. There are colourful ones that report on an entire epoch, like Goethe's *Truth and Poetry,*[2] or Kügelgen's book.[3] There are also books in which the author really does take an intense hard look at himself, like Rousseau in the *Confessions*, and there really are documents, concealed and open, works of a genuine self-analysis like some of Dostoevsky's and even the *Confessions* of St Augustine. But in even the best examples of this kind everything is mixed up together, revelations and concealments and suppressions. I've noticed this for a long time, and that's why I say: If you're going to write, why not write honestly and in full.

How much better and how much more clearly and acutely than anywhere else did Dostoevsky for example speak of himself and depict himself in his *Brothers Karamazov*, and in the characters in his novel *The Idiot*. One recalls the saying: By their fruits shall ye know them. The apple and the pear already show what tree they came from. And secondly: a true autobiography is not possible. You can report events and incidents in

[1] Adapted from "A Verse" by Ibsen: "Living means battling dark powers in oneself, writing means sitting in judgement on one's own ego."

[2] Actual title: *From my life: poetry and truth*.

[3] Wilhem von Kügelgen's (1801-1867) reminiscences of his youth were very popular in the late 19th C.

your own life and even attach observations to these, but it goes no deeper. And how should you do it, how should you arrive at yourself? We dive into this abysm and emerge with only some image or other. For you can't be simultaneously the one looking in the mirror, and the mirror. Because I never had anything to do with the novel, but only with the epic, I had no liking for today's psychology. The unhappiest thing, it seems to me, is always the inclination (see Strindberg[4] et al.) to throw oneself at oneself and seemingly to psychologise oneself. What an unhappy inclination! Instead of using the eyes, as is proper, to gaze out upon the world, instead of hearing what there is to hear, and taking part in what happens outside, and having a critical and sensible grasp of oneself – to bore into your soul and not let yourself breathe. For me, all that's needed to loosen my tongue is finding something, feeling something, and then my inside leapt into action and was able to present to itself what it is.

And so I threw myself, 30 or 40 years ago when the psychology wave was at its peak, not upon me but upon the far distant story of a Chinese Boxer[5] rebellion in my novel *The Three Leaps of Wang Lun*.Or I strayed some centuries back and there encountered a silent, pious and helpless Emperor Ferdinand and his monstrous field-marshal Wallenstein. Whoever has eyes to see, looks there. And that seems to me, and still seems so today, the proper way to speak of oneself.

But recently when I wrote a book like *Destiny's Journey* it didn't happen just so I could produce a book about my later years, but in order to be clearer, more direct, more open and decisive than in earlier works. It happened so I could pull free of writing and act according to the dictum: writing means sitting in judgement upon oneself.

[4] In his plays and writings Strindberg explores deep psychological insights apparently uninfluenced by Freud.

[5] Not strictly correct. The uprising depicted in *Wang Lun* (late 18th C.) involved the White Lotus. The Boxers emerged around 1900.

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