

We find ourselves before a man who thinks himself to be a great man. I should wish to study this man, to comprehend him, and to acquire a conception of him that is equally truthful and compassionate. We shall examine him both in terms of the values *he* holds dear, so as to determine whether he fulfills his own idea of a good, or even a great man, as well as in terms of the values I hold dear, so as to see whether I can love him purely. I should confess that, ultimately, such is my only goal—to love him purely, at best—to accept him radically, at worst. Whatever path is to be taken must be decided only by elucidating what is meant by «*him*».

Our man's infancy is rather obscure. The youngest of two brothers, his father passed away when he was four years old. While his brother grew distant with their mother and showed all the signs of a troubled youth—abuse of alcohol, aggressiveness and a tendency to react violently—our man seems to have been a very timid young boy who knit a very close relationship with his mother. One account describes the older brother as being severely violent against our man during his infancy, causing his shyness to exacerbate, but for obvious reason this cannot be verified.

It is safe to say he idealized his mother, who was a refined but melancholic woman. Several accounts paint this woman as someone who instigated conflict between the two brothers, telling each of the shortcomings of the other, and this divisive attitude of sowing discord seems to have lasted throughout her entire life. One report claims that, at around forty years old, our man finally learnt of all the terrible things his mother would say behind his back, shattering his illusion of a wonderful relationship and causing him tremendous distress and instability. Our man has confirmed on several occasions that a conflict with his mother emerged during this time, but was dismissive of its magnitude and suggested it was a minor quarrel.

Our man describes both of his parents excellently, though of course he knows very little of his father. I was able to uncover a diary of his mother from the mid sixties, when our man of interest was less than four years old. In this diary, his mother paints a profoundly sordid account of her husband, who seems to have been an alcoholic, and declares her profound distaste for him and for her situation. She speaks of a «shadow» or a darker side of the husband which only she knows exists, but which she must carry to her grave «for the sake of the children». Our man has never learnt of this diary, which I did not disclose to him if only to prevent him from learning of this sad account of his father.

The accounts of our man's adolescence are varied. He moved several times due to his mother's financial instability. He had two friends with whom he seemed

to have cultivated a healthy relationship. One woman describes him as being so «terribly cruel» in high-school that she feared him, and it is not unthinkable—given what we shall learn of his future life—that he might have enjoyed humiliating others. He seemed to have a very hard time making new friends, a trait which would accompany him throughout his entire life.

It is safe to say our man is a man of intelligence. He masters the French language, reading Chateaubriand or Montaigne directly and teaching at prestigious French institutions. He has a decent domain of the Italian, English, Russian and (less extensively) Guaraní languages. He developed a successful career both privately as a lawyer, achieving a good financial position, as well as a remarkable career in academia, specifically legal anthropology. Our man is sophisticated, with a subtle and refined understanding of the widest array of cultural domains— the Renaissance to the Nuremberg trials, Homer and the history of Argentina, *The Tale of Genji* and *Anna Karenina*—. On these and infinitely many other topics he could verse spontaneously as one who speaks of the weather.

The grimmer side of this refinement, however, is revealed in the fact that his relationship with culture—and intellectual affairs in general—is profoundly mediated by self-esteem regulation. A piece of knowledge, to our man, is a silver coin, a sort of token to be greedily collected. He reads only partially to understand the world, since the world is ultimately secondary to him, and he is mostly guided by the pleasure derived from the superiority which knowing makes him feel. He is pejorative of everyone that serves him no purpose or grants him no admiration. He never has anything good or positive to say about anyone else. When confronted with anyone, intelligent or not, he will attempt to establish his superiority with narcissistic vanity, and to delegitimize whatever education or knowledge, or even uneducated insight, the other person may have. For this reason, it is impossible to for him to form new, genuine relations, and he lives a very lonely life. He can't stand anyone else, where everyone else is ignorant and vile, and nobody can stand him, where he is narcissistic and vain.

Perhaps our man has also said, not without a hint of vanity, that he believed in Kantian ethics—perhaps, believing himself honest, he elaborated on how so many of his sorrows followed from his unyielding commitment to the categorical imperative. This is very curious, for our man is deemed by almost everyone as capable of violence, as someone of virulent hate and purulent rancor, and as absolutely incapable of self-criticism. In general, he lacks all prosocial sentiments, loving himself above all others, feigning but never granting forgiveness.

Whether or not our man is capable of love remains an open question. To many

an astute observer, it has seemed that people are to him nothing but a mirror on which to enjoy his own reflection. He has only been observed to sustain long-standing relations with those who are subordinate to him or those who admire him and feed his ego. He has a clear pattern of dating younger women who are usually his employees or students. When a person involved in this form of relationship, for one or another reason, disentangles itself, and either wishes to break free from its subordination or manages to break the spell and acquire a sincere, non-idealized vision of him, he reacts with bitter anger and fury. He never lets it on transparently, but he is controlling and exerts his influence—preferring manipulation to direct violence— so that people do what he wishes.

Let us take for instance his second long-standing relationship, and one of the very few he has had. Very little is known by me of his partner before the time they met. It is safe to say, however, that in entering this relationship she sacrificed all sense of self and mimetized completely with our man of interest. She has few or no friends anymore, and all of her time and attention is directed to looking after our man devotedly. The caring is carried out in highly pompous displays of concern and alleviation by both parties. It is all his perfect man, his idol, a man who—in her own words, according to one account—«never did anything wrong». Some see in this an expression of extreme or intense love. More likely, this woman has no true knowledge of our man. She lives with a certain man, sleeps with a certain man, but that man is not *our* man. It is an abstract ideal which exists in both of their minds—a phantom fostered by the vanity of one and the vulnerability of the other—a great man, indeed—but not our man. In fact, and in this all accounts agree, there is only *one* person who loves our man—this is, one who knows him exactly for what he is and still fosters love for him—but that is too sad a case to recollect...

His first marriage, which lasted around twenty years, is also a case of interest. His first wife was a woman who grew under the claws of a profoundly narcissistic mother and without a father. Parentification was the hallmark of her youth, having been placed in the role of the understanding and non-opposing daughter—in stark contrast with a volatile, conflictive, probably bipolar, but ultimately kind and loving sister. In short, she was deprived of one of the most precious experiences in life, which is the rebellion against our parent figures. As in most of these cases, this rebellion came much later, and with much less potency and effect.

This woman has reported that, during her marriage, there were glimpses of our man's narcissistic tendencies, but were kept in check by the fact that she was also a strong-willed woman who would not tolerate neither abuse nor overly fantastic narratives he could fabricate about himself. This does not mean, of course, that she

did not idealized him, but only that the *extent* of this idealization was somewhat limited, making it not as overreaching as the self-idealization which our man would later develop. Perhaps our man's tendencies were also kept more in check by the fact that they were only beginning to strive for success, not yet having achieved its heights. In short, if it is true that our man treats the world as a mirror, this mirror was not yet reflecting the most grandiose image of himself.

Three children came from this marriage, two sons and a daughter, who posed no problem to neither parent at least until adolescence. Exteriorly, the marriage seemed to be a happy, perhaps even a perfect one, with many friends reporting that, at the time, they viewed them as a model couple. Both sons and the daughter agree that never did they witness any form of violence or abuse—nay, not even an argument or quarrel—between their parents. The wife also reports this as true, claiming that perhaps it would have been better to have more conflict, since this superficial harmony perhaps hid deeper problems. With «deeper problems» she means all that came during their divorce, a point of fracture which I shall now address.

Our man is a vengeful man. he rationalizes his vengeful missions, always finding the way to paint them as carrying out justice. He claimed for some time to want to write a short treatise or essay on vengeance and its virtues, but to my knowledge he never truly carried this project out. He was obsessed, and passionately so, with evening the score—particularly, the score of a divorce of which he felt the sole and only victim.

It is quite probable that, in our man's experience, the outer world does not exist. I mean to say that our man is a corroboration of Schopenhauer's doctrine—in a tragic and perhaps pathetic sense. The primordial forces in his life are will and emotion. The outer world does not stand to correct his judgment on any matter—He fabricates this judgment based on the Dionysiac forces of his soul—Reason exists only and solely to justify this fabrication. Gently put, one could say he is all a poet and nothing of a science man—Realistically put, he is blind to the fact that an obscure, and at times inextricable passion drives the generation of his world, writes the legend and mythology of his life—a force which he protects from all external examination, be it fact or opinion—and weaves the story of a tragedy, much like the Chrstian passion, that renders him a blameless and penitent soul before the evils of this world. A passage from Jung's Aion struck me as such an accurate description of this that I actually see fit to reproduce it:

It is often tragic to see how blatantly a man bungles his own life and

the lives of others yet remains totally incapable of seeing how much the whole tragedy originates in himself, and how he continually feeds it and keeps it going. Not consciously, of course—for consciously he is engaged in bewailing and cursing a faithless world that recedes further and further into the distance. Rather, it is an unconscious factor which spins the illusions that veil his world. And what is being spun is a cocoon, which in the end will completely envelope him.