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What is a rebel? A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes, from the moment he makes his first gesture of rebellion. A slave who has taken orders all his life suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command. What does he mean by saying "no"?

He means, for example, that "this has been going on too long," "up to this point yes, beyond it no," "you are going too far," or, again, "there is a limit beyond which you shall not go." In other words, his no affirms the existence of a borderline. The same concept is to be found in the rebel's feeling that the other person "is exaggerating," that he is exerting his authority beyond a limit where he begins to infringe on the rights of others. Thus the movement of rebellion is founded simultaneously on the categorical rejection of an intrusion that is considered intolerable and on the confused conviction of an absolute right which, in the rebel's mind, is more precisely the impression that he "has the right to . . ." Rebellion cannot exist without the feeling that, somewhere and somehow, one is right. It is in this way that the rebel slave says yes and no simultaneously. He affirms that there are limits and also that he suspects—and wishes to preserve—the existence of certain things on this side of the borderline. He demonstrates, with obstinacy, that there is something in him which "is worth while . . ." and which must be taken into consideration. In a certain way, he confronts an order of things which oppresses him with the insistence on a kind of right not to be oppressed beyond the limit that he can tolerate.

In every act of rebellion, the rebel simultaneously ex-

periences a feeling of revulsion at the infringment of his rights and a complete and spontaneous loyalty to certain aspects of himself. Thus he implicitly brings into play a standard of values so far from being gratuitous that he is prepared to support it no matter what the risks. Up to this point he has at least remained silent and has abandoned himself to the form of despair in which a condition is accepted even though it is considered unjust. To remain silent is to give the impression that one has no opinions, that one wants nothing, and in certain cases it really amounts to wanting nothing. Despair, like the absurd, has opinions and desires about everything in general and nothing in particular. Silence expresses this attitude very well. But from the moment that the rebel finds his voice—even though he says nothing but "no"—he begins to desire and to judge. The rebel, in the etymological sense, does a complete turnabout. He acted under the lash of his master's whip. Suddenly he turns and faces him. He opposes what is preferable to what is not. Not every value entails rebellion, but every act of rebellion tacitly invokes a value. Or is it really a question of values?

Awareness, no matter how confused it may be, develops from every act of rebellion: the sudden, dazzling perception that there is something in man with which he can identify himself, even if only for a moment. Up to now this identification was never really experienced. Before he rebelled, the slave accepted all the demands made upon him. Very often he even took orders, without reacting against them, which were far more conducive to insurrection than the one at which he balks. He accepted them patiently, though he may have protested inwardly, but in that he remained silent he was more concerned with his own immediate interests than as yet aware of his own rights. But with loss of patience—with impatience—a reaction begins which can extend to everything that he previously accepted, and which is almost always retroactive. The very moment the slave refuses to obey the humiliating orders of his master, he simultaneously rejects the condition of slavery. The act of rebellion carries him far beyond the point he had reached by simply refusing. He exceeds the bounds that he fixed for his antagonist, and now demands to be treated as an equal. What was at first

the man's obstinate resistance now becomes the whole man, who is identified with and summed up in this resistance. The part of himself that he wanted to be respected he proceeds to place above everything else and proclaims it preferable to everything, even to life itself. It becomes for him the supreme good. Having up to now been willing to compromise, the slave suddenly adopts ("because this is how it must be . . .") an attitude of All or Nothing. With rebellion, awareness is born.

But we can see that the knowledge gained is, at the same time, of an "all" that is still rather obscure and of a "nothing" that proclaims the possibility of sacrificing the rebel to this "All." The rebel himself wants to be "all"—to identify himself completely with this good of which he has suddenly become aware and by which he wants to be personally recognized and acknowledged—or "nothing"; in other words, to be completely destroyed by the force that dominates him. As a last resort, he is willing to accept the final defeat, which is death, rather than be deprived of the personal sacrament that he would call, for example, freedom. Better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees.

Values, according to good authorities, "most often represent a transition from facts to rights, from what is desired to what is desirable (usually through the intermediary of what is generally considered desirable)." [1] The transition from facts to rights is manifest, as we have seen, in rebellion. So is the transition from "this must be" to "this is how I should like things to be," and even more so, perhaps, the idea of the sublimation of the individual in a henceforth universal good. The sudden appearance of the concept of "All or Nothing" demonstrates that rebellion, contrary to current opinion, and though it springs from everything that is most strictly individualistic in man, questions the very idea of the individual. If the individual, in fact, accepts death and happens to die as a consequence of his act of rebellion, he demonstrates by doing so that he is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of a common good which he considers more important than his own destiny. If he prefers the risk of death to the negation of the rights that he defends, it is because he considers these

[1] Lalande: *Vocabulaire philosophique.*

rights more important than himself. Therefore he is acting in the name of certain values which are still indeterminate but which he feels are common to himself and to all men. We see that the affirmation implicit in every act of rebellion is extended to something that transcends the individual in so far as it withdraws him from his supposed solitude and provides him with a reason to act. But it is already worth noting that this concept of values as pre-existant to any kind of action contradicts the purely historical philosophies, in which values are acquired (if they are ever acquired) after the action has been completed. Analysis of rebellion leads at least to the suspicion that, contrary to the postulates of contemporary thought, a human nature does exist, as the Greeks believed. Why rebel if there is nothing permanent in oneself worth preserving? It is for the sake of everyone in the world that the slave asserts himself when he comes to the conclusion that a command has infringed on something in him which does not belong to him alone, but which is common ground where all men—even the man who insults and oppresses him—have a natural community.[2]

Two observations will support this argument. First, we can see that an act of rebellion is not, essentially, an egoistic act. Of course, it can have egoistic motives. But one can rebel equally well against lies as against oppression. Moreover, the rebel—once he has accepted the motives and at the moment of his greatest impetus—preserves nothing in that he risks everything. He demands respect for himself, of course, but only in so far as he identifies himself with a natural community.

Then we note that rebellion does not arise only, and necessarily, among the oppressed, but that it can also be caused by the mere spectacle of oppression of which someone else is the victim. In such cases there is a feeling of identification with another individual. And it must be pointed out that this is not a question of psychological identification—a mere subterfuge by which the individual imagines that it is he himself who has been offended. On the contrary, it can often happen that we cannot bear to

[2] The community of victims is the same as that which unites victim and executioner. But the executioner does not know this.

see offenses done to others which we ourselves have accepted without rebelling. The suicides of the Russian terrorists in Siberia as a protest against their comrades' being whipped is a case in point. Nor is it a question of the feeling of a community of interests. Injustices done to men whom we consider enemies can, actually, be profoundly repugnant to us. There is only identification of one's destiny with that of others and a choice of sides. Therefore the individual is not, in himself alone, the embodiment of the values he wishes to defend. It needs all humanity, at least, to comprise them. When he rebels, a man identifies himself with other men and so surpasses himself, and from this point of view human solidarity is metaphysical. But for the moment we are only talking of the kind of solidarity that is born in chains.

It would be possible for us to define the positive aspect of the values implicit in every act of rebellion by comparing them with a completely negative concept like that of resentment as defined by Scheler. Rebellion is, in fact, much more than pursuit of a claim, in the strongest sense of the word. Resentment is very well defined by Scheler as an autointoxication—the evil secretion, in a sealed vessel, of prolonged impotence. Rebellion, on the contrary, breaks the seal and allows the whole being to come into play. It liberates stagnant waters and turns them into a raging torrent. Scheler himself emphasizes the passive aspect of resentment and remarks on the prominent place it occupies in the psychology of women who are dedicated to desire and possession. The fountainhead of rebellion, on the contrary, is the principle of superabundant activity and energy. Scheler is also right in saying that resentment is always highly colored by envy. But one envies what one does not have, while the rebel's aim is to defend what he is. He does not merely claim some good that he does not possess or of which he was deprived. His aim is to claim recognition for something which he has and which has already been recognized by him, in almost every case, as more important than anything of which he could be envious. Rebellion is not realistic. According to Scheler, resentment always turns into either unscrupulous ambition or bitterness, de-

pending on whether it is implanted in a strong person or a weak one. But in both cases it is a question of wanting to be something other than what one is. Resentment is always resentment against oneself. The rebel, on the contrary, from his very first step, refuses to allow anyone to touch what he is. He is fighting for the integrity of one part of his being. He does not try, primarily, to conquer, but simply to impose.

Finally, it would seem that resentment takes delight, in advance, in the pain that it would like the object of its envy to feel. Nietzsche and Scheler are right in seeing an excellent example of this in the passage where Tertullian informs his readers that one of the greatest sources of happiness among the blessed will be the spectacle of the Roman emperors consumed in the fires of hell. This kind of happiness is also experienced by the decent people who go to watch executions. The rebel, on the contrary, limits himself, as a matter of principle, to refusing to be humiliated without asking that others should be. He will even accept pain provided his integrity is respected.

It is therefore hard to understand why Scheler completely identifies the spirit of rebellion with resentment. His criticism of the resentment to be found in humanitarianism (which he treats as the non-Christian form of love for mankind) could perhaps be applied to certain indeterminate forms of humanitarian idealism, or to the techniques of terror. But it rings false in relation to man's rebellion against his condition—the movement that enlists the individual in the defense of a dignity common to all men. Scheler wants to demonstrate that humanitarian feelings are always accompanied by a hatred of the world. Humanity is loved in general in order to avoid having to love anybody in particular. This is correct, in some cases, and it is easier to understand Scheler when we realize that for him humanitarianism is represented by Bentham and Rousseau. But man's love for man can be born of other things than a mathematical calculation of the resultant rewards or a theoretical confidence in human nature. In face of the utilitarians, and of Émile's preceptor, there is, for example, the kind of logic, embodied by Dostoievsky in Ivan Karamazov, which progresses from an act of rebellion to metaphysical insurrection. Scheler is aware of this and

sums up the concept in the following manner: "There is not enough love in the world to squander it on anything but human beings." Even if this proposition were true, the appalling despair that it implies would merit anything but contempt. In fact, it misunderstands the tortured character of Karamazov's rebellion. Ivan's drama, on the contrary, arises from the fact that there is too much love without an object. This love finding no outlet and God being denied, it is then decided to lavish it on human beings as a generous act of complicity.

Nevertheless, in the act of rebellion as we have envisaged it up to now, an abstract ideal is not chosen through lack of feeling and in pursuit of a sterile demand. We insist that the part of man which cannot be reduced to mere ideas should be taken into consideration—the passionate side of his nature that serves no other purpose than to be part of the act of living. Does this imply that no rebellion is motivated by resentment? No, and we know it only too well in this age of malice. But we must consider the idea of rebellion in its widest sense on pain of betraying it; and in its widest sense rebellion goes far beyond resentment. When Heathcliff, in *Wuthering Heights*, says that he puts his love above God and would willingly go to hell in order to be reunited with the woman he loves, he is prompted not only by youth and humiliation but by the consuming experience of a whole lifetime. The same emotion causes Eckart, in a surprising fit of heresy, to say that he prefers hell with Jesus to heaven without Him. This is the very essence of love. Contrary to Scheler, it would therefore be impossible to overemphasize the passionate affirmation that underlies the act of rebellion and distinguishes it from resentment. Rebellion, though apparently negative, since it creates nothing, is profoundly positive in that it reveals the part of man which must always be defended.

But, to sum up, are not rebellion and the values that it implies relative? Reasons for rebellion do seem to change, in fact, with periods and civilizations. It is obvious that a Hindu pariah, an Inca warrior, a primitive native of central Africa, and a member of one of the first Christian communities had not at all the same ideas about rebellion.

We could even assert, with considerable assurance, that the idea of rebellion has no meaning in these particular cases. However, a Greek slave, a serf, a *condottiere* of the Renaissance, a Parisian bourgeois during the Regency, a Russian intellectual at the beginning of the twentieth century, and a contemporary worker would undoubtedly agree that rebellion is legitimate, even if they differed about the reasons for it. In other words, the problem of rebellion seems to assume a precise meaning only within the confines of Western thought. It is possible to be even more explicit by remarking, like Scheler, that the spirit of rebellion finds few means of expression in societies where inequalities are very great (the Hindu caste system) or, again, in those where there is absolute equality (certain primitive societies). The spirit of rebellion can exist only in a society where a theoretical equality conceals great factual inequalities. The problem of rebellion, therefore, has no meaning except within our own Western society. One might be tempted to affirm that it is relative to the development of individualism if the preceding remarks had not put us on our guard against this conclusion.

On the basis of the evidence, the only conclusion that can be drawn from Scheler's remark is that, thanks to the theory of political freedom, there is, in the very heart of our society, an increasing awareness in man of the idea of man and, thanks to the application of this theory of freedom, a corresponding dissatisfaction. Actual freedom has not increased in proportion to man's awareness of it. We can only deduce from this observation that rebellion is the act of an educated man who is aware of his own rights. But there is nothing which justifies us in saying that it is only a question of individual rights. Because of the sense of solidarity we have already pointed out, it would rather seem that what is at stake is humanity's gradually increasing self-awareness as it pursues its course. In fact, for the Inca and the pariah the problem never arises, because for them it had been solved by a tradition, even before they had had time to raise it—the answer being that tradition is sacred. If in a world where things are held sacred the problem of rebellion does not arise, it is because no real problems are to be found in such a world, all the answers having been given simultaneously. Metaphysic is replaced by myth. There are no more questions, only eternal answers and commentaries, which may be metaphysical. But before man accepts the sacred world and in order that he should be able to accept it—or before he escapes from it and in order that he should be able to escape from it—there is always a period of soul-searching and rebellion. The rebel is a man who is on the point of accepting or rejecting the sacred and determined on laying claim to a human situation in which all the answers are human—in other words, formulated in reasonable terms. From this moment every question, every word, is an act of rebellion while in the sacred world every word is an act of grace. It would be possible to demonstrate in this manner that only two possible worlds can exist for the human mind: the sacred (or, to speak in Christian terms, the world of grace[3]) and the world of rebellion. The disappearance of one is equivalent to the appearance of the other, despite the fact that this appearance can take place in disconcerting forms. There again we rediscover the *All or Nothing*. The present interest of the problem of rebellion only springs from the fact that nowadays whole societies have wanted to discard the sacred. We live in an unsacrosanct moment in history. Insurrection is certainly not the sum total of human experience. But history today, with all its storm and strife, compels us to say that rebellion is one of the essential dimensions of man. It is our historic reality. Unless we choose to ignore reality, we must find our values in it. Is it possible to find a rule of conduct outside the realm of religion and its absolute values? That is the question raised by rebellion.

We have already noted the confused values that are called into play by incipient rebellion. Now we must inquire if these values are to be found again in contemporary forms of rebellious thought and action, and if they are, we must specify their content. But, before going any farther, let us note that the basis of these values is rebellion

[3] There is, of course, an act of metaphysical rebellion at the beginning of Christianity, but the resurrection of Christ and the annunciation of the kingdom of heaven interpreted as a promise of eternal life are the answers that render it futile.

itself. Man's solidarity is founded upon rebellion, and rebellion, in its turn, can only find its justification in this solidarity. We have, then, the right to say that any rebellion which claims the right to deny or destroy this solidarity loses simultaneously its right to be called rebellion and becomes in reality an acquiescence in murder. In the same way, this solidarity, except in so far as religion is concerned, comes to life only on the level of rebellion. And so the real drama of revolutionary thought is announced. In order to exist, man must rebel, but rebellion must respect the limit it discovers in itself—a limit where minds meet and, in meeting, begin to exist. Rebellious thought, therefore, cannot dispense with memory: it is a perpetual state of tension. In studying its actions and its results, we shall have to say, each time, whether it remains faithful to its first noble promise or if, through indolence or folly, it forgets its original purpose and plunges into a mire of tyranny or servitude.

Meanwhile, we can sum up the initial progress that the spirit of rebellion provokes in a mind that is originally imbued with the absurdity and apparent sterility of the world. In absurdist experience, suffering is individual. But from the moment when a movement of rebellion begins, suffering is seen as a collective experience. Therefore the first progressive step for a mind overwhelmed by the strangeness of things is to realize that this feeling of strangeness is shared with all men and that human reality, in its entirety, suffers from the distance which separates it from the rest of the universe. The malady experienced by a single man becomes a mass plague. In our daily trials rebellion plays the same role as does the "*cogito*" in the realm of thought: it is the first piece of evidence. But this evidence lures the individual from his solitude. It founds its first value on the whole human race. I rebel—therefore we exist.

Part Two

Metaphysical Rebellion

*

Metaphysical rebellion is the movement by which man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it contests the ends of man and of creation. The slave protests against the condition in which he finds himself within his state of slavery; the metaphysical rebel protests against the condition in which he finds himself as a man. The rebel slave affirms that there is something in him that will not tolerate the manner in which his master treats him; the metaphysical rebel declares that he is frustrated by the universe. For both of them, it is not only a question of pure and simple negation. In both cases, in fact, we find a value judgment in the name of which the rebel refuses to approve the condition in which he finds himself.

The slave who opposes his master is not concerned, let us note, with repudiating his master as a human being. He repudiates him as a master. He denies that he has the right to deny him, a slave, on grounds of necessity. The master is discredited to the exact extent that he fails to respond to a demand which he ignores. If men cannot refer to a common value, recognized by all as existing in each one, then man is incomprehensible to man. The rebel demands that this value should be clearly recognized in himself because he knows or suspects that, without this principle, crime and disorder would reign throughout the world. An act of rebellion on his part seems like a demand for clarity and unity. The most elementary form of rebellion, paradoxically, expresses an aspiration to order.

This description can be applied, word for word, to the metaphysical rebel. He attacks a shattered world in

order to demand unity from it. He opposes the principle of justice which he finds in himself to the principle of injustice which he sees being applied in the world. Thus all he wants, originally, is to resolve this contradiction and establish the unitarian reign of justice, if he can, or of injustice, if he is driven to extremes. Meanwhile, he denounces the contradiction. Metaphysical rebellion is a claim, motivated by the concept of a complete unity, against the suffering of life and death and a protest against the human condition both for its incompleteness, thanks to death, and its wastefulness, thanks to evil. If a mass death sentence defines the human condition, then rebellion, in one sense, is its contemporary. At the same time that he rejects his mortality, the rebel refuses to recognize the power that compels him to live in this condition. The metaphysical rebel is therefore not definitely an atheist, as one might think him, but he is inevitably a blasphemer. Quite simply, he blasphemes primarily in the name of order, denouncing God as the father of death and as the supreme outrage.

The rebel slave will help us to throw light on this point. He established, by his protest, the existence of the master against whom he rebelled. But at the same time he demonstrated that his master's power was dependent on his own subordination and he affirmed his own power: the power of continually questioning the superiority of his master. In this respect master and slave are really in the same boat: the temporary sway of the former is as relative as the submission of the latter. The two forces assert themselves alternately at the moment of rebellion until they confront each other for a fight to the death, and one or the other temporarily disappears.

In the same way, if the metaphysical rebel ranges himself against a power whose existence he simultaneously affirms, he only admits the existence of this power at the very instant that he calls it into question. Then he involves this superior being in the same humiliating adventure as mankind's, its ineffectual power being the equivalent of our ineffectual condition. He subjects it to our power of refusal, bends it to the unbending part of human nature, forcibly integrates it into an existence that we render absurd, and finally drags it from its refuge outside time

and involves it in history, very far from the eternal stability that it can find only in the unanimous submission of all men. Thus rebellion affirms that, on its own level, any concept of superior existence is contradictory, to say the least.

And so the history of metaphysical rebellion cannot be confused with that of atheism. From a certain point of view it is even confused with the contemporary history of religious sentiment. The rebel defies more than he denies Originally, at least, he does not suppress God; he merely talks to Him as an equal. But it is not a polite dialogue. It is a polemic animated by the desire to conquer. The slave begins by demanding justice and ends by wanting to wear a crown. He must dominate in his turn. His insurrection against his condition becomes an unlimited campaign against the heavens for the purpose of bringing back a captive king who will first be dethroned and finally condemned to death. Human rebellion ends in metaphysical revolution. It progresses from appearances to acts, from the dandy to the revolutionary. When the throne of God is overturned, the rebel realizes that it is now his own responsibility to create the justice, order, and unity that he sought in vain within his own condition, and in this way to justify the fall of God. Then begins the desperate effort to create, at the price of crime and murder if necessary, the dominion of man. This will not come about without terrible consequences, of which we are so far only aware of a few. But these consequences are in no way due to rebellion itself, or at least they only occur to the extent that the rebel forgets his original purpose, tires of the tremendous tension created by refusing to give a positive or negative answer, and finally abandons himself to complete negation or total submission. Metaphysical insurrection, in its first stages, offers us the same positive content as the slave's rebellion. Our task will be to examine what becomes of this positive content of rebellion in the actions that claim to originate from it and to explain where the fidelity or infidelity of the rebel to the origins of his revolt finally leads him.

The Sons of Cain

✶

Metaphysical rebellion, in the real sense of the term, does not appear, in coherent form, in the history of ideas until the end of the eighteenth century—when modern times begin to the accompaniment of the crash of falling ramparts. But from then on, its consequences develop uninterruptedly and it is no exaggeration to say that they have shaped the history of our times. Does this mean that metaphysical rebellion had no significance previous to this date? In any event, its origins must belong to the remote past, in that we like to believe that we live in Promethean times. But is this really a Promethean age?

The first mythologies describe Prometheus as an eternal martyr, chained to a pillar, at the ends of the earth, condemned forever because he refuses to ask forgiveness. Æschylus adds still further to his stature, endows him with lucidity ("no misfortune can fall upon me that I have not myself already foreseen"), makes him cry out his hatred of all the gods, and, plunging him into "a stormy sea of mortal despair," finally abandons him to thunder and lightning: "Ah! see the injustice I endure!"

It cannot be said, therefore, that the ancients were unaware of metaphysical rebellion. Long before Satan, they created a touching and noble image of the Rebel and gave us the most perfect myth of the intelligence in revolt. The inexhaustible genius of the Greeks, which gave such a prominent place to myths of unity and simplicity, was still able to formulate the concept of insurrection. Beyond a doubt, certain characteristics of the Promethean myth still survive in the history of rebellion as we are living it: the fight against death ("I have delivered men from being obsessed by death"), Messianism ("I have instilled blind

hopes into men's minds"), philanthropy ("Enemy of Zeus . . . for having loved mankind too much").

But we must not forget that *Prometheus the Fire-bringer*, the last drama of Æschylus' trilogy, proclaimed the reign of the pardoned rebel. The Greeks are never vindictive. In their most audacious flights they always remain faithful to the idea of moderation, a concept they deified. Their rebel does not range himself against all creation, but against Zeus, who is never anything more than one god among many and who himself was mortal. Prometheus himself is a demigod. It is a question of settling a particular account, of a dispute about what is good, and not of a universal struggle between good and evil.

The ancients, even though they believed in destiny, believed primarily in nature, in which they participated wholeheartedly. To rebel against nature amounted to rebelling against oneself. It was butting one's head against a wall. Therefore the only coherent act of rebellion was to commit suicide. Destiny, for the Greeks, was a blind force to which one submitted, just as one submitted to the forces of nature. The acme of excess to the Greek mind was to beat the sea with rods—an act of insanity worthy only of barbarians. Of course, the Greeks described excess, since it exists, but they gave it its proper place and, by doing so, also defined its limits. Achilles' defiance after the death of Patroclus, the imprecations of the Greek tragic heroes cursing their fate, do not imply complete condemnation. Œdipus knows that he is not innocent. He is guilty in spite of himself; he is also part of destiny. He complains, but he says nothing irreparable. Antigone rebels, but she does so in the name of tradition, in order that her brothers may find rest in the tomb and that the appropriate rites may be observed. In her case, rebellion is, in one sense, reactionary. The Greek mind has two aspects and in its meditations almost always re-echoes, as counterpoint to its most tragic melodies, the eternal words of Œdipus, who, blind and desperate, recognizes that all is for the best. Affirmation counterbalances negation. Even when Plato anticipates, with Callicles, the most common type of Nietzschean, even when the latter exclaims: "But when a man appears who has the necessary character . . . he will escape, he will trample on our formulas, our magic

spells, our incantations, and the laws, which are all, without exception, contrary to nature. Our slave has rebelled and has shown himself to be the master"—even then, though he rejects law, he speaks in the name of nature.

Metaphysical rebellion presupposes a simplified view of creation—which was inconceivable to the Greeks. In their minds, there were not gods on one side and men on the other, but a series of stages leading from one to the other. The idea of innocence opposed to guilt, the concept of all of history summed up in the struggle between good and evil, was foreign to them. In their universe there were more mistakes than crimes, and the only definitive crime was excess. In a world entirely dominated by history, which ours threatens to become, there are no longer any mistakes, but only crimes, of which the greatest is moderation. This explains the curious mixture of ferocity and forbearance which we find in Greek mythology. The Greeks never made the human mind into an armed camp, and in this respect we are inferior to them. Rebellion, after all, can only be imagined in terms of opposition to someone. The only thing that gives meaning to human protest is the idea of a personal god who has created, and is therefore responsible for, everything. And so we can say, without being paradoxical, that in the Western World the history of rebellion is inseparable from the history of Christianity. We have to wait, in fact, until the very last moments of Greek thought to see rebellion begin to find expression among transitional thinkers—nowhere more profoundly than in the works of Epicurus and Lucretius.

The appalling sadness of Epicurus already strikes a new note. It has its roots, no doubt, in the fear of death, with which the Greek mind was not unfamiliar. But the pathos with which this fear is expressed is very revealing. "We can take precautions against all sorts of things; but so far as death is concerned, we all of us live like the inhabitants of a defenseless citadel." Lucretius is more explicit: "The substance of this vast world is condemned to death and ruin." Therefore why postpone enjoyment? "We spend our lives," writes Epicurus, "in waiting, and we are all condemned to die." Therefore we must all enjoy ourselves. But what a strange form of enjoyment! It consists in sealing up the walls of the citadel, of making sure of a

supply of bread and water and of living in darkness and silence. Death hovers over us, therefore we must prove that death is of no importance. Like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, Epicurus banishes death from human existence. "Death has no meaning for us, for what is indefinable is incapable of feeling, and what is incapable of feeling has no meaning for us." Is this the equivalent of nothingness? No, for everything in this particular universe is matter, and death only means a return to one's element. Existence is epitomized in a stone. The strange sensual pleasure of which Epicurus speaks consists, above all, in an absence of pain; it is the pleasure of a stone. By an admirable maneuver—which we shall find again in the great French classicists—Epicurus, in order to escape from destiny, destroys sensibility, having first destroyed its primary manifestation: hope. What this Greek philosopher says about the gods cannot be interpreted otherwise. All the unhappiness of human beings springs from the hope that tempts them from the silence of the citadel and exposes them on the ramparts in expectation of salvation. Unreasonable aspirations have no other effect than to reopen carefully bandaged wounds. That is why Epicurus does not deny the gods; he banishes them, and so precipitately that man has no alternative but to retreat once more into the citadel. "The happy and immortal being has no preoccupations of his own and no concern with the affairs of others." Lucretius goes even farther: "It is incontestable that the gods, by their very nature, enjoy their immortality in perfect peace, completely unaware of our affairs, from which they are utterly detached." Therefore let us forget the gods, let us never even think about them, and "neither your thoughts during the day nor your dreams at night will ever be troubled."

Later we shall rediscover this eternal theme of rebellion, but with important modifications. A god who does not reward or punish, a god who turns a deaf ear, is the rebel's only religious conception. But while Vigny will curse the silence of his divinity, Epicurus considers that, as death is inevitable, silence on the part of man is a better preparation for this fate than divine words. This strange mind wears itself out in a sustained attempt to build ramparts around mankind, to fortify the citadel and

to stifle the irrepressible cry of human hope. Only when this strategic retreat has been accomplished does Epicurus, like a god among men, celebrate his victory with a song that clearly denotes the defensive aspect of his rebellion. "I have escaped your ambush, O destiny, I have closed all paths by which you might assail me. We shall not be conquered either by you or by any other evil power. And when the inevitable hour of departure strikes, our scorn for those who vainly cling to existence will burst forth in this proud song: 'Ah, with what dignity we have lived.'"

Alone among his contemporaries Lucretius carries this logic much farther and finally brings it to the central problem of modern philosophy. He adds nothing fundamental to Epicurus. He, too, refuses to accept any explanatory principle that cannot be tested by the senses. The atom is only a last refuge where man, reduced to his primary elements, pursues a kind of blind and deaf immortality—an immortal death—which for Lucretius represents, as it does for Epicurus, the only possible form of happiness. He has to admit, however, that atoms do not aggregate of their own accord, and rather than believe in a superior law and, finally, in the destiny he wishes to deny, he accepts the concept of a purely fortuitous mutation, the clinamen, in which the atoms meet and group themselves together. Already, as we can see, the great problem of modern times arises: the discovery that to rescue man from destiny is to deliver him to chance. That is why the contemporary mind is trying so desperately hard to restore destiny to man—a historical destiny this time. Lucretius has not reached this point. His hatred of destiny and death is assuaged by this blind universe where atoms accidentally form human beings and where human beings accidentally return to atoms. But his vocabulary bears witness to a new kind of sensibility. The walled citadel becomes an armed camp. *Mœnia mundi*, the ramparts of the world, is one of the key expressions of Lucretius' rhetoric. The main preoccupation in this armed camp is, of course, to silence hope. But Epicurus' methodical renunciation is transformed into a quivering asceticism, which is sometimes crowned with execrations. Piety, for Lucretius, undoubtedly consists in "being able to contemplate everything with an untroubled mind." But, nevertheless, his mind reels at the injustices done to man. Spurred on by indignation, he weaves new concepts of crime, innocence, culpability, and punishment into his great poem on the nature of things. In it he speaks of "religion's first crime," Iphigenia's martyred innocence, and of the tendency of the divinity to "often ignore the guilty and to mete out undeserved punishment by slaughtering the innocent." If Lucretius scoffs at the fear of punishment in the next world, it is not as a gesture of defensive rebellion in the manner of Epicurus, but as a process of aggressive reasoning: why should evil be punished when we can easily see, here on earth, that goodness is not rewarded?

In Lucretius' epic poem, Epicurus himself becomes the proud rebel he never actually was. "When in the eyes of all mankind humanity was leading an abject existence on earth, crushed beneath the weight of a religion whose hideous aspect peered down from the heights of the celestial regions, the first to dare, a Greek, a man, raised his mortal eyes and challenged the gods. . . . In this way religion, in its turn, was overthrown and trampled underfoot, and this victory elevates us to the heavens." Here we can sense the difference between this new type of blasphemy and the ancient malediction. The Greek heroes could aspire to become gods, but simultaneously with the gods who already existed. At that time it was simply a matter of promotion. Lucretius' hero, on the other hand, embarks on a revolution. By repudiating the unworthy and criminal gods, he takes their place himself. He sallies forth from the armed camp and opens the first attack on divinity in the name of human suffering. In the ancient world, murder is both inexplicable and inexpiable. Already with Lucretius, murder by man is only an answer to murder by the gods. It is not pure coincidence that Lucretius' poem ends with a prodigious image of the sanctuaries of the gods swollen with the accusing corpses of plague victims.

This new language is incomprehensible without the concept of a personal god, which is slowly beginning to form in the minds of Lucretius' and Epicurus' contemporaries. Only a personal god can be asked by the rebel for

a personal accounting. When the personal god begins his reign, rebellion assumes its most resolutely ferocious aspect and pronounces a definitive no. With Cain, the first act of rebellion coincides with the first crime. The history of rebellion, as we are experiencing it today, has far more to do with the children of Cain than with the disciples of Prometheus. In this sense it is the God of the Old Testament who is primarily responsible for mobilizing the forces of rebellion. Inversely, one must submit to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when, like Pascal, one has run the full course of intellectual rebellion. The mind most prone to doubt always aspires to the greatest degree of Jansenism.

From this point of view, the New Testament can be considered as an attempt to answer, in advance, every Cain in the world, by painting the figure of God in softer colors and by creating an intercessor between God and man. Christ came to solve two major problems, evil and death, which are precisely the problems that preoccupy the rebel. His solution consisted, first, in experiencing them. The man-god suffers, too—with patience. Evil and death can no longer be entirely imputed to Him since He suffers and dies. The night on Golgotha is so important in the history of man only because, in its shadow, the divinity abandoned its traditional privileges and drank to the last drop, despair included, the agony of death. This is the explanation of the *Lama sabactani* and the heart-rending doubt of Christ in agony. The agony would have been mild if it had been alleviated by hopes of eternity. For God to be a man, he must despair.

Ghosticism, which is the fruit of Greco-Christian collaboration, has tried for two centuries, in reaction against Judaic thought, to promote this concept. We know, for example, the vast number of intercessors invented by Valentinus. But the æons of this particular metaphysical skirmish are the equivalent of the intermediary truths to be found in Hellenism. Their aim is to diminish the absurdity of an intimate relationship between suffering humanity and an implacable god. This is the special role of Marcion's cruel and bellicose second god. This demiurge is responsible for the creation of a finite world and of death. Our duty is to hate him and at the same time to

deny everything that he has created, by means of asceticism, to the point of destroying, by sexual abstinence, all creation. This form of asceticism is therefore both proud and rebellious. Marcion simply alters the course of rebellion and directs it toward an inferior god so as to be better able to exalt the superior god. Gnosis, owing to its Greek origins, remains conciliatory and tends to destroy the Judaic heritage in Christianity. It also wanted to avoid Augustinism, by anticipating it, in that Augustinism provides arguments for every form of rebellion. To Basilides, for example, the martyrs were sinners, and so was Christ, because they suffered. A strange conception, but whose aim is to remove the element of injustice from suffering. The Gnostics only wanted to substitute the Greek idea of initiation, which allows mankind every possible chance, for the concept of an all-powerful and arbitrary forgiveness. The enormous number of sects among the second-generation Gnostics indicates how desperate and diversified was the attempt on the part of Greek thought to make the Christian universe more accessible and to remove the motives for a rebellion that Hellenism considered the worst of all evils. But the Church condemned this attempt and, by condemning it, swelled the ranks of the rebels.

In that the children of Cain have triumphed, increasingly, throughout the centuries, the God of the Old Testament can be said to have been incredibly successful. Paradoxically, the blasphemers have injected new life into the jealous God whom Christianity wished to banish from history. One of their most profoundly audacious acts was to recruit Christ into their camp by making His story end on the Cross and on the bitter note of the cry that precedes His agony. By this means it was possible to preserve the implacable face of a God of hate—which coincided far better with creation as the rebels conceived it. Until Dostoievsky and Nietzsche, rebellion is directed only against a cruel and capricious divinity—a divinity who prefers, without any convincing motive, Abel's sacrifice to Cain's and, by so doing, provokes the first murder. Dostoievsky, in the realm of imagination, and Nietzsche, in the realm of fact, enormously increase the field of rebellious thought and demand an accounting from the

God of love Himself. Nietzsche believes that God is dead in the souls of his contemporaries. Therefore he attacks, like his predecessor Stirner, the illusion of God that lingers, under the guise of morality, in the thought of his times. But until they appear upon the scene, the freethinkers, for example, were content to deny the truth of the history of Christ ("that dull story," in Sade's words) and to maintain, by their denials, the tradition of an avenging god.

On the other hand, for as long as the Western World has been Christian, the Gospels have been the interpreter between heaven and earth. Each time a solitary cry of rebellion was uttered, the answer came in the form of an even more terrible suffering. In that Christ had suffered, and had suffered voluntarily, suffering was no longer unjust and all pain was necessary. In one sense, Christianity's bitter intuition and legitimate pessimism concerning human behavior is based on the assumption that over-all injustice is as satisfying to man as total justice. Only the sacrifice of an innocent god could justify the endless and universal torture of innocence. Only the most abject suffering by God could assuage man's agony. If everything, without exception, in heaven and earth is doomed to pain and suffering, then a strange form of happiness is possible.

But from the moment when Christianity, emerging from its period of triumph, found itself submitted to the critical eye of reason—to the point where the divinity of Christ was denied—suffering once more became the lot of man. Jesus profaned is no more than just one more innocent man whom the representatives of the God of Abraham tortured in a spectacular manner. The abyss that separates the master from the slaves opens again and the cry of revolt falls on the deaf ears of a jealous God. The freethinkers have prepared the way for this new dichotomy by attacking, with all the usual precautions, the morality and divinity of Christ. Callot's universe sums up quite satisfactorily this world of hallucination and wretchedness whose inhabitants begin by sniggering up their sleeves and end—with Molière's Don Juan—by laughing to high heaven. During the two centuries which prepare the way for the upheavals, both revolutionary and sacrilegious, of the eighteenth century, all the efforts of the freethinkers

are bent on making Christ an innocent, or a simpleton, so as to annex Him to the world of man, endowed with all the noble or derisory qualities of man. Thus the ground will be prepared for the great offensive against a hostile heaven.