

# Harvest and Sowing

Reflection and testimony  
on a past as a mathematician

by

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Third Part:

The Burial (II)

or the Key of Yin and Yang

To the memory  
of Claude Chevalley

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## **XI. The deceased (still not dead...)**

### **(98) The incident - or body and mind**

(22 September) The last of the notes for the Burial (apart from a few footnotes) is dated 24 May - so that's four months ago. The two weeks that followed, until June 10, were mostly devoted to rereading and completing or reworking here and there the notes already written, apart from a visit of a day or two from Zoghman Mebkhout, who came to read the whole of the notes for the Burial before I entrusted it to the typist, and to give me his comments. I thought that the final manuscript would be ready by the beginning of June, and that it would be typed and printed (that was optimistic after all...) before the university holidays. I really wanted to send my "five hundred page letter" to everyone before the commotion of the holidays!

In fact, the text of the Burial is still not finished as I write: as it was four months ago, it still lacks the two or three final notes - plus one(\*) that has been added in the meantime: the one I have just started with the lines I am writing, a quick account of what has happened in the meantime.

On 10 June, a new unexpected event broke into the writing of Harvest and Sowing, full of unexpectedness: I fell ill! A stitch, which appeared suddenly (while the minute before I didn't suspect anything), pushed me on my bed with a peremptory force, no argument/*sans réplique*]. Standing or even sitting up suddenly became very painful for me, only lying down seemed suitable. It was really silly, especially at a time when I was about to finish a very urgent work, and no more about that! Typing while lying down is out of the question, and even handwriting in this position is no easy task...

It must have taken me almost two more weeks, during which I tried somehow to continue my work against all odds, before I realised the obvious thing: my body was exhausted and was demanding with insistence, without my even pretending to hear, a thorough rest.

I had had such difficulty in hearing it, because my mind had remained fresh and alert, wriggling to keep going, as if it had an autonomous life, totally separate from that of the body. It was even so fresh and wriggly that it had the greatest difficulty in taking into account the body's need for sleep, stubbornly refusing to let go of the tasks to which it was attached, and constantly pushing back to the limits of exhaustion the deadline for sleep, this killjoy!

Throughout my life, and until three or four years ago, the ability to recuperate through deep and prolonged sleep had been the solid and salutary counterpart to sometimes excessive investments of energy: when sleep is secure, one is no longer afraid of anything, one can allow oneself (without it being madness) to throw oneself wholeheartedly and to exhaustion into the orgies of work - even if it means making up for it with orgies of refreshing sleep! This ability, which all my life had seemed to me to be as much a matter of course as the ability to work, the ability to discover (and surely the two are intimately linked...), has ended up in these recent years

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\* (23 September) In fact, it appears that this planned "note" burst into three separate notes (n°s 99 - 101)

worn out, and sometimes disappeared, for reasons which I can't really discern at the moment, and which I haven't really made the effort to fathom.

More and more often, when, after a long day spent on my typewriter (or on handwritten notes) and obeying the injunctions of my body which refuses to go on, I finally resolve to go to bed, the lying down position (and the partial relief it provides from the tension of sitting) immediately revives the thinking. It starts again in full swing, perhaps for hours or even for the whole night (or rather what's left of it...). I do realise that this system is not profitable (assuming it is bearable in the long run), since (at least for me) prolonged reflection without the support of writing ends up going in circles, often becoming a kind of [remâchage] - the bad pattern [*mauvais pli*] is set, and tends to get worse. It had become, it seems to me, the grand place of energy dispersion in my life in recent years, while other dispersion mechanisms have been eliminated one by one, gradually, over the years.

If this very mechanism has taken root in my life with such tenacity, if I have been willing to pay such a price all these years, it is surely because something in me has found its reward, and will again find its reward in due course. It would not be a luxury for me to examine the situation closely - and more than once in the past four months I have come close to doing so.

This was certainly an urgent task. I eventually realised, however, that there was something even more urgent. First I had to deal with the most pressing matter: to re-establish contact with my body, to help it to recover from the state of exhaustion that I had finally felt and admitted, and to regain the vigour that had disappeared. I understood then that for this, I had to give up all intellectual activity for an indefinite period of time - even the meditation on the meaning of what was happening to me. It is with the notes that I am resuming today that this long and salutary "parenthesis" in my grand investments comes to an end, which for a time (since February of this year) were poured [*rejoints*] in the writing of "Harvest and Sowing". The present note is a first reflection, or at least a kind of summary account, in a gush, of this four-month "parenthesis".

By the time I understood, at the end of the ends, the need for a complete rest, a great fatigue had become a deep exhaustion. Not knowing how to listen to the peremptory language of my body, the few derisory pages of comments and retouching to the Burial, ripped out of a state of physical fatigue in these first two weeks, were done at the cost of an investment of energy which, with hindsight, seems to me to be insane! The fact remains that after these exploits, I had to lie down for long weeks, getting up only a few hours a day for the indispensable practical tasks.

Remarkably, once I finally understood the need for complete rest, I had no difficulty whatsoever in giving up all intellectual activity, without any intention of "cheating". Strictly speaking I didn't even have to make a decision - by the very fact of having understood, I had already dropped out. The tasks which only the day before had kept me on my toes suddenly seemed very distant, as if they belonged to a very distant past...

This gift was not empty, however. While for weeks and months sleep remained reluctant to come, and I lay for long hours, seemingly in total inaction, I don't remember for a single moment finding the time long. I was reacquainted with my body, and also with the most immediate surroundings - my room, or sometimes the patch of grass or dry herbs bathed in sunlight right before my eyes, wherever I happened to lie, near the house or on a short (and careful...) walk. I spent long moments following the dance of a fly in a ray of sunlight, or the

peregrinations of an ant or tiny translucent green or pink bugs along endless strands of herbs, in inextricable forests of such strands entangled before my eyes. These are also the moments [*dispositions*] when, in silence and in a state of great fatigue, one follows with solicitude the hesitant peregrinations of the slightest wind through one's inside [*boyaux*] - in short the moments when one reconnects with the elementary and essential things; the moments when one knows how to fully appreciate the benefits of a refreshing sleep, and even the marvel of simply taking a leak without any difficulty! The humble functioning of the body is an extraordinary marvel, which we only become aware of (sometimes unwillingly) when this functioning is disturbed in one way or another.

It was clear that "technically", the root of my "health problem" was the disturbance of sleep. The deeper reasons for this disturbance escaped and still escape me. It was by trial and error that I tried above all to find the sleep again, the good, sound sleep I had known, which mysteriously slipped away at the moment when I needed it the most! I have only recently found it again. Certainly, needless to say, the idea did not occur to me to rely on pills, and if I tried herbal teas or orange blossom water (of which I came to know on this occasion), I knew deep down that they were at best expedients. More importantly, I took this opportunity to make important changes in my diet: reduction of starchy foods in favour of green vegetables and fruits (both raw and cooked), reintroduction (in moderation) of meat as a regular part of my diet, and above all, a drastic reduction in the consumption of fats and sugars, where there had been a systematic imbalance in my diet (as in many others in affluent countries) since at least the end of the war. I was helped a lot to realise the importance of such a change of diet to recover a disturbed equilibrium of life, by my son-in-law Ahmed, who practices Chinese medicine and who has a very good "feeling" for these things. He is also the one who insisted without tiring on the importance of an important physical activity, of the order of a few hours per day, to balance [*faire le poids*] an intense intellectual activity. The latter otherwise tends to exhaust the body, pulling the available vital energy towards the head and creating a strong yang imbalance.

Ahmed, moreover, was not content in providing me with good advice, accompanied by a yin-yang dialectic to which I am quite sensitive, over the four or five years in which I had ample opportunity to familiarise myself with this delicate dynamic of things. As soon as I was well enough to garden, and seeing that I was doing my bit to revive a mini-garden that was looking pretty bad, Ahmed took the lead in starting the larger-scale work: clearing new strips of land, bringing in soil, transplanting and sowing, making terraces, retaining walls, rearranging the compost heap... As the days and weeks went by, I saw unfolding before me, under the impulse of my tireless friend, enough landscaping tasks to keep me busy for years, if not for the rest of my life!

This was exactly what I needed, and also what I need in the long run to counterbalance an overly spirited intellectual activity. In this respect, daily walks, which I could impose on myself, as has been suggested to me for a long time, would not be of much help: my head continues to grind during the walks as it does in bed, without being disturbed by the beauties of the landscape, which I pass through without seeing much of anything! On the other hand, when watering the garden, which I am responsible for making sure is in good shape, and even better when hoeing a bed of vegetables, I can't help but pay attention and get into it a little - to see the texture of the soil, how it is affected by the hoeing, by the vegetable plants and the "nasty" herbs that grow in it, by the compost and by the mulching - and also, through this, to see the state of the plants that I am supposed to take care of, a state that reflects to a large extent the greater or lesser attention that I have given them. This activity of gardening, and all that revolves around it, responds to two strong aspirations or



dispositions in me: one that pushes me towards an action where day by day I see something coming out of my hands (which is by no means the case for walking, and even less so for the weightlifting suggested to me by a colleague and friend...); and one that pushes me towards an action where, at every moment, I have the opportunity to learn from the contact with things. It seems that I am best disposed to learn in situations where I "do" something - "something" that takes shape and transforms under my hands...

Once I was past the state of exhaustion proper, my convalescence was, it seems to me, aided by two types of activity, or rather, two types of important and beneficial factors in my day-to-day activities, both at home and in the garden. On the one hand - there was the physical effort: even though I often felt fatigued and spiritless before I set to work - the "tougher" the work was, say wielding a heavy pickaxe or large stones, the more fit I felt afterwards, heavy with good fatigue. And there was also the contact with living things: the plants that had to be cared for; the soil that had to be prepared for them, mulched or hoed; the food that had to be prepared and that I ate with as much pleasure as I had had to prepare the meal; the cat claiming its pittance, and its share of affection; the various utensils and tools as well, and even the rough and often untidy [*mal léchés*] pebbles that had to be turned and re-turned in all directions, in order to assemble them into low walls that would remain standup...

Physical effort and contact with living things - these are precisely the two aspects that are lacking in Intellectual work, and which make such work incomplete, fragmentary, and eventually, if not supplemented and compensated for by something else, dangerous or even harmful. This is the third time, in just over three years, that I have had the opportunity to realise this. It has even become clear now that I am facing a drastic deadline: to change a certain way of life, to find an equilibrium where the yin pole of my being, my body, is not constantly neglected for the benefit of the yang pole, the mind or (to put it better) the head - or else, to die within the next few years. This is what my body has been telling me, as clearly as it is possible to say! I am now at a point in my life where the need for some basic "wisdom" has become a matter of survival, in the true and literal sense. This is surely a good thing - otherwise said "wisdom" would be perpetually put on hold, in favour of the kind of bulimic intellectual activity, which has been one of the dominant forces in my entire adult life.

Faced with such a clear deadline: "change or die [*crever*]!" - I did not have to examine myself to know my choice. This is why for almost four months, I was able, without ever having the impression of doing violence to myself, to abstain from any intellectual activity, maths or not maths. I knew without having to tell myself that, in the end [*limite*], a living gardener is better than a dead mathematician (or a dead "philosopher" or "writer", whatever!). With a little malice, one could add: and even better than a living mathematician! (But that's another story...)

I do not believe that I will ever find myself forced into such a "limit" situation, where I would have to renounce for a long time all intellectual activity, whether mathematical or meditative. Rather, the most immediate practical task, the most urgent one in the years to come, seems to me to be precisely that of achieving an equilibrium of life in which the two types of activity coexist from day to day, that of the body and that of the mind, without one or the other becoming devouring and ousting the other. I make no secret that it is indeed in the "spirit" direction that my most powerful investments have been made since childhood, and that it is also towards this direction that the two main passions that have continued to dominate my life in recent years still lead me today. Of these two passions, the mathematical passion and the meditative passion, it seems to me that

it is the first named above all, if not exclusively, that acts as a factor of disequilibrium in my life - as something that still retains an unfortunate tendency to "devour" all the rest for the benefit of it alone. It is surely no coincidence that the three "episodes of illness" in my life that have marked a situation of disequilibrium, since June 1981, have occurred at times when it was precisely the mathematical passion that was in the forefront.

One could say that this is not quite the case for this last episode, which occurred during the writing of Harvest and Sowing, which constitutes a period of reflection on myself, if not of meditation in the strict sense. But it is also true that this reflection on my past as a mathematician was constantly fed by my mathematical passion. This was especially so in the second part, the Burial, it seems to me, where the egotic component of this passion was involved in a particularly strong and constant way. Yet, even in retrospect, I don't have the impression that at any point this reflection took on a rhythm, a diapason that was devouring, even insane, as it did on the two previous occasions when my body was finally forced to let out an "fed up!", which was unanswered. Seen separately from the context of a whole life, my intellectual activity for the last year and a half (since the "resumption" of the writing of Pursuing Stacks, followed by Harvest and Sowing) seems to have continued at a very reasonable rhythm, without forgetting to eat or drink (but sometimes, a little, to sleep...). If it ended up leading to a third "health episode" (to use a euphemism), it is undoubtedly against the background of a whole life marked by the endless disequilibrium of a head that is too strong, imposing its rhythm and its law on a robust body that has long endured without stumbling(\*).

During the past two months I have had ample opportunity to realise the irreplaceable benefit of working with the body, in intimate contact with humble living things, speaking to me in silence about simple and essential things that books or reflection alone are powerless to teach. Thanks to this work, I found sleep again, that even more precious companion than food and drink - and with it, a renewal of vigour, a robustness that had suddenly seemed to have faded away. And I was able to see that in the season of life that is mine, if I want to continue for a few more years this new mathematical adventure begun last year, I cannot do so without endangering my health and my life, if not with my two feet firmly planted in the soil of my garden.

The coming months will be those in which a new way of life will have to be put in place, in which the work of the body and that of the mind find their place and are reconciled from day to day. There is work to do!

## **(99) The trap - or ease and exhaustion**

(23 September) I had to cut myself short last night, so as not to continue on my way until two or three o'clock in the morning and be caught up in a spiral that I know only too well. I was feeling cool and fresh, and if I had followed my natural inclination, I would have continued until the early hours of the morning! The trap of intellectual work - at least that which one pursues with passion, in a subject where one ends up feeling like a fish in water, following a long familiarity - is that it is so incredibly easy. You pull, you pull, and it always comes, you just have to pull; it rarely happens that sometimes you have the feeling of an effort, of a rubbing, a sign that it resists a little bit...

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\* I should make an exception here for the five years from 1974 to 1978, which were not dominated by any grand task, and where manual occupations absorbed a not negligible part of my time and energy.

I remember, however, from my early years as a mathematician, a persistent feeling of heaviness, of gravity that had to be overcome, by an obstinate effort, leaving a feeling of fatigue thereafter. This corresponded above all to a period in my life when I was working with insufficient, or even inadequate, tools; or to the later period when I had to acquire more or less painfully tools that were a bit "in all directions" [*tous azimuts*], under the pressure of a milieu (essentially, that of the Bourbaki group) that used them fluently, without their *raison d'être* appearing to me as I went along, sometimes even for years. I have had occasion to speak of these sometimes somewhat painful years (see "The welcomed stranger" s.9, and "a hundred irons in the fire, or: no use drying up!", note n° 10), in the first part of Harvest and Sowing. It was especially the period from 1945 to 1955, which coincides with my period of functional analysis. (It seems to me that in the students I had later, between 1960 and 1970, this resistance against learning without sufficient motivation, where one ingests notions and techniques on the faith of the authority of elders, was much less strong than it was in me - to tell the truth, I did not perceive any at all).

To come back to my subject, it is especially from 1955 onwards that I often had the impression of "flying" - of doing maths by playing with myself, without any feeling of effort - just like some of my elders whom I had formerly envied so much for such an almost miraculous facility, which had seemed to me to be well beyond the reach of my modest and heavy person! Today, it seems to me that such a "facility" is not the privilege of some exceptional gift (as I have encountered in some, at a time when such a "gift" seemed entirely absent in me), but that it appears of itself as the fruit of the union of a passionate interest in a given material (such as mathematics, say), and of a more or less long familiarity with it. If the "gift" does indeed intervene in the appearance of such an ease, it is undoubtedly by means of the time factor, longer or shorter from one person to another (and sometimes also from one occasion to another in the same person, indeed...), to arrive at a perfect ease in working on this or that subject(\*).

Still, the more it goes on - as the years go by - the more I have this impression of "facility" when I do maths - that things are just asking to reveal themselves to us, if only we take the trouble to look, to scrutinise them a little. It's not a question of technical virtuosity - it's quite clear that from this point of view, I'm in much worse shape than I was in 1970, when I "quit maths": since then I've had the opportunity to unlearn what I'd learnt, "doing maths" only sporadically, in my own corner, and in a spirit and on themes quite different (at first sight at least) from those of yesteryear. I don't mean to say either that it would be enough for me to stick to a famous problem (of Fermat, Riemann, or Poincaré, say), to make my way in a straight line to its solution, in one or two or even three years! The ease of which I speak is not that which proposes itself and allows to reach such a goal, fixed in advance: to prove such a conjecture or to give it a counter-example... It is rather that which allows us to launching off [*élancer*] into the unknown, in such a direction that an obscure instinct tells us is fruitful, with the intimate assurance, which will never be denied, that each day and each hour of our voyage fails not to bring us its harvest of new knowing. What exactly the next day's knowing will be, or even the next hour on this very day, we certainly sense - and it is this "premonition [*pressentiment*]", which is constantly caught short, and the suspense with which it is bound, that constantly propels us forward, while the very things we are searching for tend to draw us into them. Always what becomes known exceeds what was sensed, in precision, in flavour and

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\* Yet I know several mathematicians, each of whom has produced profound works, and who have never seemed to me to give that impression of ease, of "facility", which we are discussing here - they seem to be confronted with an omnipresent gravity, which they have to overcome with effort, at every step. For some reason, the "natural fruit" just mentioned did not "appear on its own" in these eminent men, as it was supposed to do. So not all unions bear the fruit one might expect...

in richness - and this known in turn immediately becomes the starting point and material for a renewed sensing, launching forward in pursuit of a new unknown eager to be known. In this game of discovering things, the direction we follow at each moment is known, while the goal is forgotten, assuming that we started from a goal indeed, which we proposed to reach. This "goal" was in fact a point of departure, the product of an ambition, or of ignorance; it played its part in motivating "the boss", setting an initial direction, and triggering this game, in which the goal has no real part. If the voyage undertaken is not of a day or two, but of a long duration, what it will reveal to us over the days and months and where it will lead us at the end of a long cascade of unknown adventures, is for the voyager a total mystery; a mystery so distant, so out of reach in fact, that he hardly cares! If he sometimes examines the horizon, it is not for the impossible task of predicting a point of arrival, and even less to decide on it according to his will, but to take stock of where he is at the moment, and among the directions that are offered to him to continue his voyage, to choose the one that henceforth he feels is the most burning...

Such is the "incredible facility" I spoke of earlier, in relation to the work of discovery in an entirely intellectual direction, like mathematics. It is not hindered either by inner resistance(\*) (as is so often the case in the work of meditation as I practise it), or by a physical effort to be made, generating a fatigue that would eventually give an unequivocal signal to stop. As for intellectual effort (assuming that one can even speak of "effort", having reached a point where the only "resistance" left is the time factor...), it does not seem to generate either intellectual or physical fatigue. More precisely, if there is any physical "fatigue", it is not really felt as such, except for occasional soreness, from sitting too long in a fixed position, and other such incidental annoyances. These are easily eliminated by a simple change of position. The lying down position has the unfortunate virtue of making them disappear, and thus of favouring a revival of intellectual work, instead of the much needed sleep!

However, I have come to realise that there is a more subtle and insidious physical "fatigue" than fatigue of the muscles or nerves, which manifests itself as such in an indisputable need for rest and sleep. The term "exhaustion" here (rather than "fatigued") would better capture this, it being understood however that this state is not perceived as such, in the common sense of this term, which designates an extreme fatigue, manifested in particular by a great effort necessary just to get up, walk a few steps etc.. It is rather a "exhaustion" of the body's energy for the benefit of the brain, which manifests itself by a gradual lowering of the body's general "tonicity", of its vital energy level. It seems that this exhaustion by excessive intellectual activity (I mean: not compensated by sufficient physical activity, generating physical fatigue and the need for rest) - this exhaustion is gradual and cumulative. These effects must depend on both the intensity and duration of intellectual activity over a given period. At the level of intensity at which I pursue intellectual work, and with my age and constitution, it would seem that the cumulative exhaustion in question reaches a critical, dangerous threshold after a year or two of uninterrupted activity, without compensation by regular physical activity.

In a sense, this "facility" I speak of is only apparent. Intense intellectual activity involves considerable energy, that's clear: energy is taken from somewhere and "spent/dépensée]" on a work. It would seem that the

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\* I know a remarkably gifted mathematician, however, whose relationship to mathematics is typically conflictual, impeded at every step by powerful resistances, such as the fear that a certain expectation (in the form of a conjecture, say) might turn out to be false. Such resistance can sometimes lead to a state of real intellectual paralysis. Compare this with the previous footnote.

"somewhere" is at the level of the body, which "cashes in/[*encaisse*]" (or rather disburses) as best it can the (sometimes dizzying) expenses that the head pays for without counting. The normal way of recovering the energy provided by the body is through sleep. It is when the head becomes bulimic that it ends up encroaching on sleep, which amounts to eating up capital-energy without renewing it. The trap and the danger of the "facility" of intellectual work is that it relentlessly incites us to cross this threshold, or to remain beyond it as soon as it is crossed, and that, moreover, this crossing is not signalled to our attention by the usual, unmistakable signs of fatigue, or perhaps even of exhaustion. It takes great vigilance, I realise, to detect the approach and crossing of the threshold in question, when one is fully engaged in the pursuit of an exciting adventure. To perceive this emptiness of energy in the body requires a state of listening to the body, which I have often lacked and which few people have. I doubt, moreover, that such a state of communion of conscious attention with the body can flourish in anyone at a period of life dominated by purely intellectual activity, to the exclusion of all physical activity.

Many intellectual workers actually instinctively feel the need for such physical activity, and arrange their lives accordingly: gardening, DIY, mountains, boating, sports... Those who, like me, have neglected this healthy instinct in favour of a too invasive passion (or a too strong lethargy), sooner or later pay the price. Three times in three years I have paid the price, and I must say I have done so without reluctance, or to put it better, with gratitude, realising with each new episode of illness that I was only reaping the fruits of my own negligence, and moreover, that it was also teaching me a lesson, which perhaps only it could give me. The most important lesson, perhaps, that the last of these episodes, which has just come to an end, has taught me is that it is high time to take the lead and make such calls to order unnecessary from now on - or more concretely: that it is high time to cultivate my garden!

### **(100) A farewell to Claude Chevalley**

In my reflections yesterday and today, I have deliberately left out an event that took place right in the middle of the illness-episode, in the first days of July, at a time when I was still bedridden. It was the death of Claude Chevalley.

I learned about it from a vague article in *Libération* more or less devoted to the event, which a friend had passed on to me by chance[*à tout hasard*], thinking that it might interest me. There was almost nothing about Chevalley, but some bits about Bourbaki, of which he was a founding member. I felt quite stupid when I heard the news. I had been thinking for months that I was about to finish *Harvest and Sowing*, printed in paperback[*frappé tiré broché*] and all - and go up to Paris to bring him a still warm copy! If there was one person in the world who I was sure would read my paving stone[*pavé*] with real interest, and often with pleasure, it was him - and I wasn't at all sure if there would be anyone else but him!

From the very beginning of my reflection, I realised that Chevalley had brought me something, at a crucial moment in my itinerary, something that had been sown in an effervescence, and had germinated in silence. What I felt connected to him then was not so much a feeling[*sentiment*], say, of recognition, or sympathy, of affection. These feelings were surely present, as they are also present towards this or that other "elders" who had welcomed me as one of their own, more than twenty years earlier. What made my relationship to Chevalley different from my relationship to any of them and to most of my friends, if not all of them, is something else. It

is the feeling, I think, or better said, the perception, of an essential kinship[*parenté*], beyond the differences in culture, the conditioning of all kinds that marked us from our young ages. I cannot say whether something of this "kinship" shows through in the lines of my reflection where he is mentioned(\*). In the period of my life to which these lines refer, Chevalley appears perhaps more as an "elder", this time on the level of an understanding of certain elementary things in life, than as a "parent". This is a distance, however, that my later maturation must have reduced and perhaps eliminated, as had been the case for a long time at the mathematical level, in my relationship to him as to my other elders. If I now try to put into words the sense of this kinship, or at least one of its signs, it comes to me as follows: both of us are "lone riders [*cavaliers seuls*]" - voyagers each in his own "solitary adventure". I expressed myself about mine in the last "chapter" (of the same name) of "Fatuity and Renewal"(†). Perhaps, for those who knew Chevalley well (and even for others), this part of the reflection is more apt to suggest what I would like to express, than the part that refers to him by name.

Meeting and talking with him would surely have allowed me to understand this friend better than I had in the past, and to better situate both this essential kinship and our differences. If there was, apart from Pierre Deligne, one person for whom I felt an eagerness to be able to hand in person the text of Harvest and Sowing, it was certainly Claude Chevalley. If there was one person whose commentary, whether mischievous or sarcastic, would carry particular weight for me, it was him still. On that day in the first week of July, I knew that I would never have the pleasure of bringing him the best I had to offer, nor the pleasure of hearing the sound of his voice again.

The strange thing - and which no doubt contributed to making me feel so stupid upon hearing this news - was that more than once in the past months, when I thought of a forthcoming meeting with Chevalley, I remembered that he was having health problems - and there was a worry in me, constantly dismissed, that this meeting might not take place, that my friend might disappear before I could come to see him. The idea of course occurred to me to write or phone him, if only to ask about his health and how he was, and to tell him a few words about the work I was engaged in, and my intention to go and see him in this regard. The fact that I pushed this idea away as silly and unwelcome (that there was really no reason why... etc.), as one so often does in situations of this kind, illustrates how I, like many others, continue to live "in my own ways [*en dessous de mes moyens*]" - pushing away the obscure prescience of things which breathes to me a knowing that I am too busy and too lazy to hear...

### **(101) The surface and the depth**

(September 24) After the digression of the previous two days around the "illness episode" of the past months, it is time for me to pick up the thread interrupted in June, where I had left it. I foresaw then that there would still be two final notes, which remained to be written: a "Funeral Eulogy (2)" (which would take up and complete the note "The Funeral Eulogy(1) - or compliments" of May 12), and a final "De Profundis", where I intended to sketch out an assessment of the whole of my reflection around the Burial.

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\* See "Encounter with Claude Chevalley, or: liberty and good intensions" (section 11 ), and the last paragraph of the following section, "The merit and the contempt".

† See especially, in this regard, the two sections "The forbidden fruit" and "The solitary adventure", nos 46, 47.

The intended substance of these two notes was still very much warm when I fell ill - I was about to throw it all out on paper, just long enough to finish putting the finishing touches to the previous set of notes, so that I would feel I was working on solid and tidy "backsides[*arrières*]" ... During the three full months (since June 23rd to be exact) when I practically stopped all work on the Burial, except for some occasional typing corrections, it has, alas, slipped my mind a bit. I even feel a bit stupid, embarrassed in any case, to wisely start filling in the blank pages behind the chores-titles, under the pretext that they appear in a provisional table of contents, and that I had the imprudence to allude to them here and there in a certain text intended for publication. This is especially the case for "The Funeral Eulogy (2) ", and even rereading sometimes the first juice "The Funeral Eulogy (1)" (alias "the compliments") was not enough to warm up for me a substance which for months had had the leisure to cool down in its corner!

However, from the day after the 12th of May when I wrote this note, and throughout the month that followed, my hands were tingling with the desire to delve deeper into this new mine that I had just got my hands on, without ever doubting it. When Nico Kuiper had been kind enough to send me the jubilee booklet of the twenty-five years of existence of the IHES last year, I must have spent half an hour going through it (including the two briefings, half a page each, on Deligne and me), without finding anything in particular. The only thing that struck me was the absence of any reference to the difficult early years of the IHES, where its reputation was established in a makeshift room, myself (with the first Séminaires de Géométrie Algébrique) being the only one to represent it "in the field". I thought about this months later, when writing the note "The salutary tear-away" (n° 14), in March 84. Not being sure of my memory, I asked Nico to send me another copy of the booklet just to be certain (not being able to find the first one). This was a second opportunity to go through again the two briefings in question, perhaps with a less hasty eye. However, this time again I'm not hooked up, decidedly. I noted in passing, with some surprise, that it is said in the briefing on Deligne that "The main thrust of his work is to "understand the cohomology of algebraic varieties"", who would have believed it! To forget the thing for a month or two (until I am led to remember it, in writing the note "Refusal of a legacy - or the price of a contradiction", n° 47). On the other hand, I did not notice that in the briefing about me the word "cohomology" is not pronounced, nor is the word "scheme". In the state of inattention that I was in at the time, nothing yet makes me suspect that this anodyne text, a little overloaded with hyperbolic epithets, functions as a Funeral Eulogy, "served" (moreover) "with a perfect touch"! A touch so perfect that I wonder if any of the readers of this booklet (a little boring around the edges, by dint of deliberate ointment on all sides, as the occasion required, one would think...) noticed it more than I did, on my first and second readings.

This immediately ties in with an observation that I constantly make whenever, for one reason or another, I am led to look with a somewhat intense and sustained attention at something that I had previously been content to look at "in passing" with the "habitual", routine attention that I give to the things and events, large and small, that pass through my life from day to day. Such a situation frequently arises during meditation, which often leads me (usually "one thing leading to another[*de fil en aiguille*]" and without any deliberate intention) to subject to closer scrutiny such events of the day or night (including dreams), which had passed more or less unnoticed in my customary state of attention, or whose meaning (often clear and obvious) had at first entirely escaped my conscious attention.

When I speak here of "a somewhat intense and sustained attention", what I really mean is an awakened look, a fresh look, a look that is not burdened by habits of thought, or by the "knowledge/*savoir*" that serves as a façade. If, for one reason or another, we are led to cast an awakened, attentive look on things, these things will seem to transform themselves before our eyes. Behind the apparent flatness of the dull and smooth surface of things presented to us by our everyday "attention", we suddenly see an unsuspected depth open up and come to life. This deep life of things has not waited around for us to take the trouble to become aware of them - it has been there all along, it is part of their intimate nature, whether they are mathematical objects, a garden lawn, or the whole of the psychic forces that act in such and such a person at such and such a time.

Thought is one instrument among others to reveal and enable us to fathom that depth behind the surface, that secret life of things, which is only "secret" because we are too lazy to look, too inhibited to see. It is an instrument that has its advantages, as well as its disadvantages and limitations. But in any case, thought is rarely used as an instrument of discovery. Its most common function is not to discover the secret life in us and in things, but rather to mask and freeze it. It is a multi-use tool at the disposal of both the Child worker and the Boss. In the hands of the former it becomes a veil, capable of capturing the forces of our desire and carrying us far into the unknown. In the hands of the other it becomes an immovable anchor, which neither eddies nor storms can shake...

The reflection was getting a bit astray, and now it's coming back to a starting point - which is the same observation I made yesterday: to what extent, due to inveterate habits and conditioning, I live in my own ways! (In which I find myself, moreover, in very numerous company...). It is thanks to a progressive discovery of the Burial, from facts as big as the volume LN 900(\*), that a lazy attention has finally been awakened. A reading of the note "Refusal of a legacy - or the price of a contradiction" (n° 47) leads me on 12 May to reread the two famous "briefings" a third time (!). This time, however, I notice a rather unusual detail: there is no mention at any time of "cohomology" (nor of algebraic varieties or schemes) in the small text in dithyrambic style devoted to me in the jubilee booklet! The thing seems to me funny enough to deserve a footnote, which I start to write as quickly as possible. Along the way, I became aware of one or two other "funny" details, which had not yet caught my attention: although this was a third reading, it had also remained superficial, mechanical - more or less, I had limited myself to repeating, to reproducing the readings done previously. It was only when I wrote what was supposed to be a footnote, and which became the note "The Funeral Eulogy (1)", that little by little I got hooked on the game, that a curiosity was awakened, which made me come back to these texts yet again, this time looking at them a bit more closely. It was only then that the transformation I mentioned earlier took place - that a "depth" opened up, an intense life behind the flat façade of a dithyrambic discourse, served up in the blare of a great occasion! It is this curiosity that has transformed a mechanical, repetitive, distracted look into an "awakened" look...

Moreover, the "awakening" in question was not instantaneous, it was made progressively, with the progression of the reflection pursued in this footnote. To tell the truth, it was not complete until the very final point of this

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\* See the note "Memory of a dream - or the birth of motives", n° 51, as well as the following note "The Burial - or the New Fathers".



note, when the hour was late (I think I remember) and encouraged me to "get it over"(\*). But I had not yet placed this point, or at least not until the next day, when I realised that I was still far from having exhausted the subject of the Funeral Eulogy. Only then did I fully realise how rich in meaning these two texts, so short and innocuous in appearance, were, rich in meaning, real mines to say the least! And that I was far from having reached the end of what they had to say, if I would only listen...

(25 September) I had to cut short the reflection again last night, even though it had only just started, it seemed to me. I had been sitting in front of my typewriter for three and a half hours straight, and little subtle signs were beginning to show me that it was time to get up and move.

I remember well the first time I was led to direct an "intense and sustained attention" to written texts, and experienced day after day, for months on end, the stunning metamorphosis of a dull and flat "surface", coming to life and revealing a rich and precise meaning, an unsuspected "depth". It was also, at the same time, my first long-term meditation, in the spirit of a voyage into the unknown, which would last as long as it would last... The starting material was the voluminous 1933/34 correspondence between my father (who had emigrated to Paris) and my mother (who was still in Berlin at the time, with me, who was then five years old). My aim was to "get to know" my parents. I had discovered the previous year that the admiration I had devoted to them all my life, which had ended up being frozen in a kind of filial piety, covered up and maintained a very great ignorance about them. This phenomenal ignorance, in which I had been happy to maintain myself all my life, only became apparent to me in its full dimension during the long-term meditation of the following year, from August 1979 to March 1980.

I had begun to "prepare the ground" throughout July 1979, notably by doing a first reading of the whole of this correspondence, in the margin of a work on a "poetic work of my own composition" (†) to which I was then putting the finishing touches. Every evening I spent a few hours reading three or four letters and replies, with interest for sure and, I would have said without hesitation, in an attentive manner. Yet I was vaguely aware that I remained a stranger, an outsider to what I was reading - that the real meaning escaped me. What I was reading was often quite crazy, as if this man and this woman I saw living and parading before my eyes had nothing in common with those I had thought I knew - those of whom my memory restored a clear, intangible image. For lack of patient, meticulous, demanding work on what I was reading, which I should have pursued as I went along, I was only stunned, but no more, by the (relatively) little in these letters that was "big" enough to catch my superficial attention. What was recorded in me this way was superimposed on the "well known", which had been since my early childhood and until those days still (without my ever having realised it, of course) the invisible and immutable foundation of my life, of my sense of identity. Assuming that I had stuck to this first reading, surely the thin layer of new and undigested "facts" that had thus been superimposed on the master layers would have been quickly eroded and carried away without leaving much trace in the months and years that followed.

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\* All the more so, surely, as I had already the same day gone through the long and substantial reflection "The massacre" (n° 87), to which, moreover, I refer towards the end of the note "The Funeral Eulogy - or The compliments", which had followed on from it.

† Allusion is made to this work, and the episode in my life that it represents, at the end of the section "The Guru-not-Guru, or the three-legged horse", n° 45, and in the note n° 43 to which it is referred.

At the time of this preliminary work, my main investment was elsewhere, in the writing of a book which was then absorbing most of my energy. I was well aware of the limits of a work done on the fringe of another, and that I would have to come back to it from beginning to end, through a work on parts in which I would invest myself thoroughly. I anticipated that it would be a matter of a few weeks - in fact I spent seven months in a row, devoted to a meticulous examination of the letters and writings left by my parents, of which the most "burning" part is surely the 1933/34 correspondence. Seven months, in fact, at the end of which I ended up cutting it short, realising that the subject ("get to know my parents") was as inexhaustible as ever. It had become more urgent to get to know myself, with the help of all the things I had learned about my parents, and thus, indirectly at least,... about my own forgotten childhood...

I have just spent nearly two hours going through the beginnings of the notes of this meditation on my parents, begun on 3 August 1979. Contrary to what I thought I was hastily remembering, I did not then realise, except perhaps very confusedly, the need to review thoroughly, "from beginning to end" (as I wrote earlier), the letters and other written traces of my parents that I had read during the past month. At least I don't suggest anything to that effect in my notes. After a day or two of recapitulative reflection, taking a provisional stock of my multiple, slightly confused impressions aroused by this reading, I make no effort [*fais nullement mine*] of resuming it by a meticulous work on parts. Instead, I follow it up (as a matter of course) with a (similarly brisk) reading of other letters (and in particular of a voluminous correspondence of my parents in the years 1937/39), and with a parallel reflection fed by the reading impressions. One thing leading to another, in the course of that August and the following month, I began to learn what it is to work on a letter (or another written testimony of a life), which allows one to apprehend its true, sometimes blazing meaning - a meaning, however, that the person writing often likes to ignore, to conceal from himself or herself as well as from others, unseen unknown! while managing to spread it "between the lines" in a sometimes ostentatious, incisive way. And it must be rare that an insinuation or provocation (sometimes ferocious...) does not reach the addressee, that it is not perceived and "cashed in" by him at a certain level, while he too is not careful to let this perception, this knowledge penetrate the field of his gaze, and that he too enters with all sails unfurled, into this same game of "unseen unknown"! It is the most obscure passages, infallibly, those that seem to verge on debility (or insanity...) and defy all rational interpretation, that to the curious eye turn out to be the richest in meaning: veritable mines, providing irreplaceable keys to penetrate further into the simple and obvious meaning behind the accumulation of apparent nonsense. Such passages, frequent in the correspondence between my parents, and especially in the letters of my mother who was leading the dance, of course completely "went over my head" during my first readings throughout July. I started to pick up on it, here and there, during the following month. It was only in September that various cross-checks made me realise that, decidedly, I had perhaps missed something essential in what I had to learn from the 1933/34 letters, and brought me back to them, prompting me to do a first 'in-depth' reading of some of them. This reading immediately shook up the image I had, since childhood, of my parents and of their relationship to me and my sister.

## **(102) Praise for writing**

(26 September) It's been two days since I was fully in "autobiographical reminiscences", while I was on my way to write ("in the cold [*à froid*]") the continuation of a certain note, on a certain Funeral Eulogy. I don't know if this digression will have warmed my ardour at all! It is time at least that I got to the point I had in mind when I

started the day before yesterday, a little in the direction of : "On the art of reading a message that pretends not to say what it has to say". This kind of text-message is far more common than I had formerly suspected...

It goes without saying that the question of the "how" of this "art" does not arise, as long as one is prepared (as I was for most of my life) to take at face value [*argent comptant*] and literally everything that is said or written to you, and not to seek or see, in anything and in anyone, any other intentions than those expressly expressed by the person concerned. On the other hand, it arises when one is confronted with the undefinable expression that in such and such a statement, tirade or narration, something is "fishy [*cloche*]", there is a rat smell, that something has "passed", somewhere, that is not supposed to have been said (what would you imagine there!). Sometimes it is also the perception, elementary and disconcerting, of an incoherence, of an absurdity, so enormous at times and at the same time seemingly elusive, that it seems to defy all formulation, at the limits of seeming debility or delirium. These situations are often overloaded with anxiety - and it is indeed by an instantaneous influx of anxiety, never recognised as such but blurred and immediately submerged under a wave of violent, distraught anger, that I invariably reacted to such situations, where absurdity suddenly burst into my life: an inadmissible, incomprehensible absurdity, heavy with threats, each time shaking my serene vision of the world and of myself to the foundations! This was the case at least until I discovered "meditation", when an intrepid and enterprising curiosity defused and took over from these waves of anger and anxiety...

It was curiosity, that is to say the desire to know, that made me spontaneously find, under the pressure of needs, this "art" of deciphering a scrambled testimonial text - or more modestly speaking, a method that suits the limited means and the heaviness that are mine. No matter how hard I tried and no matter how curious I was, on first reading (or even on second reading) of these letters heavy with meaning, all the essentials went over my head - "I could see nothing but fire". Sometimes, commenting on a few often confused impressions, perhaps about this or that particularly obscure and confusing passage, I managed to penetrate further into the meaning of a text that had seemed hermetic. Along the way, I was sometimes led to recopy, for quotation purposes, passages of varying length, which stood out either because of their obscurity or because they gave me the impression of being "important", for one reason or another. As the days and weeks went by, I realised that the simple fact of copying out verbatim such and such a passage from the text I was scrutinising, modified my relationship to that passage in a surprising way, in the sense of opening up to an understanding of its true meaning.

This was quite unexpected, whereas my initial motivation (at least on a conscious level) had been a matter of pure convenience. I even remember that for a long time there was a certain restrained impatience in me to spend precious time acting as a copyist, nothing more and nothing less, and I was gnawing at the end and writing as fast as I could... But there is no common measure between the speed of the eye browsing through written lines while reading them, and that of the hand transcribing them word for word. No matter how fast one writes, the "time factor" is absolutely not the same. And I suspect that this "time factor" does not act in a purely mechanical, quantitative way - or to put it better, that it is only one aspect of a more delicate and richer reality. Nor is there any common measure, for me at least, between the action of the eye which browses lines that another has thought and written, and the act of the hand which letter after letter, word after word, rewrites those same lines. Surely there is a deep symbiosis between the hand and the mind or thought; and at the very rhythm of the writing hand, and without any deliberate purpose, the mind cannot help but reform, rethink the same words, assembling themselves into sentences charged with meaning, and these into speech. Provided that a desire to know animates this hand which reproduces letters, words and sentences, and that it animates this mind

which, in unison, also "reproduces" them, at another level, - surely this double action creates a contact which is different and more intimate between my person and this message of which I make myself the scribe-writer, than the act, above all passive and without support or tangible trace, of the eye which is content to read.

This groping intuition is in line with a long-standing observation - that for me the rhythm of the working thought (whether it is mathematical work or any other, including the work I call "meditation") is most often (if not always) that of the hand that writes, and not at all that of the eye that reads(\*). And the written trace left by my hand (or sometimes, by the typewriter operated by my hands...), at the rhythm of the thought which progresses without haste and without ever dawdling, is the indispensable material support of this thought - both its "voice", and its "memory". I suspect, moreover, that it must be more or less the same (though perhaps to a lesser degree) for most if not all "intellectual workers".

### **(103) The child and the sea - or faith and doubt**

(27 September) In any case, the fact is there; just as I can only know how to "enter" a mathematical theory by writing, I hardly begin to enter a text-message, into the "between the lines" of a message, until I rewrite it. My first work of meditation "on texts" was transformed, an apparent flatness began to open up to a living depth, and the absurd to find a meaning, from the moment I began to rewrite the message verbatim, or (in the case of a message of prohibitive dimensions) the passages that an intuition made me feel as crucial.

One might tell me that in the absence of reliable "objective" criteria to guarantee the validity of an "interpretation", presented as the result or outcome of (so-called?) "work", on a text let's say, one can make any text or speech say exactly what one wants, inventing whatever 'message' one likes to attribute to it. Nothing could be further from the truth and examples certainly abound! I doubt, moreover, (except perhaps in a limited discipline like history - and even there...) that it is possible to identify such criteria. It would not be of much use anyway: neither to prevent anyone from inventing à gogo fanciful interpretations, nor to allow anyone to fathom and discover the true meaning of a message, a situation or an event. Rules and criteria are ingredients of a method, which has its usefulness and importance (often overestimated by the way, to the detriment of other factors and forces of a completely different nature), as a tool for discovery and consolidation in the development of scientific or technical knowledge, in that of any kind of know-how: driving or repairing a car, etc. On the other hand, at the level of knowing and discovery of oneself and others, the role of the method becomes entirely accessory: it is "stewardship" that follows for sure, when the essential is there. And to be inspired by or to start from a method, or even to cling to it tenaciously, does nothing to encourage the emergence of this more essential thing - quite the contrary!

To put it another way: the one who sets out to find something decided in advance (which he will call as "true", or "truth") will have no difficulty in finding it, and even in proving it to his complete satisfaction - and surely he will find along the way one or another, if not a whole crowd of people, all happy to make an alliance with him

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\* This circumstance, which seems to play a greater role in my case than in that of most of my mathematical colleagues, had once made it difficult for me to fit into the collective work sessions of the Bourbaki group, as I found myself unable to follow the readings at the pace at which they were being carried out. I have never really liked reading mathematical texts, even the beautiful ones. My spontaneous way of understanding maths has always been to do it, or to redo it (with the help, if necessary, of ideas and indications provided by colleagues or, if there is nothing better, by books...).

and share his convictions and satisfaction. He is like the butterfly hunter, who sets out with a beautiful butterfly in his net (a stuffed one, if that's what it is), and brings it out all happy (and to his complete satisfaction) when he returns from his "hunt".

And there is also the one who is placed before an unknown, like a naked child before the sea. When the child desires to know it, he enters and knows it - be it lukewarm or cool, calm or restless. He who is attracted by an unknown thing, and who sets out to know it, will surely know it to a greater or lesser extent. With or without a net, he will find the truth, or at least some truth. His errors as well as his findings are as many stages in his journey, or to put it better, in his love affair with what he wishes to know.

I know well what I am talking about, because in my life I have been abundantly alternating, between this butterfly hunter and this naked child. There is no difficulty in distinguishing one from the other. I doubt that the "objective criteria" are of much help here, it's much simpler than that! You just have to use your eyes...

And there is no difficulty either in distinguishing the successive stages, the successive phases of decantation, in this journey of which I have just spoken, starting from this "dead" stage where no presentiment surfacing to consciousness yet makes us suspect "something", beyond a certain flat and amorphous surface presented to us by somnolent eyes, and which through successive "awakenings" leads us towards an apprehension of this "something" that is more and more delicate, more intimate, more complete. It is not essentially different in nature, whether it is a question of the journey in the discovery of mathematical things, or in that of oneself and others. The feeling of a progression in knowing, which deepens little by little (even through an accumulation of errors, patiently, tirelessly corrected) - this feeling is as irrefutable in the latter case as in the other.

This assurance - this is one side of an inner disposition, the other side being an openness to doubt: an attitude of curiosity excluding all fear, towards one's own errors, which allows one to detect and correct them constantly. The essential condition of this double foundation, of this faith that is indispensable for welcoming doubt as well as for discovery, is the absence of any fear (whether apparent or hidden) about what will "come out" of the research undertaken - any fear, in particular, that the reality we are about to discover will upset our certainties or convictions, that it will disenchant our hopes. Such fear acts as a profound paralysis of our creative faculties, of our power of renewal. We can discover and renew ourselves in pain and sorrow, but not in fear of what is about to be known, of what is about to be born. (No more than a man can know a woman and make her conceive, in a moment when he is afraid of her, or of the act that carries him into her). Such fear is probably relatively rare in the context of scientific research, or any other research whose theme does not involve our own person in any profound way. It is, however, the great stumbling block when it comes to the discovery of oneself or of others.

And yet, the feeling that accompanies a discovery, big or small, is as irrefutable in the case of the discovery of oneself or of others as it is in the context of an impersonal research, such as mathematics. I have already alluded to this feeling. It is the reflection, at the level of emotions, of a perception of something that has just happened - the appearance of something new - and this "something" appears as tangible, as irrefutable (I apologise for the repetitions!) as the appearance of a mathematical statement, say, or of a notion or a demonstration, which one had never thought of before. It also seems to me difficult to distinguish or separate this feeling that accompanies a particular discovery from the feeling of progress I mentioned earlier, which accompanies a whole research. The "big and small" discoveries are like the successive levels that materialise a progression, like successive

thresholds that we must cross. Progression is nothing other than this sequence of crossing these thresholds, of accessions from each of these levels to the next.

The "feeling", or better, the perception which reflects, which restores this process, is a sure, unmistakable "criterion" - I do not remember that it ever misled me, either in maths or in meditation: that I had to note, with hindsight, that this feeling had been illusory. Often it allows, without any residual doubt, to distinguish between the true and the false, or to discern the true in the false, and the false in what is supposed to be true. But above all it is an irreplaceable guide in any true search - a guide ready to inform us at a moment's notice (if we take the trouble to consult it) if we are on the wrong track, or on the right way.

The disposition to listen to this sure guide is, it seems to me, nothing other than what in another place of my reflection(\*) I called "rigour". This rigour is not different in essence, it seems to me, from the demands of mathematical research, or from the demands of self-knowing, without which there can be no such knowing. But it goes without saying that this does not mean that the presence of this rigour, at the level of such intellectual work, is a guarantee or sign of its presence for the knowing of oneself and of others. In fact, the opposite is true, as I have seen on countless occasions, starting with myself. In this area, the "rigour" I am talking about here came into my life at the same time as meditation. Or rather, I can't really distinguish between one and the other. The moments of meditation in my life are none other than those in which I examine my own person (most often through my relationship to others) in such an extremely demanding disposition with myself.

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\* In the section "Rigour and rigour", n° 26, where I speak of "rigour" as a "delicate attention to the quality of understanding present at each moment" in a research.

## XII. The Funeral Ceremony

### 1. The Funeral Eulogy

#### (104) The compliments

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#### (105) The strength and the aureole

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## 2. THE KEY OF YIN AND YANG

### 2.1 (106) The muscle and the gut (yang buries yin (1))

(2 October) I would still like to pursue at least one of the associations of ideas, aroused by the three-part Funeral Eulogy (of which I ended up giving the full quotation yesterday). This association came to me the day after 12 May, when I had just written the note "The Funeral Eulogy (1) - or the compliments" (n° 104). It touches on a certain aspect of things which often goes unnoticed, and which I only began to realise in the last five or six years.

Amongst the lines in the texts examined, one sees the cult of certain values asserted. In this respect, what is highlighted in relation to Weil conjectures, proven by Deligne, is their "difficulty"(\*) - not their beauty, their simplicity, the vast perspectives they opened up from the moment they were first stated by Weil. I am also thinking of the fruits borne by these glimpsed perspectives, long before they were demonstrated, and of other glimpsed fruits that now fall at the right moment, once the last step in the long voyage that led to its demonstration has been taken. It is the beauty, the extraordinary internal coherence of these conjectures, and the previously unsuspected links they reveal, that have made them such a powerful and fecund source of inspiration, for two generations of geometers and arithmeticians. The most profound part of my work (both the "completely carried through", and the "dream of motives") is directly inspired by them (through Serre, who knew how to grasp and communicate all the strength of the vision expressed in the conjectures). Without them, neither the l-adic cohomology, nor even the language of topos would probably have come into being. To put it better, this "vast unifying vision" of (algebraic) geometry, topology and arithmetic that I have endeavoured to develop over the last fifteen years of my life, it is in these "Weil conjectures" that I found a first and striking outline of it. And as the vision gained in breadth and maturity, it was this vision itself and the previously hidden

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\* (3 October) Difficulty described as, moreover, "proverbial"! This makes little sense, except to impress those who are not in the know! The "difficulty" of a conjecture can only be truly appreciated once it has been demonstrated - it is its fecundity, on the other hand, that can be sensed from the outset, and which often manifests itself objectively, even before it is demonstrated, through the work it has inspired. The "great" conjectures are not distinguished from the others by their "difficulty" (which is not known - even supposing that the term has a meaning...), but by their fecundity. I note in passing that this is a typically "yin", feminine aspect of a thing, whereas "difficulty" is a typically "yang", "masculine" value.

things that it allowed me to apprehend one by one, that whispered to me step by step what to do, and at its end to "take" what presented itself at hand. The last step in the demonstration of Weil conjectures was neither more nor less than one of the steps in a long and fascinating voyage that began I cannot say when, long before I was born, and which after my death will still not be completed!

But following the spirit detected in the quoted text, one could believe that "Weil conjectures" were a question of weights and dumbbells: here is the weight to be lifted "in a snatch [*à l'arrachée*]"! Two hundred kilos is not nothing, the difficulty is proverbial, many have tried it and not one yet has been able to do it - until "H-day" (like "Hercules")! The result is surprising (106.1), so judge two quintals - no one would have believed that one would ever manage it... It is the same spirit that one perceives in the laconic commentary on the "difficult theorem" proved by Faltings: there again, in the very designation of this new stage in our knowledge of things, it is the difficulty again that is highlighted, to arouse the admiration of the crowds - not the perspectives that open up, starting from a new summit overcome(\*). It did not even seem useful to mention the name "Mordell's conjecture" (unknown to a non-mathematical public, it's true) - as if the apprehension and formulation of the conjecture (here, by Mordell) were an accessory thing, because "easy". In place of it, a bogus perspective on "Fermat's theorem" (which is supposed to be "illuminated"). It is true that the latter is universally known (even outside mathematical circles) as a weight of well over three hundred kilos (which has resisted three centuries of effort).

The first point I wanted to make is that, the values exalted in these texts (with the discretion that befits the circumstance, of course), are those that can be called the values of muscle, of the "brain muscle" in this case: the one that makes it possible to surpass, by the strength of the wrist, proverbial records of "difficulty".

These values are not only those of the hero pinned up here, like those of the author of a certain jubilee booklet (an anonymous author whom I believe I recognise). They are also the values that increasingly (it seems) dominate the mathematical world, and more generally, the scientific world. Beyond this world, which is still relatively small, one can say that these are also, and increasingly, the values of a certain "culture", qualified as "western" (†). Nowadays and since a long time ago, this "culture" and its values have conquered the surface of our planet, annihilating all the others, as an irrefutable proof of their superiority. The planetary symbol, the heroic embodiment of these values, is the astronaut in his waterproof armour, the first to set foot on some unimaginably remote and desolate planet, in front of millions of breathless television viewers, slumped in front of their screens.

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\* What struck me most, from the moment I held in my hands Faltings' preprint where he proves three key conjectures, including Mordell's (discussed here), is on the contrary the extraordinary simplicity of the approach, by which he proves in about forty pages these results, which were supposed to be "out of reach"! (Compare with note n° 3. )

† When I refer here to the "values" of our culture as they appear today, I am of course referring to the "official" values - those which are conveyed by the school, the media, the family, and which are the object of a general consensus in the various professional circles. This does not mean that these values are accepted unreservedly by all, nor that they constitute the basic note in the attitudes and behaviour of all. It is with affliction that honest people, the media and competent professional literature (from the pen of educators, sociologists, psychiatrists etc.) speak of a "certain youth" in particular, which decidedly does not "fit in [*cadre*]" and which mars a certain picture!



These values, which for lack of a closer look I have limited myself to designating by a summary term of symbolic value, "the muscle", are not new. In ethnologist's jargon, we could also call them "patriarchal". One of the first written texts, it seems to me, in which their primacy is forcefully affirmed (an unanswerable force!) is the Old Testament (and more particularly, the book of Moses). However, one only has to read this fascinating document from a remote era to realise that the primacy of "patriarchal" values, that of man over woman, or that of "spirit" over "body" or "matter", was far from going all the way to the negation or disregard of complementary values (which were perhaps not yet perceived as "opposed" or "antagonistic")(\*) . I don't know if the history of the vicissitudes of these two sets of complementary values has been written - and it must be a fascinating thing to pursue this history, through centuries and millennia, from the time of Moses to the present day. It is also the history, no doubt, of the gradual degradation of a certain equilibrium of "values", "patriarchal" or "masculine" on the one hand, "matriarchal" or "feminine" on the other - of "muscle" and "gut", of "spirit" and "matter"; a degradation that has visibly been made in the direction of "male" (or "yang", in the traditional eastern dialectic) values, to the detriment of "female" (or "yin") values.

It seems to me that our era is characterised by an excessive exacerbation of this cultural degradation. Among the last acts of this history, there are those, intimately interrelated, of the "space race" between the two antagonistic superpowers (imbued with essentially identical values), and of the arms race (especially nuclear). As the ultimate act and probable outcome of this fanatic escalation of a certain type of "force" or "power", we can now already foresee some nuclear holocaust (or other, there is an embarrassment of riches to choose from...) on a planetary scale. Perhaps it will have the merit of solving all problems at once and once for all...

My purpose here is not, however, to paint a tantalising picture of the "end of the world" (nobody expected me to do that), and even less to wage war against "muscle" or "the brain" (alias the "spirit"). I know that even my "guts" would have nothing to gain from it! I value my muscles and my brain, which are very useful to me as you can imagine, as I also value my "guts", which are no less useful. Rather, it seems useful to me to say here in a few words (if possible) how this deep conflict, conveyed by the surrounding culture, between these two types of values has played out in my own person. In more down-to-earth terms, it is also about the history of my attitudes (of acceptance or even exaltation, or rejection) of two equally real and tangible aspects or faces of my person, inseparable and complementary by nature, and in no way antagonistic by themselves. I could call them "the man" and "the woman" in me, or also (to take less "charged" appellations, and which therefore offer less risk of misleading), the "yang" and the "yin".

It would seem that in most people, the "games are made [*jeux sont faits*]" from early childhood, where the essential mechanisms are put in place which, during their entire life, will silently dominate attitudes and behaviours, with the efficiency of a perfectly tuned automaton. At the heart of these mechanisms are those of affirmation or rejection of such and such traits in us, or of certain deep impulses, with either a yang or a yin "signature", or of such and such "packages" of traits and impulses with a given signature, or even of the whole "yang" or "yin" package. It is these mechanisms which, to a very large extent, determine all the other choice mechanisms (affirmation or rejection) structuring our "self".

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\* In this respect, the cult of the mother is a tradition that is strongly rooted in Jewish culture, and which undoubtedly has a compensatory role with regard to the "official" values (if one can say so) put forward in the sacred texts. This tradition is found again, in a modified and more exalted form, in the Catholic tradition, with the cult of (the virgin!) Mary.

For reasons that are still mysterious to me, in my own case the history of the relations (both conscious and unconscious) between the self ("the boss") and the "male" and "female" in me (both in the "boss" himself and in the "worker", both of whom are dependent on the double yin-yang aspect of all things) - this history has been more turbulent [*mouvementée*] than normal. I distinguish three periods. The last one in some sense connects with the first one, which spans the first five years of my childhood. This third period, which I can call the period of maturity, can be seen as a kind of "return" to this childhood, or as a gradual reunion with the "childhood state", with the harmony of the uneventful nuptials of "yin" and "yang" in my being. This reunion began in July 1976, at the age of forty-eight - the same year that I made the discovery (three months later) of a power hitherto unknown in me, the power of meditation(\*).

The dominant values in the person of each of my parents, both my mother and my father, were yang values: willpower, intelligence (in the sense of intellectual power), self-control, ascendancy over others, intransigence, "Konsequenz" (which means, in German, extreme coherence in (or with) one's choices, ideological in particular), "idealism" at the political and practical level... In my mother's case, this valorisation took on an exacerbated force from a young age, it was the reverse side of a real hatred that she had developed towards "the woman" in her (and from that point, towards the female in general). This hatred in her eventually took on a vehemence and force that was all the more destructive, as it remained entirely hidden throughout her life. (I myself came to discover these things only five years ago, three years after meditation came into my life.) In such a parental context, it is a mystery (and yet a fact that is not in doubt for me) that I was able to flourish fully during the first five years of my childhood - until the moment of the uprooting from the parental environment and the destruction of my family of origin (consisting of my parents, my older sister, and myself), by my mother's will and through the favour (if one may say so) of the political events of the year 1933.

### (106.1)

(3 October) Neither I nor Deligne have ever had the slightest doubt that Weil conjectures might be not true, and I do not recall hearing anyone expressing such doubts. To describe the "result" (i.e. the proof of these conjectures) as "surprising", shows again the deliberate intention to impress the gallery. In fact at no time since the introduction of "topology" and étale cohomology did I have the feeling that these conjectures were out of reach, but rather (from 1963 onwards) that they would not fail to be proved in the next few years. At the time of my departure, in 1970, I had little doubt that Deligne, who was the best placed of all for this, would soon prove them (which he did not fail to do), along with the "standard conjectures on algebraic cycles", which were stronger (and which, on the other hand, he endeavoured to discredit).

It is indeed with good reason that Deligne expresses reservations about the validity of the latter conjectures, of which I am no more convinced than he is. But the significance of a conjecture does not depend on whether it will eventually turn out to be true, or false, nor does its so-called "difficulty", which makes it "out of reach" - an entirely subjective character. It depends solely on whether the question on which the conjecture puts its finger (and which had not been perceived, before it was asked) - whether this question touches on something really essential for our knowing of things. It is obvious (to me at least!) that there can be no question of having a good understanding of algebraic cycles, nor of the so-called "arithmetic" properties of the cohomology of algebraic

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\* See the two sections "Desire and meditation" and "The wonder", nos 36 and 37.

varieties (or even, of the "geometry of motives"), as long as the question of the validity of these conjectures has not been settled. Today still, as at the Bombay Congress in 1968, I consider this question, together with that of the resolution of singularities, as one of the two most fundamental questions in algebraic geometry. I can sense the scope of both of them! This potential fecundity cannot fail to manifest itself, once we no longer limit ourselves to skirting around a conjecture that has been decreed "too difficult", and once someone finally takes the trouble to roll up his sleeves and get to grips with it!

## 2.2 A life story: a circle in three movements

### (107) The innocence (the nuptials of yin and yang)

(October 4) I have already had occasion to mention an important aspect of these first five years of my life, as a "privilege" of great price(\*) : a deep and problem-free identification with my father, which was never touched by fear or envy. I became aware of this circumstance, and of the very existence, as well as the silent force, of this identification with my father, only four years ago (during the meditation on my childhood and my life which followed the one of August 79 to March 80 on my parents). This identification was like the peaceful and powerful core of an identification with the family we formed, my parents, my sister (who was four years my senior) and me. I had boundless admiration and love for both my father and my mother. Their person was for me the measure of all things.

This does not mean that my attitude towards them was one of automatic approval, of blissful admiration. I may not have known that they were the measure of all things to me, but I knew full well that they were fallible like me, and there was no fear in me that would have prevented me from seeing a disagreement and making it clear. In the conflicts around me, I was not afraid to take sides in my own way. This did not affect a certain faith, a certain assurance that formed the deep, unshakeable foundation of my being - rather, it flowed spontaneously from that faith, from that very assurance.

At times my father, in outbursts of impotent anger as my sister (without seeming to) took pleasure in provoking him, would strike her with brutality - and each time I was outraged, in an unreserved surge of solidarity with my sister. These, I think, were the only big clouds that passed over my relationship with my father (there were none with my mother). It's not that I approved of my sister's sometimes dodgy tricks, nor do I think they really troubled me - it was not her that was the measure of things for me. Her tricks (the reason for which surely escaped me as much as it did my father, who always "went on [*marchait*]", or my mother, who was careful not to intervene either before or after) - these tricks in some sense did not really have any consequences for me. She was my sister, she was the way she was, there was the trick. But for my father to allow himself to be so blindly brutal...

The three closest people, who together constituted the matrix of my first years, were torn by conflict, each of them against himself, and against the other two: insidious conflict, with an impassive face, between my mother and my sister, and conflict with violent outbursts between my father and my mother on the one hand, and my

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\* See note "The massacre", n° 87.

sister on the other, each of whom on their own account (and without anyone during my parents' lifetime ever pretending to notice anything...) made this work in its own way. The mysterious, extraordinary thing is that surrounded by the conflict in these most sensitive, crucial years of life, it remained exterior to me, that it didn't really "bite" on my being in those years and settle there permanently.

The division in my being, which has marked my life as much as anyone else's, did not settle in me in those years, but in the two or three years that followed, from about my sixth to my eighth year. At a certain point (which I think I could place within a few months, and which could be in my eighth year) there was a certain swing[*basculement*], after more than two years of separation from my parents (who didn't care to give me any sign of life) and from my sister. It was above all a rupture with my childhood, "buried" from that moment onwards by the effective mechanisms of forgetfulness (which have remained in place, more or less, to this very day). At some deep level (not the deepest though...) my parents were then declared by me to be "strangers[*étrangers*]", just as my childhood was henceforth declared to be "foreign[*étrangère*]". I abdicated, in a sense: in order to be accepted in the world that now surrounded me, I decided to be like "them", like the adults who rule there - to acquire and develop the weapons that compel respect, to fight on equal terms in a world, where only a certain kind of "force" is accepted and prized...

Moreover, it was this force that was preferred by my parents, who had surrounded my early years. And here I come back to this "mysterious thing" (from which I have just moved away, following the thread of another association aroused by this thing), the absence of division in me, in those first years of my life.

Perhaps the mystery for me is no longer in this absence, but rather in this: that my parents, my father and my mother, each accepted me in my totality, and totally: in what in me is "virile", is "man", and in what is "woman". Or to put it another way: that my parents, both torn by conflict, each denying an essential part of their being - each incapable of a loving openness to themselves and to each other, as well as a loving openness to my sister... that nevertheless they found such an openness, such an unreserved acceptance, towards me, their son.

To put it yet another way: at no time in these first five years of my life, have I felt ashamed of who I am, whether in my body and its functions, or in my impulses, my inclinations, my actions. At no time have I had to deny something in myself, in order to be accepted by those around me and be able to live in peace with them.

Of course sometimes I did things that didn't "pass": like all children I was certainly a pain, even unbearable when I got down to it[*je m'y mettais*] - and it was clear sometimes that I had to rectify the situation. I did not lay down the law, nor was I tempted to do so, not having to compensate for some secret mutilation. And in my parents' love for me, there could have been no room for adulation, for indulgence of whims - for unconditional approval. But if I was inevitably "sent packing[*envoyer sur les roses*]" by my father or my mother (just as the reverse could sometimes happen), neither of them ever made me feel ashamed of an act or behaviour that did not please them.

On the basis of a deep identification with the father, without any ambiguity, my person as a child appears to me today as marked by both virility and femininity, both strong.

It seems to me that in each being and in each thing, in the indissoluble and fluctuating nuptials of the qualities of yin and yang within it that make it what it is, whose delicate equilibrium is the profound beauty, the harmony that lives in this being or this thing - that in this intimate union of yin and yang there is often (perhaps always) a background note, a "dominant", which is either yin, or yang. This background note is not always easy to detect in a person, because of the mechanisms of repression, effective and complete to varying degrees, which distort the game by substituting, for an original harmony, a borrowed image. Thus my "brand image" for forty years was almost exclusively virile - without ever being questioned or even detected as such, either by myself or (it seems to me) by others, until my forty-eighth year. I tend to believe, however, that the background note present at birth remains present throughout one's entire life, at least in deep layers that may never find an opportunity to come to light. In my own case, strangely enough, I still cannot say today what this dominant note is, the one that imbued my early childhood and that was "mine" already at birth. Various signs have made me suspect more than once that this note is "yin", that it is the "feminine" qualities that dominate in my being, when this one finds occasion to manifest itself spontaneously, in the moments when it is free of all kinds of conditioning that have accumulated in me since childhood. To put it another way: it could be that what is the creative force in my body and spirit, what I have sometimes called "the child" or "the worker" in me (as opposed to the "boss" who represents the structure of the self, that is to say what is conditioned in me, the sum or the result of the conditioning accumulated in my person) - that this force is more "feminine" than "virile" (whereas by nature and necessity it is one or the other).

It is not the place here to go through all these "signs". Indeed the important thing is not whether this deep dominant note in me is "feminine" or "virile". It is rather that I know how to be myself at every moment, welcoming without reticence both the traits and impulses in me by which I am "woman", and those by which I am "man", and allowing them to express themselves freely.

When I was a child, in those first years, it was not uncommon for strangers to mistake me for a girl - without this ever creating in me the slightest discomfort or the slightest feeling of insecurity. It was mainly my voice, I think, that had this effect, a very clear, high-pitched voice - not to mention the fact that I had long hair (most often dishevelled), perhaps simply because my mother (who had plenty of other things to worry about) didn't often take the trouble to cut it off. I was also as strong as a Turk and playing games that were a bit violent or daredevil did not displease me, but this never prevented me from having a penchant for silence, or even for solitude, and also a penchant for playing with dolls(\*). I don't remember anyone making fun of me for this, but it certainly didn't fail to happen now and then. If such incidents passed without leaving any trace of wound or humiliation, it is surely because they were not echoed or amplified, by any feeling of insecurity in me, while the acceptance of who I was, by those who alone truly mattered to me, was beyond question. The mockery could not have reached me, it could only backfire on the one who must have appeared to me to be very foolish, to pretend to find fault with the most natural thing in the world.

And I was well aware that this kind of somewhat strange silliness is by no means an uncommon thing, that the mere sight of nudity can be a cause of scandal! Yet for as long as I could remember, I had had occasions to see my mother, father and sister naked, and every opportunity to satisfy my legitimate curiosity as to how each of

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\* If this tendency seems rare in little boys, I think it is mainly because it is systematically discouraged by the people around them.

them and myself were made. It was quite evident that there was no cause for scandal in the conformation of men or women, which seemed to me to be quite all right as it was - and more particularly (I made no secret of it) that of women.

### **(108) The Superfather (yang buries yin (2))**

(5 October) It was in 1933, when I was in my sixth year, that the first crucial turning point in my life took place, which was at the same time a crucial turning point also in the lives of both my mother and my father, in their relationship to each other and to their children. It was the episode of the violent and definitive destruction of the family that the four of us formed, a destruction of which I was the first and only one, forty-six years later, to take note and to follow the events, in my parents' correspondence and in one or two bloodless[*exsanguis*], enigmatic and persistent memories, patiently probed and deciphered - long after the death of my father and of my mother(\*).

It is not my purpose to dwell here on what I have learned and understood in the course of this long work, about the scope and meaning of this episode. I have already alluded three days ago to this turning point(†) as marking the abrupt end of the first of the three great periods in the history of the nuptials of yin and yang in me. In December 1933, I found myself hurriedly dumped into a stranger's family, which neither I, nor my mother, who had brought me there from Berlin, had ever seen. In fact, these unknown people to whom she was taking me were simply the first people who would take me in as a "boarder" for a more than modest pension, and with no guarantee whatsoever that it would ever be paid, while my mother was preparing to join my father as quickly as possible, who was moping around waiting for her in Paris. It was agreed between my parents that everything was going to be fine for me in Blankenese (near Hamburg), as well as for my sister who for some months had been dumped at the end of the day in an institution in Berlin for handicapped children (where she had been well liked, although she was not more handicapped than me or our parents).

At the end of six strange months, heavy with dull menace and anguish, I found myself overnight in a world totally different from the only world I had known in my life, the one formed by my parents and my sister and me. I found myself as one of a group of boarders, eating separately from the family and looking like second-class children to the children in the house, who were a world apart and looked down on us. From my mother I received a hasty and stilted letter from time to time, and from my father never a line from him, during the five years I stayed there (until 1939, on the eve of the war, when I finally joined my parents under the pressure of events).

The couple who welcomed me quickly took a liking to me. Both he, a former pastor who had left the priesthood and lived on a meagre pension and private lessons in Latin, Greek and mathematics, and his wife, who was sparkling with life and sometimes mischief, were unusual people, endearing in many ways. He was a humanist of vast culture who had lost his way a little in politics, and had had a brush with the Nazi regime, which

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\* My father died in Auschwitz in 1942, my mother died in 1957. The work I am talking about here was carried out between August 1979 and October 1980.

† See end of note "Yang buries yin - or the muscle and the gut", n° 106.

eventually left him alone. After the war I renewed my relationship with them and remained in constant contact with them until the death of both of them(\*)).

From him and especially from her, as from my parents, I received the best as well as the worst. Today, with a long retrospect[*recul*], I am grateful to them (as I am to my parents) for this "best", as well as for this "worst". It is this best and the worst that I received, first from my parents, then from them, that formed the bulk of the voluminous "package" that I received as a child (as everyone receives theirs...), which I had to unpack and examine. They are part of the substance, the richness of my past, with which it is up to me to nourish my present.

My new environment was very "appropriate[*comme il faut*]" and conformist in many respects, with in any case the repressive attitudes de rigueur for everything concerning the body and, more particularly, sex. However it took several years, I think, before I internalised and took on board these attitudes, such as the shame of showing myself naked, which went hand in hand with an ambiguous relationship with my body. This shame, inculcated from a young age, is one aspect of a deep division, where the body is the object of a tacit contempt, while the so-called "cultural" values (confused with intellectual capacities of memorisation and the like) are highlighted. This division in me remained ignored until my forty-eighth year, when it began to be resolved. This is the second great turning point in my life, which marks the advent of the "third period" in the history of my relationship to myself, that is to say, also that of my relationship to my body, and to the "man" and "woman" in me. But prior to that I had had ample opportunity to help pass on this division to my children(†), whom I could see passing it on in their turn...

I alluded yesterday(‡) to the "swing" that finally took place in me. With a time lag of more than two years after the uprooting from the initial family environment (or better said, after the destruction of this environment), this swing consecrates the setting up of the common repressive mechanisms, from which my childhood had had the rare chance to be exempt until then. I have so far detected two major forces of a repressive nature, which have dominated my adult life and a large part of my childhood (108.1). I think I can say that their appearance was not gradual, but that in my case these mechanisms appeared more or less overnight and in their full force, as a consequence of a deliberate choice, at the unconscious level. I have previously described this choice as "abdication", but at the same time it was also a powerful principle of action: the "I will be like 'them'" (and not "like me") also meant: I will "bet" on "the head", no worse in me than in anyone else after all, and fight myself and "them" with their own weapons!

One of these mechanisms, and the one that interests me most here, is one of the most common: the repression of my "feminine" traits (or those felt as such by common consensus), in favour of "virile" values. The other side of the coin was of course the thorough investment in my traits and abilities perceived as "virile" and the excessive development of them, which took up an inordinate proportion.

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\* She died at the age of 99, two years ago, and I was actually able to see her dead, face to face, the day before the funeral.

† At least, to the four of them that I helped raise. The fifth and last one is being brought up by his mother, and so far there has not been a good opportunity for him and me to get to know each other.

‡ See the beginnings of the previous note "Hatching of the force - or the nuptials", note n° 107.

If there is something uncommon here, it is of course not the simple presence of this double mechanism, nor (it seems to me) the force of the "repressive" component in the strict sense, the force of the repression of "yin" traits, attitudes, and impulses. There is no comparison here with what took place with my mother, whose life (and that of her relatives) was devastated by her hatred (which remained hidden all her life) of what made her a woman. At no time, I believe, were my ways entirely devoid of a certain gentleness, even tenderness, which stubbornly rounded the edges of the character I had carved out for myself since childhood, and which often attracted sympathy and affection. The exceptional side would rather be found in the excessiveness of my investments, in the excessiveness of the energy I invest in my tasks, without letting myself be distracted by a glance to the right or to the left! Outside of the work itself, my mind is constantly focused on the achievement, on the completion of this or that stage of the work. This attitude ("Zielgerichtetheit" in German, "aimdirectedness" in English) is par excellence a yang attitude, an attitude of tension, of closure to everything that does not appear to be directly linked to the task.

This excessiveness was likely to arouse in others the image of a sort of "super-man" or "super-male", admirable indeed alas! (given the values that prevail), but immediately arousing (at a level that remains unconscious most of the time) instinctive reactions of defence or even antagonism in the face of such a display of force, felt as threatening or even aggressive, or in any case dangerous (108.2). And above all, this image irresistibly evokes the image of the "super-father", and immediately sets in motion the ambiguous multiplicity of reactions of attraction and repulsion knotted around the endless conflict with the father... This is my contribution to these ambiguous relationships, which have been so common in my life, and with which I found myself confronted so many times during the course of Harvest and Sowing. This ambiguity is reinforced, not diminished, by the persistence of yin traits in me that feed a sympathy, which the mere hypertrophy of yang traits into a kind of gigantic "superman" would be powerless to arouse.

And once again I can see, in these endless "ambiguous relationships", that I am still only harvesting what I myself have sown, even if each time the harvest turns out to be unexpected (and unwelcome...)! Because, the motivation (or at least one of the motivations) which pushes "the boss" in me to surpass himself unceasingly in the accumulation of works, has it not been precisely to force and relaunch unceasingly the esteem of my peers/[pairs] (in the first place) and of my mistakes/[impairs] (in addition); to hear some of the best lamenting that they cannot follow me, at the pace at which I am running ahead?! Yes, there has been in me this secret desire to arouse in others (as well as in myself) this "larger than life/[plus grandes que nature]" image, excessive - like the very one it reflects - and which obstinately comes back to me through the other: in clear and high words, through the expected praise (and taken as a due) - and also, through the dark and deep ways of muted enmity and conflict...(\*)

### (108.1)

(6 October) I mean that the forces of a repressive nature that have been at work in my life seem to take especially, if not exclusively, one of these two specific forms: burying the past, and emphasising my "virile"

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\* (6 October) To tell the truth, "this secret desire" on which I have just put my finger again, is still not yet exhausted today, even if it has finally been detected (only a few years ago...), and if it is less devouring today than before.



traits to the detriment of my "feminine" traits. I do not mean to say that these two "forces", both of a repressive nature (that is to say, aiming at a "repression", at a retraction[*escamotage*] of a certain reality), are the only ones that have "dominated my life"! This would be to forget the whole non-egotic aspect of my being, the drive for knowing expressing itself at the level of the body as well as the mind. (On this subject, see "My passions", section n° 35).

Even among the forces structuring the self, emanating from the "boss", there is at least one, of a non-repressive nature by itself, well before the forces of repression and whose role in my life has been even more essential: it is the identification with my father, who has been like "the peaceful and powerful heart" of the feeling of my own strength. This identification was in no way directed towards the exaltation of certain values or qualities (say, virile) to the detriment of others ("feminine"). Regardless of the values professed by my father, his person (until 1933, when a swing took place in him(\*)), was marked by a strong yin-yang equilibrium, in which intuition and spontaneity were no less important than intellect and will.

Finally, as another important "force" of an egotistical nature, intimately linked to the repressive mechanisms (or to put it better, of a "repressive" nature itself), it is necessary to count the endless vanity, whose role has been as heavy in my life as in anyone else's. But this "force" itself is of such a universal nature, just like the dominant role it plays in everyone's life (in a more or less coarse or subtle form), that it is hardly necessary to include it expressly, in a list of the specific forms that the forces and mechanisms that structure the self take in a person, and that give the latter its particular physiognomy and its foundation[*assise*].

### (108.2)

(6 October) In this "display of force" there is no "aggressive" intention in the usual sense of the term, neither consciously nor unconsciously, only an unconscious desire to impress, to force esteem. It is true that this term "force esteem", which occurs to me spontaneously, already carries a connotation of coercion[*contrainte*], close to that of "aggression". This unconscious intention to coerce, also perceived at the unconscious level, must often be experienced as a kind of aggression (even though this experience remains hidden, just like the antagonistic reactions it triggers). At the same time, this experience must often be amalgamated with the similar experiences, dating back to childhood, with the father as the protagonist, and where he appears as the main holder of repressive authority, or even as an overwhelming[*écrasant*] rival, envied and detested.

Even without such an amalgam, and independently also of any perception in others of an intention of "coercion" in me, there must often be the perception of a strong disequilibrium, of a fundamental disharmony, in this exclusively yang "display of force" (in its spirit and intention, at least). This excessiveness is harmful to the main person concerned, namely myself, and in the end quite "dangerous" even for his physical survival (as the health incidents of the last few years have clearly shown me!). This is undoubtedly what was underlying[*en*

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\* Remarkably, this "swing" in my father (then 43 years old) was towards a super-yin state, towards a kind of pasha passivity, in close connivance with my mother, playing a super-yang role. She took charge of him instead of her children. (They were cast aside as "profits and losses", at least until 1939, the year in which, under the pressure of events and against her will, she finally took me back to her...) This relationship of dependence on my father and the reversal of the yin-yang roles between my parents lasted until my father's death in 1942.

*filigrane*] my thoughts when I wrote that "such a display of force" was felt "in any case to be dangerous" - dangerous "by nature", therefore an example definitely not to be followed... ! Such a feeling is surely enough to arouse "reactions of defence", even in the absence of any aggression or intention to aggress.

It is true that such ambiguous relationships recurred after 1976, with some of my students in particular, at times when any mathematical investment was absent, and when there was no apparent "display of force" in my life. It is also true that the "deployments" in question in the past have created a reputation, which continues to stick on my skin, especially in my professional life, and which to some extent substitutes for the perception of who I am at the present. Moreover, I have acquired in the trade of certain mathematical subjects such an ease that, even outside my mathematical periods and my reputation helping, this ease or natural mastery can already have the effect of a "display of force", on less motivated students, and make me felt by them (in spite of certain pleasant or even reassuring features) as a kind of Superman (a little Superfather on the edges!).

Moreover, as a flip side of the ease I am talking about, I often tend to underestimate how difficult it may be for a certain student to acquire a certain baggage, or to develop a certain tool - which tends to put him at odds/*en porte-à-faux*] with my expectations. (See on this subject the note "The failure of teaching (1)", n° 23 iv.) Such a situation must quite often be one of the important ingredients of a distorted relationship with the father...

### **(109) The reunion (the awakening of yin(1))**

(9 October) I felt very happy when I finished the previous note(\*), four days ago. I found myself unexpectedly reconnecting with an intuition that had come to me on a certain Sunday, October 17, 1976 (eight years ago, give or take a few days) - the intuition of the devastating effect, in my life as well as in my mother's, of a "certain force" within me. It was the first time in my life that I had ever given any reflection, however brief, to what my life, and especially my childhood, had been. It was also two days after I had discovered the power of meditation(†), and it was the first time since then that I had made use of this power, so long ignored. It was not deliberate, but by a deep impulse, as if moved by a very sure instinct, that the reflection that day ended up being directed towards my childhood. Only in retrospect do I realise how much of my true strength, as well as the conflict and division within me, was driven by a deep need to know. For nearly three years I did not return to it, distracted as I was during those years by the sole questions of the "agenda/*d'ordre du jour*", without realising that I remained on the periphery of the conflict in my life, while stubbornly keeping myself away from the very heart: from that childhood drowned in mists, which seemed so infinitely distant...

I have just gone through again, "diagonally", the eighteen leaves, of an exceptional density, of this crucial meditation in my life. It was during the night following this meditation, or rather in the early hours of the morning after this night of meditation, that I had a dream of overwhelming force - the first dream in my life whose message I had probed, passionately. I was no more aware then of where I was going and what was happening than I had been two days before when I was "discovering meditation". For four hours I delved into

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\* See the note "Yang buries yin - or the Super father", n° 108.

† See the section "Desire and meditation", n° 39.

the meaning of this experience, this dream-parable, through successive layers of ever more burning signification, before arriving at the heart of the message, at its meaning, simple and clear.

It was not then the sudden click of an understanding of "intelligence", nor even like a sudden light in a darkness or in a gloom. It was rather like a deep wave born in me that suddenly surged through me and in its vast waters brought me that sense which had been eluding me until then: that I was finding in this moment a very dear and precious being, whom I had lost since my childhood...

This moment was experienced as a birth, as a profound renewal. This feeling remained very strong throughout that day, and even in the following days. Looking back over eight years, this moment still appears to me today as a creative moment of all in my life, and as an essential turning point in my spiritual adventure. It was certainly prepared by many other "moments", in the days and months that preceded it. Perhaps the first precursor was that "salutary uprooting", more than ten years before, from an institution where I intended to end my days(\*). These earlier moments seem to me to be the ingredients, or rather the means at my disposal, with which I could cross this other "threshold" that was before me without my noticing it, which was situated at a deeper, more hidden level than others I had crossed. Everything was in place, for a few days or hours, for me to cross it - and I was able to cross it, just as I was unable to cross it, day after day throughout my life...

And also, this threshold being well and truly crossed, the way was opened towards still other crossings, towards other "awakenings[*éveils*]" or "reawakenings[*réveils*]", each of which by nature is also a renewal, and to some extent, a "new birth", a rebirth. I have evaded some of them for months or even years, to finally take the step, thus relieving myself of some tenacious illusion, which for a long time had stood between me and the full flavour of my life and the world around me. And surely, there are also some that I am still evading, even as I am writing these lines...

From the point of view of the reflection of these last few days, it is this moment of reunion with my childhood, believed lost and dead for a long time, which marks the end of the "second period" of my spiritual itinerary: that of the predominance, in my personal life, of egotistical mechanisms, against the creative forces, the forces of knowing and of renewal, which had passed through an almost complete stagnation of forty years. It was also the time of the preponderance of a "certain force", a force of an almost exclusively "virile" character, in the image of the honoured values of the surrounding world, at the expense of the deep "feminine" aspects and forces of my being, ignored and suppressed (with never complete success, thank God!).

The very first intuition about the destructive nature of this force, which had dominated my life as well as my mother's, and that of other women who had been important in my life - this intuition made a brief appearance in those days of intense maturation, certainly with the help of the re-emergence of yin, "feminine" energy, in my conscious apprehension of things. Contrary to what I thought I had hastily remembered earlier, this appearance did not take place in the meditation of the day before the reunion, but a few hours after it, in a short meditation on the meaning of what had just happened. The intuition is born and takes shape at the very end of the few pages of notes in that meditation. I perceive the destructive nature of this "force" (which today I would call

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\* See note n° 42, of the same name.

"superyang force", that is to say with an excessive yang dominance) in my mother at first, then in other women, to follow with these final lines:

"As for the 'force' in myself, it is certainly it that made me the target and object, expected during a young life, of the secret hatred and resentment of M., then of J., then of S. - of a hatred deposited in them long before they knew of my existence, in the distraught days of a childhood deprived of love."

The word "childhood", in the last line, which testifies to an important day in my life, actually appears for the last time for almost three years! As for the intuition about the nature of the superyang force in me, as provoking antagonistic reactions, even hatred and resentment, it tended (it seems to me) to sink somewhat into oblivion until the last few days. More precisely, it has remained present only in my perception of certain important relationships in my life (and above all, relationships with women I have loved). On the other hand, it has hardly really penetrated situations of conflict that are somewhat "commonly encountered [*de tout venant*]"(\*), with certain students in particular, as I have had to examine or mention many times in the course of Harvest and Sowing. During all this reflection, the fact that by a kind of involuntary "provocation", I myself made my own contribution to the conflict situations I mentioned or examined here and there - this fact often remained completely hidden, whereas the contribution of the protagonist was quite clear to me. This is of course a reflex that is widespread, not to say universal! The reflection of the last few days has finally defused it and at the same time made me detect it again in myself - by making me suddenly find myself, at the turn of the road (of a reflection on yin and yang...) face to face with myself - with a certain myself, at least.

The short reflection four days ago barely begins to show the multiplicity of aspects of my person, through which the yang disequilibrium in the "character" I had been playing since my childhood was felt; as well as the crushing effects this disequilibrium could sometimes have on others. On those in particular in whom the yang-type force was still lacking a basis - and first and foremost on my own children. I am thinking here especially of a certain "mode" of peremptory assurance on which I operated, in all the things (and there were many) on which I had, rightly or wrongly, a way of seeing or feeling, or very fixed opinions. Of course, the idea would not have occurred to me to impose these ways of seeing on anyone, least of all on my children - and with this absence of any inclination to constraint in me (at least at the conscious level), I was unable for most of my life to realise to what extent these ways in me of being (which seemed spontaneous and natural, and whose complex nature I was far from discerning...) - to what extent they had the same effect on my children and others as a constraint; or rather, an even more insidious effect: that of arousing or maintaining in the other person an insecurity about the value of his or her own feelings, ways of seeing, opinions - as if these (in the face of my unfailing assurance, or even my pained astonishment [*étonnement peiné*]) did not even have a reason to be.

I also have the feeling that the development of this propensity in me, particularly in my relationship with my children, could well be quite complex, intertwining intimately with the vicissitudes of my conjugal life. This is not the place to try to follow its mysteries; nor is it the place to make a more or less complete inventory of other aspects of my person through which this disequilibrium manifested itself, of which I tried in the previous note to identify a particularly apparent aspect: that of the "display of force".

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\* Or treated as such...

One should not believe that this disequilibrium, cultivated throughout my life, and the multitude of psychic mechanisms through which it manifested itself, vanished overnight as if by a wave of a magic wand. I didn't expect anything like that, either on the day of the reunion, or in the days and weeks that followed.

(10 October) Those were days of melting ice, carried by a powerful influx of new energy - days of inner work and wonder, in front of these new worlds that day after day I saw opening up, taking birth in the humble weave of daily minutiae and unfolding under the intense action of eyes eager to see. Those were also the days of the dawning of the first premonition of the richness of this unknown that suddenly called to me, which I had ignored just the day before. I apprehended it through these "bits" that had just made themselves known to me, at the very moment of the reunion, and in the unpredictable and unforeseen voyage that had followed. I felt that this "birth" through which I had just passed was just the commencement of something entirely unknown, or rather the recommencement of something which had been interrupted, which had been cut off or stifled one day, and which had started again mysteriously. To tell the truth, this intense "becoming" had already started up again in the preceding months, but on a level in which introspective thought had hardly had much of a part yet...

One of the profound aspects of this becoming that had come to life again, of this work that had resumed, was the progressive restoration of the original equilibrium of "the woman" and "the man", of yin and yang in me, over the days, weeks and years. In a way, I can say that since the moment of the reunion, "the childhood" or the state of being a child has remained present, "in power", through a deep and indelible knowing[*connaissance*] in me of my own nature, of my essential, indestructible unity, beyond the effects of a certain "division" which often continues to agitate the surface of my being. The very word "child" or "childhood" to designate the thing, this unity of being, did not appear until years later, around the time when I began to get to know, at the level of conscious thought, the double yin-yang aspect of all things. It was also the moment when this knowing (or at least, this premonition) appeared that the state of childhood, the creative state, is that of the perfect equilibrium of yin and yang forces and energies, that of the "nuptials" of yin and yang, manifesting itself in a state of creative harmony.

It seems to me that at a certain level, this knowing of my fundamental unity is present at all times, and that it acts at all times. It is also true that this action is more or less sensible and effective according to the moments, and that it is by no means in the nature of a more or less permanent elimination, or even of a destruction en bloc of the egotic forces, therefore of the "boss" - nor even of an elimination of the forces of repression (which form a good part of the "I", if not quite its totality...). These are the forces of surreptitious retraction[*escamotage*] of the reality that surrounds me and of the reality that unfolds within me - the forces silently and stubbornly at work to maintain against winds and tides the tenacious illusions, which without them would immediately collapse under their own weight... Some of these repressive mechanisms were spotted one by one and disappeared. I got rid of some of the illusions that weighed heavily on me, and I elucidated the few stubborn doubts that, throughout my life, had been relegated (by care of the "boss") to rot in garbage-undergrounds, never examined. Their message finally heard, these doubts disappeared, leaving a peaceful and joyful knowing. I have also spotted some very powerful mechanisms of repression, deeply rooted in the self, which I have realised (in recent years) have remained as significant in my life today as ever. They are in the direction of yang disequilibrium, in the direction of the occultation of certain yin forces and faculties. I don't know if these mechanisms will ever be defused - and I know it's up to me. They will probably vanish on the day, and only on

the day, when I have entered into the origins of the conflict in my life much more deeply and fully than I have done so far.

For the moment, with the present orientation of my life towards a significant mathematical investment, I can well say that it is by no means the case!

### **(110) The acceptance (the awakening of yin (2))**

(11 October) I have been wanting for the past day or two to take stock, in a few words, of where (after eight years) this "progressive restoration of the yin-yang equilibrium" stands in me.

Perhaps the most important change of all is in having a much greater acceptance than in the past, of myself as I really am at every moment. To put it another way, the repressive mechanisms in me have softened considerably. As I said yesterday, some have disappeared after being discovered and understood, and others, which I had ignored all my life, have become familiar in their everyday manifestations. I see them in action, not as enemies that I should try to extirpate at all costs, but as part of the multiplicity of facets of my conditioned being, and thus, of the richness of the "given" present, which faithfully reflects my past history; both the "ancient" history of my conditionings and of the roots of division in my being, and the more recent history of my maturation, of the work by which I end up unpacking and "eating" and assimilating the initial package bequeathed to me by my parents and by their successors. This "acceptance" in me therefore includes not only the impulses and traits of the "child" that I had long ignored and repressed (and in particular those that reflect the feminine aspects in me), but also the mechanisms of repression proper to the "boss", that is to say, precisely the inveterate mechanisms of "non-acceptance"! Accepting the latter has nothing to do with "cultivating them", or strengthening them. On the contrary, it is an indispensable first step to unravel or defuse them to some extent, through the effect of a curious and loving attention. The experience of these eight years gives me the conviction that, as long as this attention dives deep enough and down to the very root of the repression, the latter is resolved and disappears by releasing a considerable amount of energy - the energy that until then had been immobilised in order to maintain against all odds such a set of repressive mechanisms, and the habits of thought and others that serve to maintain them.

But it was not with regard to the inherently "knotted[*noués*]" aspects of my person that this new acceptance of myself first appeared in my life. It came without fanfare, even before the discovery of meditation, and therefore even before the "reunion" that closely followed it. It was in July 1976, during a short romantic liaison with a young woman, G., who was perhaps a little more "mannish" in her ways than the women I had loved before. By chance (?), the material circumstances surrounding this love affair were such that I saw myself placed in a typically "feminine" role. I was doing the cleaning and preparing the evening meals, while waiting for my spouse[*conjoint*] to return from a long and tiring day's work: tending a herd of one hundred and fifty goats in the hills, which she also had to milk in the evening. It so happened that this unusual role of house wife suited me like a glove. It may seem a small thing - but it "clicked" then. The link was made in me with certain impulses and desires in my love life, expressed then and for the first time in certain love poems, where the experience of love appears, without any ambiguity, as "feminine". I understood then, without reflection or "effort", without any hint of reticence or embarrassment[*gêne*], that in my body as well as in my desires, in my feelings and in my mind, I was a woman, and at the same time a man - and that there was no conflict of any

kind between these two deep realities in my being. In those days, the dominant note was feminine - and I accepted this with gratitude, in silent amazement[*étonnement*]. When I thought about it, there was in me a silent and very sweet joy.

This joy was sufficient in itself, it did not need to be expressed in words, either to myself, or to others. I don't know if I spoke about it to the woman of whom I was the lover, or the mistress perhaps... Surely, on some level she knew it, without my having to say.

This joy has not gone stale[*éventée*], it has remained alive to this day. It comes from a living knowing, like the fragrance that accompanies a flower. At certain times or periods of my life, this knowing, and this joy that is a sign of it, is more present than at others, more strongly active. But I don't think it ever leaves me.

When I have spoken here and there about this experience and this knowing, in the weeks and years that followed, it has always been as if I were communicating something of great value to others, in a moment when I felt that they were open to receive, even if only for a few instants, something of this joy within me. I never felt any embarrassment that would have kept me from talking about it, as if it were something a bit scabrous. (Perhaps there would have been such embarrassment at times, however, if the reality and force of the "man" in me had not been above all suspicion!) And I also remember one occasion when I was definitely strutting about, enjoying the experience of playing and thus winning on both sides at once - all I needed was to get my period like everyone else and give birth to a kid right away[*aussi sec*].

My new feminine identity, superimposed on my virile identity, had an immediate effect of renewal on my love life. It had a very strong echo with the women I was subsequently in love with, awakening in the lover masculine impulses, which throughout her life had been carefully repressed, and had only found expression until then "on the sly", as a kind of burr, unworthy of figuring in the conscious love experience.

The unconscious experience of love is rich in archetypal impulses, one of the most powerful of which is that of returning to the Mother, of returning to the original bosom. Such an archetype is present in the deepest layers of the love experience, both in men and in women. In women, the resistance to the satisfaction of such an impulse in the couple's experience of love is even stronger than in men, where it comes up against one key taboo, not two as in women. In both men and women, the satisfaction of these impulses in the common experience often remains more or less symbolic and, above all, concealed from consciousness. When such an archetype and this experience come up from the deepest layers into the light of day, into the field of conscious gaze, this experience is immediately transformed, it acquires a new dimension. At the same time there is a liberation of considerable energies, previously compressed by repressive mechanisms, or tied up by the tasks of repression. The effect is that of an immediate liberation of the erotic impulse, manifesting itself in a renewed intensity and a new fullness of experience in love.

From the above, it should already be clear that this new acceptance of my own person went hand in hand with an acceptance of others. The two are inextricably tied together. It is understood that this is "acceptance" in the full sense of the term, which in no way means a (often bittersweet) tolerance towards such and such "flaws[*travers*]" or "defects", felt as an unavoidable evil, for which one is obliged to "make do". In such an attitude, I sense above all a resignation, not to say an abdication, and certainly not a source of joy, nor an

impetus to become aware of something worth knowing: the perceived, unknown depth, behind the flat surface of such "faults" or "flaws" that one is well willing to tolerate...

That this is a joyful, creative acceptance does not go so far as to imply that this acceptance is total, yesterday I already noted that this was not the case. An attentive reader will have noticed this more than once in the course of Harvest and Sowing, as I have sometimes realised in passing, when I have been confronted once again with this endless mechanism in me of rejecting everything that presents itself in an unpleasant appearance, in others or in myself. (But when it comes to oneself, this mechanism more often than not has the effect of not even taking note of the unpleasant thing in question...)

The acceptance I am talking about is rooted in an interest in the thing one is "accepting", whether in oneself or in others. While acceptance is in itself a disposition of a typically "yin" character, this connotation of "interest" that it takes on in me is of a "yang" nature - it is the "yang in the yin", in the delicate Chinese dialectic of the infinite intertwining of yin and yang... I was about to venture to say, somewhat in the wake of this, that there was a pure and simple identity between the acceptance (the real one!) and this interest, this curiosity. However, as I pondered a bit on this matter, I realised that there is also another way of accepting, of a nature, more totally yin than the one I am especially accustomed to. It's like a welcome of the accepted thing, and not an impetus/*élan*/ towards it to probe it. (This nuance of welcome now strikes me [*m'apparaît du coup*] as the "yin within the yin", here we go!) The impetus of interest, and the attitude of welcome, can both form the background note to the acceptance of others or of oneself. The thing common to both is sympathy. This is also one of the forms of love. If there is any deep identity to be identified here, it would be through the observation that acceptance is a form of love. Love of self, love of other, indissolubly linked to each other...

Except for rare moments, my interest is more intensely involved with my own person than with that of others. It is this passionate interest for my own person that has animated the long periods of meditation, over the past eight years. It is true that it is indeed the knowing of the self that is at the heart of the knowing of others and of the world, and not the inverse - and I feel that it is indeed towards the heart of things, towards the most essential, that my new passion, meditation, has carried me and still carries me. The interest in others has come more fragmented and reluctantly over these years, just like the acceptance that follows from it. One of the ways it has manifested itself concretely is in a lesser propensity to talk when I am in company, and in an attitude of listening. For most of my life, this ability to listen had been almost entirely absent. Even after the great turning point of the reunion, I had to realise many times that I had spoken out of turn, for lack of listening and discernment, before this inveterate propensity began to fade. If it has become much less invasive, and has even almost disappeared, it is in no way the result of some discipline that I might have imposed on myself (such as: you won't open your beak unless...). It's simply because I've lost the urge to speak, at times when I feel it's useless, that it doesn't bring anything to others or to me - at least nothing of value as I see it. If now I often manage to feel such things, it is certainly because I have become more attentive. This too did not come about as a result of discipline ("you'll be careful to open your ears wide when..."), but I can't say how. In any case, I now feel better, life is all the more interesting (and especially less noisy!). And the others are also feeling better...

I think I really started to talk less, from the moment of the disappearance (so to speak) of this force in me which pushes me to always want to rectify what appears to me (rightly or wrongly) as "errors" in others - as if it wasn't enough that I detect and rectify my own! It is also the force which pushed me (and sometimes still pushes me)



to want to convince others of this or that, instead of simply looking at why so-and-so prefers to stubbornly believe this rather than that (which seems to me should be "that", and of which I would like to convince him!); or why I am so keen for him to believe that, rather than this. This almost universal force in us, which constantly pushes us to seek in the approbation of others (even if only a single person...) the confirmation of the validity of what we hold to be true - this force deeply rooted in the ego has finally, I believe, let go of me. This was a great relief, the end of a tremendous energy dispersion. It was when I finally realised, two years ago, the extent of this force in my life, its nature, and the extraordinary dispersion of energy it represented, that it was defused - and I found myself thus lightened "by a hundred tons". To get to know without reluctance the echoes that we receive from others about ourselves, without being tied down by a desire or "need" (however hidden) for approbation or confirmation - that is really being "free from it". It is such a need or desire that truly constitutes the "hook", discreet and of ironclad solidity, by which the conflict can "hang" in us, and by which we are (whether we like it or recognise it, or not) under the dependence of the others, of their goodwill - by which, in short, it "holds" us, and (casually [*mine de rien*]) manoeuvres us to its will...

Logically, the acceptance of others should also involve the acceptance of their way of seeing things, whether or not they seem wrong to us, and even when it comes to their way of seeing our own proper and precious selves (including our own ways of seeing...). This is, indeed, precisely the crux of the matter - this is the key point in the acceptance of others, and not in the acceptance of common, more or less embarrassing [*génants*] "defects" which do not directly involve our person. Very often, moreover, if we reject such "defects" in others, it is above all because we feel directly challenged by them, simply because we are confronted with ways of being which seem to us (rightly or wrongly) to be the opposite of our own. In other words, it is an insecurity within us, manifested by the reactions (more or less apparent or hidden) of vanity, which is the great obstacle, opposing our acceptance of others. But this deeply rooted insecurity, compensated by the movements of vanity, appears to me as indissolubly linked to the non-acceptance of ourselves, it is like its inseparable shadow.

Thus, it is the full acceptance of oneself that appears here as the key that opens us to the acceptance of others. And this link which has just appeared to me here, joins another deep link, which I have known for a long time, perhaps for all my life: that love of the self is the heart, peaceful and strong, of love of the other.

## 2.3 The couple

### (111) The dynamics of things (the yin-yang harmony)

(13 October) Yesterday I did not continue writing the notes. Instead, I had fun going back over to review a number of yin-yang "couples". Starting with the ones that came through my head, a bit by luck, I then delved [*piqué*] into the game, and ended with a sort of "census" of all the ones I could get my hands on. I started because I thought that not a little of what I'd written lately has the serious risk of going entirely "over the head" of a reader who isn't already familiar with the double yin-yang aspect of things. It might not be unhelpful to take the trouble to give at least a few vivid examples of such couples, in addition to the ones that had been introduced in a roundabout way in last few days. Then, driven by the little devil (or angel, I don't know...) in me of being systematic, I ended up bringing out my old reflections from five years ago on this theme. For a week or

two I had fun "collecting" a hundred or two of these very suggestive couples, which were then assembled by affinity in about twenty groups. As this reflection took place in the margins of the famous "poetic work" I was writing, I couldn't help arranging these groups as best I could in a row, by affinities and filiations of meaning from one group to the next. Last night, resuming the reflection in hindsight, and without a poetic straitjacket around my neck, I found eighteen groups (instead of twenty), by a perhaps more rigorous grouping. I suspect, moreover, that there must still be many other groups, perhaps even an unlimited number, corresponding to modes of apprehension of reality that I did not think of in the course of the work (nor, perhaps, ever will).

As for the eighteen groups that I did identify, I tried to assemble them into a diagram (or "graph") following the main links of affinity that connect them to each other. Some of these links only caught my attention in the course of drawing successive drafts of the diagram. The work here was really very close to the familiar mathematical work, when one strives to capture graphically, as vividly as possible, a set of relations of varying complexity (given, for example, by "maps", represented by arrows) between a certain number of "sets" or "categories", appearing as "vertices" of the "diagram" one is striving to construct. Here too, essentially aesthetic natural requirements[*exigences*], notably symmetry and structural transparency, frequently lead to the introduction (and, if necessary, the discovery or even the invention) of "arrows" or links which had not been thought of at the outset, and sometimes even of new "vertices". In any case, after five or six successive drafts, I ended up with a diagram, vaguely in the shape of a Christmas tree, which satisfied me provisionally - all the more so as it was getting prohibitively late!

I went to bed happy, feeling that I hadn't wasted my time, even if my notes hadn't progressed a single bit[*unpoil*](<sup>\*</sup>). But I had put myself back in contact with things that were decidedly juicy - each of these groups was rich in weight and mystery, and each of the yin-yang couples that were supposed to constitute it (but which rather, all together, point to it, without in any way exhausting it) - each of these couples had something delicate and important to tell me about the nature of this world I live in, and often about my own nature. I have rediscovered with new strength the feeling that was already present five years ago: that the delicate interplay of yin and yang, of the "feminine" and the "male" in all things, is an incomparable thread leading to an understanding of the world and of oneself. It leads us straight to the essential questions. Often, too, the very "yoga" of yin and yang, I mean, the mere fact of paying attention to the aspect of things and events that is expressed in terms of yin-yang equilibrium and disequilibrium, provides a first key to a better understanding of these questions, and to an answer.

I apologise if for some readers I might have given the impression, over the last page or two, that I've been talking about the sex of angels, then they wouldn't really be able to see what these famous yin-yang "couples" are that I'm talking about, let alone these "groups" into which some of them come together, groups that are supposed to be assembled in a "diagram" (maths is useful, after all!). I should give here at least one of these groups - and I feel like taking the one I spontaneously started with yesterday, the one that ended up appearing in

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\* In compensation, I could patent the invention of a new poetic form, namely the so-called "non-linear" or "diagrammatic" poem.

the course of reflection as the "primitive" group(\*), from which all the others seem to progressively emerge, through some sort of successive "filiations" (continuing on my famous eight "generations" diagram...). Here is the list of "couples" that I have identified, constituting this primitive group (which could be named by the first of these couples, namely "the action-inaction group").

- Action-inaction
- activity-passivity
- wake-sleep
- subject-object
- beget-conceive
- execution-conception
- dynamism-equilibrium
- thrust-seated/*élan-assise*
- ardour-perseverance
- enthusiasm-patience
- passion-serenity
- tenacity-detachment.

I would also like to add the following two couples, among a dozen or so "latecomers" who came to me again this morning, following the momentum of my reflection yesterday:

- learn-know/*savoir-connaître*
- explain-understand.

Needless to say, in these couples, it is the term "yang" or "male" that is put first, following the usage of our patriarchal society, where the man names the couple. On the other hand, while traditional Chinese society is considerably more patriarchal than ours, when one follows Chinese usage to speak of the relationship of yin and yang, one always puts yin ("feminine") first, e.g. by speaking of "yin-yang equilibrium" (instead of yang-yin). The meaning of this usage is surely in the archetypal intuition that it is yang that arises from yin, which is the "more primitive" principle of the two, and not the inverse...

This is not the place for me to launch into comments on any of these couples. For the reader who "feels nothing" when seeing them, it would be pointless anyway; and for the one who feels called by them, who feels (even if obscurely) that each of them has something to say about the world and about himself - about equilibrium and disequilibrium, about the internal dynamics of beings and things..., he can do without detailed comments, and take this questioning as a starting point for his own reflection.

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\* (6 November) In fact, there is an even more primitive group, which can be called the "father-mother" group. See, on the subject of this "oblivion", the note "Our Mother the Death - or the Act and the Taboo" (n° 113). The "beget-conceive" and "execution-conception" pairs, which I have included below in the (so-called "primitive") action-inaction group, visibly fit more naturally into the "mother group" formed around the "father-mother" couple.

### (111') The enemy husbands (yang buries yin (3))

There is only one point I would like to emphasise here, common to all yin-yang "couples" without exception. It is also the most crucial thing of all, it seems to me, for an understanding of the nature of the relationship between yin and yang, and hence, of the nature of each of these two principles (or energies, or aspects, or forces...) in the Universe. It is this: each of the two terms of one of these couples, such as action-inaction, in the absence(\*) of the other term, constitutes a state of serious disequilibrium, and at the limit (when the "absence" in question is almost complete, and prolonged) a state which leads to the destruction of the thing (or being) in which this disequilibrium takes place, and even of itself and its surroundings.

Thus, a state of uninterrupted action, which does not alternate with sufficient periods of inaction, of rest, leads to exhaustion, to illness and (ultimately) to death - something which has been most actual recently, for me!(†) But conversely, a state of excessive inaction leads to a weakening and sclerosis of the capacities and functions of the body or psyche (depending on the case), and ultimately, to destruction. In the case of my "illness-incident", I have a simultaneous example of the two disequilibria: excessive action of the mind, inaction of the body (and sufficient rest for neither of them...).

This "explanation", in this specific case, of the "philosophy" of the disequilibrium of yin and yang, remains superficial, in the sense that it does not touch upon an inveterate cultural bias, valuing the term yang, the action, in opposition to the term yin, the inaction. The latter is felt to be a "negative" thing, not productive or interesting from any point of view, accepted at best as a stopgap, which unfortunately is imposed even on the best will in the world, since one must rest from time to time in order to continue to invest oneself in the action (precisely because of the pain of, as I have just explained, overwork and also God knows what else...). In short, the inaction is seen as the humble servant of the action, indispensable unfortunately but otherwise unworthy of attention or esteem.

Of course, such an "official" valorisation of the action to the detriment of the inaction immediately results in setting in motion in the person mechanisms of resistance (which often remain hidden or at least very blurred), expressing themselves by an opposite valorisation: the action, therefore, appears as something imposed by the hard necessities of life, like the job in short, damned boring as hell, in the office or in the factory or even in the fields, and gruelling in any case even if it is not too damned boring. The real reason for the action is to earn the crust and a dwelling (this is indispensable), and beyond that and above all, to have nice leisure activities/*loisirs chouettes*] (during one's active life), and a pretty/*coquette*] retirement and pleasant permanent leisure activities later on, when one is exempted from the regrettable obligation of "job". This time, it is the inaction (alias "leisure") that is more or less consciously valued, and it is the action that is its humble servant. There is thus a reversal of roles, but always with the same disequilibrium: that which consists in the antagonism established by

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\* (16 October) In fact, this "absence" is never total, it seems to me - in no thing is either yin or yang present in a pure state, without the simultaneous presence of its complementary, however slight. The "disequilibrium" of which I speak is thus characterised, not by the total absence of one of the two complementary terms (something that can never be realised), but by a state of excessive weakness of that term. Another type of disequilibrium, or morbidity, occurs when both terms are "absent", or more precisely, are present but very weak. Thus, in the case of the "action-inaction" couple, a state of agitation, which does not properly "act" (except to perpetuate itself, to maintain a confusion/*confusion*), while at the same time dispersing energy, can probably be considered as such a disequilibrium "by default" (of yin and yang).

† See on this subject the first two notes (n° 98, 99) of Procession XI, "The deceased (still not dead...)".

the person (under the pressure of cultural conditioning) between two essential aspects or poles of his life; an antagonism which is expressed and perpetuated by a state of despotic preponderance of one of its aspects, and servitude of the other.

It seems to me that more often than not, the two attitudes and values are superposed on each other in the same person, one dominating the stage at the conscious level, the other at the unconscious level. From the superposition of these two opposing disequilibria, obviously, no equilibrium can arise! This, by contrast, follows naturally from an understanding of the true nature of action and inaction (even when such an understanding remains purely "instinctive", manifesting itself directly in balanced behaviour, and in no way in verbalised "knowledge/[*savoir*]"). In action in the full sense of the word, there is also inaction - I mean in the very moment, and not just "after" because one has to rest after the action! This "inaction" in the "action", the "yin in the yang", is like a deep calm that serves as a basis for a movement that would take place on the surface. It is manifested, for example, by the impression of perfect relaxation that emanates from a moving feline, whether it is the first alley cat that comes along, or a lioness with a powerful build/[*carrure*]...

And likewise in true inaction, even if it is total, there is action. Thus sleep is rich in its dreams which speak to us of ourselves, through which we live another life which is more intense and more delicate, which we are often too sleepy or too pusillanimous to live in the waking life. And it is enough to contemplate a sleeping baby, or just being pulled out of a deep sleep, to feel that even without dreams, real good sleep is a work in its own way: something that absorbs us totally, in short to "refill" an energy that had been dispersed and that we come to replenish at its source... This is again the "yang in the yin", without which the yin itself would be destructive.

Reflections along the same lines could surely be developed for waking inaction, outside of sleep time. One only has to observe carefully piece by piece, in an attentive way, such or such a state that one perceives as "inaction". One will come to realise that in inaction, there is action, even the sterile cackling of a thought that continues to go round in circles when it has stopped working. But in truth, it is inappropriate to call it "action", this purely mechanical movement, which continues by the sole effect of inertia - by the incapacity to stop the machine! And it is certainly not this inner agitation that will bring to "inaction" a yin-yang harmony that will make it beneficial. On the other hand, this may be the case with various activities intended to furnish one's leisure time (when these are nevertheless experienced as a state of inaction). But even in the state of complete rest, of a state of convalescence say, there can be action, without which this rest or "inaction" becomes a shapeless thing/[*avachissement*], certainly not conducive to a convalescence (which means, precisely, to the restoration of a disturbed equilibrium!). For example, this state of rest can give rise to an attention to one's own body and to one's immediate surroundings (which constitutes a second skin for it...), an acquisition of knowing/[*connaissance*], or even a communion, which by itself has an authentic character of "action"; for there is no doubt that learning is indeed an act (since it has an irrefutable effect: the appearance/[*apparition*] of a knowing...).

If we examine one by one the fourteen couples that I have included in the action-inaction group (and surely we could find many others that fit in naturally), we can see that for all of them except perhaps one, it is the first term, the "masculine" term, that is invested with prestige, with "value", according to the attitudes-reflexes transmitted by our culture and inculcated since childhood. This is a sign of the same inveterate disequilibrium in our culture, the disequilibrium marked by the exclusive valorisation of the yang, to which I have already alluded

previously(\*). The same observation can be made for almost all the yin-yang pairs I came across - this is a really very striking thing, which I had never before taken the time to verify in such a detailed manner.

Among the couples written earlier, the only one that seems to me to be an exception is the passion-serenity couple, since in common usage, the word "passion" is often associated with the image of an outburst/*déchaînement*], a violence, or if not of sloppiness, which is unfortunately close to the cloud of associations surrounding a word like "turpitude". As if by chance, sloppiness and turpitude designate states of psychic disequilibrium characterised by an excessive yin, feminine preponderance! And symmetrically, following the same push-button mechanisms (which reveal our current conditioning, and by no means the nature of something like "serenity"), the word "serenity" is associated (as opposed to "passion") with the image of a control of the self - a quality which, as it happens, is essentially masculine. (In fact, the yin counterpart to "control" is not at all "passion", but "abandon/*abandon*").)

What is happening here, then, is that as a result of a general confusion in people's minds about the nature of certain things, expressed by an equal confusion in the use of certain words, supposed to designate them, there is a confusion of the yang-yin couple "passion-serenity" with the set of the two notions of

relaxation-control,

the terms of which are yin-yang (without, however, constituting a "couple", as the two terms in question have no desire to marry each other!) It seems to me that the so-called "exception" to the rule (of the systematic valorisation of yang) is, on the contrary, a particularly interesting confirmation of it! And I would not be surprised if the same were true of the other few examples I have identified, where in a yang-yin couple, it is the yin term that seems to be valorised.

I am not at all sure that this distortion in the view of the world that I see in the so-called "western" civilisation, stemming from this systematic bias in favour of the masculine, as opposed to the feminine - that this distortion, this disequilibrium, is so much less in the Chinese tradition, or even in the Chinese world (or more generally the "eastern" world) of today. There are no signs, on the level of everyday life, that would lead me to presume this, neither through my eastern friends, nor through the echoes that may have reached me of the tradition and present-day life in China or other countries of the far-East - quite the contrary. Rather, it seems to me that a fine perception of the yin-yang dynamism has been confined almost exclusively to the practice of certain arts - such as calligraphy, poetry, the culinary arts and, of course, the medical arts(†).

It is especially the latter, under the name of "Chinese medicine" and through certain spectacular successes of acupuncture, that has, over the past twenty years, acquired legitimacy/*droit de cité*] in our country, and been invested with prestige. However, many people are still unaware that in Chinese medicine, the alpha and omega

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\* See the note "Yang buries yin (1) - or the muscle and the gut", n° 106.

† (21 October) I have forgotten to mention the divinatory art, in the I Ching or "book of changes", which today enjoys great popularity in certain circles in both Europe and America. The 64 "hexagrams" which constitute the basic "words" of the divinatory language of I Ching, are none other than the 2<sup>6</sup> possible combinations of sequences of six yin and yang "signs", from pure yin (six repetitions of yin) to pure yang (six repetitions of yang). There seems to be a kind of alchemy of great finesse in the combinations of yin and yang, which (it seems) had fascinated Jung. The interest of this alchemy (as a "collection of archetypes" in particular) seems to me a priori independent of its use in the art of divination, and of the credit that one is willing to give to such use.

of the apprehension of the body, of the circulation of energy in the body and of the disturbances of this energy (which constitute the morbid states that we call "illnesses"), is precisely in a very fine dialectic of yin and yang. The fact that this dialectic "works[*marche*]", since "Chinese medicine" based on it is effective (including in many cases that escape the means of the western panoply[*panoplie*]), can be considered as a kind of "proof" of the reality of the "principles" or "aspects" or "modes" (of apprehension, or of existence) of yin and yang - that they are not pure speculations coming out of the hats of certain philosophers and other poets (not to say phonies[*fumistes*]).

It is true that one may ask what is the meaning of such proofs, and indeed of any "proof" whatsoever of the validity of this or that view of the world. Even if the evidence were convincing (that is to say, if the person concerned were willing to be convinced), and even if, on top of that, the vision in question were profound and therefore, beneficial - the best proof of the world is powerless to convey[*communiquer*] one vision, let alone a vision of the world. It does you a fat lot of good to be stubbornly "convinced" of a vision which remains foreign, not understood[*incomprise*]. To tell the truth, it doesn't even make sense - or more exactly, the real meaning of his "conviction" is no more understood by the person concerned than the vision he pretends to incorporate into his heavy cultural baggage.

When the vision is understood and assimilated, the very question of a "proof" appears strangely absurd - a bit like proving that the sky is blue when you can see that it is blue, or that the scent of a flower you love is good...

### **(112) The half and the whole - or the crack**

(17 October) My first reflections on the double aspect of "feminine" and "masculine" came from a reflection on myself. It was around the beginning of 1979, at a time when I was still unaware of the Chinese words "yin" and "yang", and of the existence of a kind of subtle "philosophy" of the incessant play of yin and yang, in the Chinese cultural tradition. I learned about this towards the end of the same year, I think, from my daughter and especially from my son-in-law Ahmed, who was then beginning to take an interest in Chinese medicine, which he hooked onto strongly in the following years. Most of what he told me crossed with and confirmed the vision I had arrived at, which was not at all surprising to me. If there was any surprise, it was rather in the few cases of "couples" where the "natural" yin-yang role seemed to me to be reversed, in the Chinese tradition. My reflex (strongly "yang" in this case!) had been a skin-deep conviction that this "reversal" must be due to a cultural distortion, without looking too closely(\*) - this was at a time when my past experiences with the feminine-masculine seemed quite distant, while I was engaged in a much more personal meditation on the life of my parents and on my childhood. It was only months or years later, I think, that through a certain amount of cross-checking, I realised that in some cases my apprehension of the yin and yang roles in such and such a "couple"

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\* This reaction of peremptory assurance, with regard to a thousand-year-old tradition which could have prompted me to be more cautious, is the same one which, as a child, made me reject the formula (quite complicated my goodness!)  $\pi = 3,14...$  taught by books, in favour of  $\pi = 3$  of which I had convinced myself by my own means. (See the note "Squaring the circle", n° 69.) It is true that for this story of yin and yang, I had had ample opportunity to realise to what extent the apprehension of the nature of the "feminine" and the "masculine", and of their interrelationships, is warped by inveterate cultural distortions, of considerable force. I did not yet realise, however, how essential a precise and delicate apprehension of these relationships was in the practice of certain traditional Chinese arts, and pushed to a degree of great finesse.

had remained a little superficial; that I had lumped together, somewhat hastily, situations of a different nature, which the Chinese yin-yang dialectic was very careful to distinguish (112'). Now, I realise that the apprehension of yin and yang is still relatively crude and static for me, especially when compared to the finesse required for the practice of certain traditional Chinese arts such as medicine (which is also closely linked to dietetics and the culinary arts), where this apprehension ends up becoming like second nature.

I have had the impression more than once that among the followers[*pratiquants*] and practitioners[*praticiens*] of these arts, whether eastern or european, this finesse of apprehension remains fragmentary, in the sense that it remains, to a very large extent, carefully confined to the practice of this art. In everyday life, it acts rather like ordinary "learnings", purely and simply superimposed on the "learnings" of cultural (and other) conditioning, and remaining more or less a dead letter vis-à-vis the latter. To put it another way, I had the impression that the vision of the world and of oneself, and the mechanisms of repression in the perception of reality, are in no way different in these wholly "informed" people than in the common mortals.

This impression crosses over with another one, which I had while browsing through two or three texts, written by europeans supposedly "in the know", which is: to give an overview of the traditional Chinese philosophy of yin and yang. (One of the authors is a well-known French orientalist, whose name now escapes me). The thing that struck me was that in these texts, yin and yang are presented as "opposing" (or "contrary") or even antagonistic principles (the latter term appears several times in one of these texts), rather than complementary. This "opposition" or "antagonism" would have its typical expression in that which would take place between woman and man inside human society, and inside the couple instituted by society.

Antagonism in the husband-wife relationship[*couple*] is indeed a reality, both in the East and in the West. It is deeply rooted in the culture, to such an extent that it can sometimes appear as one of the (sometimes puzzling!) aspects of the human condition, or even as the root of the conflict in man or in human society. The reality of this antagonism is irrefutable, and it certainly surpasses the common clichés that try to exorcise it as best they can[*tant bien que mal*]. This "social" reality is the product of an immemorial conditioning, which very early on takes root in the "I" in formation and structures it. However, beyond this reality, there is a deeper reality, coming from much further back, which is decisive in the love impulse itself. It is the reality of a profound, essential complementarity of the sexes, where there is no room for any kind of "antagonism". This is also the reality that is clearly manifested in all living species, with the sole exception of our own, where it is to a large extent obscured by cultural antagonism, and thus by a state of division specific to man and to human society.

The common romantic clichés, such as "Us Two", which dominate much of literature and the media, point to a junk "complementarity", while at the same time casting a discreet veil over the troubling aspect of male-female antagonism, or (at best) treating it as a kind of somewhat spicy accident, welcome to pepper up a meal that is otherwise a bit too dull or syrupy. As soon as we go beyond these reassuring clichés, we are immediately confronted with the reality of this male-female antagonism - a reality that is apparently universal and, moreover, of an ironclad tenacity, a tenacity of weed! But to start from this omnipresent and irrefutable reality, in order to institute a kind of cosmic antagonism of yin and yang, of the "feminine" and the "masculine", is to project onto the entire Universe the state of rupture, of deep division of human society and the individual, a disease therefore peculiar to our species. It is also to perpetuate one's own ignorance of another reality within oneself (which joins with[*rejoignant*] this cosmic reality of the harmony of the complementary), a reality which is just as



tenacious (or, to put it better, indestructible), but more hidden. This reality goes against the conditioning that tacitly institutes a de facto antagonism between woman and man, wife and husband, as well as between that in ourselves which is "woman" and that which is "man".

In fact, this dualistic or warlike vision of the Universe, where one aspect of things is at constant war with an equally essential "symmetrical" aspect - this vision is in no way the fruit of a reflection which would "start" (as I wrote just now) from the reality of the conflict in the human couple and in human society, in order to "deduce" (or "institute", as I wrote, more precisely) it in the entire Cosmos. It is no more, no less, than the faithful expression, automatic as it may be, of cultural conditioning, and in line with an essential function of this conditioning: the maintenance of the conflict, of the division in the very person, obviously, the maintenance of this instituted antagonism between "woman" and "man" in me would be impossible, or rather, this antagonism would already be resolved, from the moment when I would take the leisure to contemplate the Universe with these eyes received at my birth, and where I would note that everywhere, except (apparently...) in myself and among my fellow men, the "feminine" and the "masculine" are your complementaries indissoluble to each other; that it is from their nuptials and their union that harmony, creative force and living beauty are born in all living and "dead" things of Creation. On the other hand, if I claim to "see" everywhere in the Universe "oppositions" and "antagonisms" where they are not (and even though in doing so I would be following a venerable tradition, several thousand years old), I would be in no way using my own eyes, but rather that I would have confined myself to repeating (as everyone else does) what has been repeated from generation to generation since perhaps the dawn of time; and in any case, to obey the silent and imperative injunction of the cultural consensus - the very one that has solidly instituted in my person a division, a conflict that I would pretend to rationalise (and that I would thereby perpetuate) as a "cosmic necessity".

There is certainly a lot to be said about antagonism in the couple, and more generally about female-male antagonism - and I trust my fellow men that much has been written on this subject, including other relevant things. This is not the place to expand on this most interesting theme, in particular the particular form that this antagonism takes in our patriarchal society. It seems to me that among those who have seen its existence clearly, many hold the structure of society, reflecting and concretising the preponderance of the man over the woman, as responsible for this antagonism. They surely have their reasons - and I suspect that in a society with a pronounced matriarchal tendency, a similar antagonism must also be found, manifesting itself in a more or less symmetrical way. What I would only like to add is that this causality seems to me to be indirect, that it seems to be exercised through the intermediary of a more hidden causality, touched upon in today's reflection. This more hidden and more essential cause of the division in the couple is the state of division within the person, both woman and man, with regard to the person's own impulses (and in particular those of sex) and own faculties. I see in this the real root of the antagonism between man and woman, as well as of their mutual dependence on the spiritual level, I mean the lack of inner autonomy of each one of them.

This division in oneself consists of the intimate and secret conviction, in both of us, that we are only a half. One of the signs of this conviction is this diffuse and insidious feeling, never examined, of crack [*fêlure*], of mutilation perhaps, which only the partner of the other sex could liberate us from, provisionally at least. Behind the circumstantial airs of "macho" or "Circe" (and many others), everyone, men and women alike, find themselves in the position of a beggar with regard to their potential or real partner, one who expects an ephemeral liberation from the (more or less) goodwill of the other, which he hopes will be complete and which

always turns out to be lame, from his pitiful state of cracked pot, not to say broken - half a pot in short, which seeks another to stick to it as best it can (and rather, badly than well, as one can guess...).

This feeling of crack, or again, this ignorance of our true nature, of our fundamental unity beyond the physiological specificity linked to our sex - this deep division in us seems to me to be the product of social conditioning alone. There is no trace of it, at least in the first days and months of an infant's life. This conditioning is by no means reduced to the valorisation of the "masculine" to the detriment of the "feminine", or inversely. After all, if I feel, and accept myself, and am accepted, as being both "male" and "female" at the same time, with a "background note" that can vary from one facet of my person to another, and which is by no means limited to the dominant (albeit very important) gender that prevails at the level of the genital organs - it is consequently no longer so important whether it is the "masculine" or the "feminine" that is valorised around me. At the level of my sexual impulse, my personal "valorisation" would then always tend to be towards the sex opposite to mine (sorry, complementary I meant to say), without feeling inferior (not more than superior) in front of this being different in its body, towards which I am attracted by a deep and imperious impulse. Moreover, whether it is a question of valorisation linked to sex or any other, the importance of the "value" or prestige lent by the social consensus (to oneself or to others) are relatively secondary, not to say minimal, in a person who is not (or not very much) affected by this feeling of "crack" I am talking about - in a person, therefore, in whom there is this spontaneous assurance which is neither presumptuousness nor a facade, but a manifestation of an intact knowing of one's own nature.

One sign among others that the "crack" or division(\*) in the person is not only the product of a valorisation, is that this division rages in the man just as well as in the woman, in the one who is supposed to be the "beneficiary" of this consensus which claims to "valorise" him, while (in a certain sense) it breaks the backs of him as well as of his partner. We can see that this division is all the more acute, all the more violent, when the repression of one of the sexes for the "benefit" of the other is stronger, more ruthless. It could be said that the principle followed by "the Society" (source and instrument of repression) in setting up repressive mechanisms, is: "divide and rule"! But this "division" created by the Consensus in order to break and enslave both man and woman is also played out on two ways/tableaux at once. The most visible way is that of the division in the couple, obtained(†) by instituting a more or less tyrannical preponderance of one of the sexes over the other - of the man over the woman, or vice versa. One is supposed to rule over the other - and both end up as slaves(‡). For when the wife or husband is despised, it is both of them who are brought into contempt - contempt by others sometimes, but more profoundly and above all, contempt by themselves.

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\* I refrain from using here the rather fashionable expression of "castration", a term of great violence (superyang for that matter!), which has the additional disadvantage of suggesting the image of an irremediable, irreversible mutilation, and thereby, stimulating reactions of dismay, revolt or resignation likely to reinforce a state of blockage, rather than favouring the evolution of it in the direction of a progressive resolution.

† (21 October) On the surface at least. But as suggested above, if we go deeper into things, we realise that this division in the couple, maintained by the preponderance of the man over the woman, has a deeper "root", to which I return in a few lines below.

‡ Slaves, moreover, who for nothing in the world would break off from Their chains, which are dearer to them than life...

And here we come to the "second way", more hidden, of the game of division. It is the division in the person himself, the hidden spring of the division of the couple, it is accentuated by the latter, yet without being reduced to it, and it is by no means produced by the only valorisation of a sex to the detriment of the other. It is rather the product of a silent and incessant constraint, exerted on us by our environment from our earliest years. This constraint pushes us to deny, on pain of being rejected, a whole "side" of our person (the "yin" side, or the "yang" side(\*) ), rejected as ridiculous or as unseemly, and in any case, as unacceptable.

### **(112') Archetypal knowing and conditioning†**

Thus, in the matrix-embryo and vagina-penis couples; the distribution of yin-yang roles is not in doubt, and the yin term surrounds and contains the yang term. This had made me hastily conclude that in the container-content couple it was the "content" that was yang, without being warned by the form-content, exterior-interior, periphery-centre couples (where, as I had sensed, the first term is clearly yang, while being the "container"). In fact, in the matrix-embryo and vagina-penis couples, I had wrongly emphasised on the "geometrical" or configurational aspect of the relation of the two terms in presence, a secondary aspect, however, in front of the main aspect, which determines in this case the distribution of the roles: what nourishes is yin in relation to what is nourished which is yang, and what penetrates is yang in relation to what is penetrated which is yin (in the same way that what gives in relation to what receives).

My reflections on yin and yang, limited as they are, have established a firm conviction in me that, beyond differences in individual apprehension of yin-yang role distributions (or also, of the yin or yang "background note" in a given person, let us say), an apprehension which is strongly subject to "cultural distortion", such a "natural" distribution (or "background note") does exist. It has a reality that is just as irrefutable, "cosmic", and immutable (as regards the distribution of roles in couples of a universal nature, such as those discussed so far), as a physical law, or a mathematical relation, even if it cannot be "established" either by experiment (in the sense in which this term is understood in the practice of the natural sciences), or by "proof" or even "demonstration". This reality of yin/[ying] and yang is apprehended by direct perception, which can be developed and refined (among other things) by sufficiently deep reflections.

It seems to me that one of the main effects of such a reflection is precisely to make us surpass the cliché reflexes, programmed in us by the surrounding culture, in order to recover contact with reality itself. This reality, it seems to me, is already present in deep layers of the psyche, as a kind of archetypal knowing, beyond the reach of cultural conditioning. The role of reflection is to enable us to regain contact with this already present knowing, and to carefully decant/[déganter] it from superficial "learning/[savoir]", in other words from cultural conditioning.

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\* In principle, and barring accidents, the sense of constraint pushes the man to deny his yin side, and the woman to deny her yang side. The situation is more delicate for the woman, who is supposed to deny the very traits in her that are endowed with prestige by the social consensus, and which she would therefore feel encouraged to cultivate. She is thus subjected to two pressures in opposite directions, and the task for the unconscious to structure an "operational" identity is complicated by this.

† This note is taken from a footnote to the previous note (see reference in the first paragraph of the latter).

The work I have started in this respect has been important for my understanding of the world and of myself, and thus, in my daily "doing" and in the conduct of my life. This work (as on many other occasions) seems to me like a first breakthrough, like a door that I have just pushed and it opens onto a vast panorama, which I still have to explore. I have everything I need to do it - but I don't know if I will ever do it(\*). Putting even mathematics aside, there is no shortage of themes for reflection that are just as "juicy", and even more personal and burning, which will undoubtedly be preferred first to the deepening of a more general reflection on yin and yang...

## 2.4 Our Mother the Death

### (113) The Act

(21 October) Three days have passed without writing any notes. My days have been absorbed by other tasks and events. One of these was a visit from Pierre, with his little daughter Nathalie, who arrived last night. He thinks he will stay until tomorrow evening, and by then read what is written about the Burial. It might be a bit short, for a text that took me almost three months to write...

The time I was able to devote to a reflection, I spent playing with the yin-yang "couples" and the groups they form. The subject is fascinating, combining the very particular flavour of investigating a mathematical "structure", the very nature of which gradually becomes clearer in the course of the work, with that of a reflection on the world and on existence. Each of the main yin-yang couples represents a kind of "keyhole" (among an infinity of others), revealing a certain aspect of the world, or of a corner of the world. The "groups" of couples that I have identified so far seem to correspond rather to different possible modes of apprehending things in the Universe, like so many doors that would open onto it and show it to us from so many different angles. Each of these "doors" has a large number of keyholes, perhaps even an unlimited number, through which to look - perhaps awaiting to be pushed open altogether? For the moment I have limited myself to detecting a good number of these holes (I have found well over two hundred), to sticking my eye to each one even if only for a few moments, while realising each time that there would be something to look at for a good while without wasting my time, in fact! But my impatience is greater to go and have a quick look at such and such a hole through which to look again, and also to go round all these doors and to orientate myself as best I can how they are arranged in relation to each other, and perhaps also according to what "patterns" are arranged in one or the other of these holes which had revealed their existence...

Finally, the eighteen "doors" I had detected, a little over a week ago, were augmented by three more, making twenty-one, arranged in a diagram (which I had described as "vaguely Christmas tree-shaped"), now comprising

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\* Just as I don't know if the kind of work I see opening up here has already been done. (In short, the study of a kind of local and global "map" of the qualities of things in the Universe and their modes of apprehension, in the light of the harmony of the complementary yin-yang.) Yet this is a very minor issue, since it is not a question of presenting a doctoral thesis on this or that, but of deepening an understanding of the world and of oneself, which can only be the fruit of personal work.

a "trunk" of nine "vertices" (or "doors", or "groups", or "angles"), connected by vertical "edges" or "links", with on each side of the trunk six other vertices connected to it and to each other, so as to form the "branches"(\*).

These connotations linked to the love impulse were constantly at the forefront of my thinking five years ago. They have also been entitled to almost uninterrupted lyrical emphasis throughout the 130 or so pages of the famous "poetic work" in which the reflection was then condensed, which produces a wearying effect on even the most willing reader. It is surely a reaction of annoyance towards this double "deliberate purpose[*propos*]", poetic and erotic(†), in my only reference text for my reflection of the last few days, that I have purely and simply "forgotten", among the famous groups of yin-yang couples, the one which of course opened the procession (and, moreover, rightly so) in this text of misfortune.

The title of the work in question, "Eulogy of the Incest", was also a little provocative, and of a nature to give a false idea of its intentions and its "message". These evolved quite strongly while writing - the poetic straitjacket did not prevent a deepening work from continuing, and a decantation from happening. A first and main purpose had been to probe a certain aspect (which I felt to be deep and essential) of the love impulse, as I knew it from my own experience. It was therefore above all a question of the erotic impulse in men, or more precisely: the "yang" impulse, which corresponds to the "male role" in the game and in the act of love, but which is present with varying strength(‡) in women as well as in men. For a long time, perhaps since the very beginning, I have known that this impulse, by its very nature, is "incestuous": it is also the impulse to "return to the Mother", to return to the original Womb[*Giron*]. This great return is "staged" and relived in the course of the game of love,

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\* (24 October) I would be embarrassed to predict whether or not there will eventually be yin-yang couples coming out that do not naturally fit into any of the groups I have identified so far, that is to say, whether there are still other yin-yang groups or "doors" opening out into the world, or even an unlimited number?

The fact that I could not find another would by no means mean that there could not be an infinite number of others, perhaps even an infinite number of others that escape human experience, and our means of perception of the Universe. This reminds me that more than once in recent years, I have been struck by the intuition that, from the ant or the tiny aphid to the mammals which are already very close to us, each animal species has means of perception and apprehension of the Universe which escape any other species, including our own of course; so that as far as the richness of the modes of sensory (let's say) apprehension of what surrounds us is concerned, our species does not "recover" or "contain" any other, any more than any other contains us.

The "not any more than" that I have just ventured to say in a rush[*sur ma lancée*] seems to me to be hasty, and even presumptuous, given that at the level of the richness and finesse of purely sensory perception, the evolution of our species would tend to go rather backwards, to regress. It is only at the level of the intellect, of the finesse of mental images, and those linked to language in particular, that we excel over other species, it seems to me. It is no coincidence that most of the yin-yang couples that spontaneously came to my attention belong to this specifically "human" register, while only a handful have (among others) an obvious sensory connotation, such as shadow-light, cold-hot, low-high, and a few others.

† (24 October) This deliberate purpose in form reflected an inner attitude, the choice of a certain role - a role as an apostle of a message. See the end of the section "The Guru-not-Guru - or The three-legged horse" (n° 45), and the related note n° 43.

‡ (24 October) This presence is often more or less totally suppressed by mechanisms of repression of great force. I have the impression that in men, this yang impulse tends to be predominant over the complementary yin impulse, and that the opposite occurs in women. But cultural conditioning, and the various modes of internalising it, both "positive" and "negative", interfere so drastically (and often complexly) with the play of the original impulses, that it is sometimes difficult to detect them, behind sporadic, furtive and often degraded manifestations.

culminating and being accomplished in an annihilation, an extinction of the being, a death. To live the act of love in its fullness, is also to live one's own death, like a "birth backwards" that returns us to the maternal womb(\*).

But it also means transgressing at the same time two taboos of considerable power: the incest taboo, which excludes "the Mother" as the object of desire in love, and the taboo which (in our culture at least) separates and opposes, like irreconcilable enemies, the life and the death, birth and death. Yet I already knew that the act of love is at the same time a death, accomplished in the orgasmic spasm, and a birth, a renewal of being, emerging[issue] from this death... like a new shoot delicately springs up from the nourishing earth, itself formed from the creative decomposition of beings that have sunk[*abîmés*] into it...

It was during this reflection on the meaning of the act of love, five years ago, that I finally understood that "death" and "life" were the wife and husband of the same closely entwined couple(†), that life is eternally born of death, to eternally sink into it. Or to put it better, that life eternally sinks into Death, to be eternally reborn from Her, the Mother, fecund and nourishing - She herself nourished and renewed unceasingly by the eternal return to Her of the innumerable bodies of Her children.

And the human couple of wife and husband, women and men lovers[*l'amante et de l'amant*], when they fully live the impulse that draws one into the other, is like a parable of these endless nuptials of life and death: at the end of each night of love the man[*amant*] sinks and dies in the woman[*amante*], only to be reborn with her from this death in their common embrace...

At the beginning of this same reflection, I visualised an essential aspect of the division in the person, as a kind of "cut", a "horizontal" cut: that established by the taboo of incest which "cuts" the child from the mother, as it cuts life from its mother the Death, and as it also cuts a generation from the one that precedes it.

If I first saw this cut, it was no doubt because it was precisely the one from which I was exempt. However, my life, like everyone else's, has been profoundly marked by this other great cut, which I saw later in the course of the reflection and which I called the "vertical cut": the one that separates, in order to oppose them to each other, the two "halves" of the feminine and the masculine in each being, tolerating only one to the exclusion of the other. This is precisely the one that has been discussed in this long digression on yin and yang, in which I have been engaged for the past week or two.

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\* I am convinced, moreover, that this content of the yang love impulse is present in all living species and even beyond; that it corresponds to the same deep dynamic of all things in the Universe: that every creative process (or "act") is an embrace of yin and yang, of "the Mother" and Eros the Child, returning to and sinking[*s'abîmant*] into her. From this "death" (or "birth backwards") of the child returning to the Mother emerges, as if from a nourishing matrix, the fruit of the act, the "work". It is the appearance of the "child", of the new thing, through the act of death and renewal of the "old" that gives birth to it. In this cosmic dimension, the original impulse of sex has been present since time immemorial, long before the appearance of the human species and even before the appearance of life (in the biological sense) on our planet.

† (24 October) It is strange then that among the yin-yang couples that I had noted a few weeks later, the couple "the death - the life" does not appear. Perhaps this is because of confusion with the related couple "death - birth" (or better, "die - born") which does appear, so that the former might seem to overlap with the latter.

It seems to me now that this division ("vertical") is even more crucial than the other ("horizontal"), that in a certain sense it implies or "contains" it. After all, to separate the child from the mother, and life from death; to associate with death, as with the impulse that links the child to the mother, a feeling of stain, repulsion or shame, is also to cut off from each other, to oppose them to each other, the husband and wife in those two indissoluble and primordial cosmic couples: the mother - the child, the death - the life(\*).

Interestingly, these last two couples do not appear among those I had noted in the "Eulogy". The "death-birth" couple, on the other hand(†), more directly linked to my love experience, appears there. The "mother-child" and "death-life" couples only appeared in the course of my reflection over the last few days, among many others that had escaped my attention until then, one of the most interesting of which is "the evil-the good". This is one of those couples (like "death-life") that can be called "difficult", in the sense that the conditionings of great power makes us apprehend the two terms as antagonistic "opposites", rather than as inseparable complementaries. Clearly, these conditionings were stronger in me five years ago when I wrote the Eulogy than they are today. There were, however, already a number of "difficult couples" in the Eulogy, among them the couples "chaos-order", and "destruction-creation"...

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\* I have written the couples here in the "natural" yin-yang order, starting with the yin term, the "original" term. Concerning the couple "the mother - the child", it should be noted that the term "the mother" also appears in a second important archetypal couple, mentioned earlier, the primitive couple of all "mother - father", giving its name to the group it describes. (The group of the "mother-child" couple is actually different, it is the one I call the "cause-effect" couple). Moreover, the yang term "child", of this same "mother-child" couple, is also part of another archetypal couple "elder-child", neighbour of the very interesting couple "maturity-innocence". These two couples are part of the group I call "high-low", which is the richest (if only numerically) of all those I have detected so far. It contains many other remarkable couples, such as decline-elevation[*essor*], die-born, destruction-creation, forget-learn, end-start...

In enumerating these couples, I had to do almost violence to myself, in order to name them in the yin-yang order, contrary to inveterate habits. At first sight the new order looked a bit wacky, even absurd - the world turned upside down! On closer inspection, one comes to realise that this unusual order reveals another aspect of the relationship of the two terms, one that is complementary to the usual aspect where (for example) "born" precedes "die" - whereas we have just seen that "die", in a deeper sense, precedes "born".

The same is true for the overall name of my reflection, "Harvest and Sowing", which is undoubtedly a yin-yang couple (which I am discovering right now!). It is named again in reverse order to the usual yang-yin order, with the harvest supposed to follow the sowing, not the opposite. Yet the name imposed itself on me without any ambiguity whatsoever, and without at any time even the idea that this name could have been the opposite, "Sowing and Harvest". It was being confronted with unwelcome harvests, which each time ended up drawing my attention to the sowing from which they came; as if the deep meaning and function of the harvest had been to stubbornly bring me back to the sowing of my own hand, long since forgotten...

† One should note that in this "death-birth" couple, the term "death/[*mort*]" does not have the same meaning as in the "death-life" couple: in the first it designates an act (synonymous with "demise"), in the second a state. In German, there are two different words, "Sterben" (without the somewhat cavalier connotation of "demise") and "Todt". In French, it seems to me preferable to designate the couple by "mourir-naître", which eliminates the ambiguity about the meaning of the term "mort".

In retrospect, a somewhat deeper understanding(\*) of the nature of the different yin-yang couples, as forming a harmonious entity of indissociable complementaries, now appears to me as so many "thresholds" to be crossed in our voyage of discovery of the world and ourselves. Such a "threshold" is all the more notable, the more "difficult" the couple in question is; that is also to say, that its apprehension as a "couple" comes up against stronger inner resistance, an expression of cultural conditioning.

#### **(114) The Beloved**

(26 October) Yesterday's reflection(†) was a bit hard to start. This is no doubt due to the many interruptions of the last few days. However, since the day before there was something still warm inside me that I was anxious to put on paper, if only in a few lines. I was very embarrassed afterwards to realise that it had been lost on the way, ousted by all that came along! Today I could not bring myself to let go of it prematurely, as if by misunderstanding, that is to say, before I had really got to know it.

I had leafed through the recently reissued "Zupfgeigenhansl"(‡), this classic of old German folk songs, compiled and edited around the turn of the century. It was said to have become unobtainable, but some German friends who were visiting me had brought me a copy. This day (the day before yesterday) I had a quick look at it before getting to work, a bit like shaking hands with a friend from old times. I came across the song "Wohl heute noch und morgen", which I skimmed through without really paying attention, being in a hurry to finally get back to the work I had to do. This however did not stop something from "clicking". I could feel that these simple and seemingly naive words were delicately touching something deep inside me - something, moreover, very close to what I had tried so hard to evoke three days before. I was just about to rewrite my notes on the subject. Perhaps I felt confused that the stanzas I had just skimmed through were more faithful and convincing messengers of what I would have liked to communicate, than my notes of preemptory brevity, written in the wake of something else, as if in passing, while the emotion of an immediate experience remained absent.

This morning when I got up, I tried to translate into French these stanzas, the tune of them I ignored, which nevertheless had continued to sing in me for two days. Surely this was a way of recovering them better, of letting their flavour and melody penetrate me better. To my surprise, it was not too difficult to find in another language, which at first seemed restive, some of the rhythm and music of the German text, while remaining very close to the literal meaning. So here are the seven stanzas, rendered as best I could(§).

"Ce jour encore et demain

\* I mean, an understanding that does not remain purely intellectual, that manifests itself concretely in a changed relationship to others, to the world or to ourselves, because ways of being are changed.

† This is the reflection in yesterday's note (n° 116) which I placed after today's.

‡ In Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag (1981).

§ (29 October) The following version is a revised version over the next three days. In the evening we sang and I was able to learn the tune of the song. Most of the changes to the original version were made to accommodate the rhythm and tonic accent requirements of the sung text. Even if the syllables have to be distributed appropriately among the notes of the tune, it can be sung with the French text, without at any point having to do violence to the tonic accent (as is unfortunately common in some French consonants of recent vintage).



auprès de toi serai  
mais dès que point le troisième jour  
sitôt je partirai."

"Mais quand reviendras-tu encore  
m'amour, mon doux aimé ?"

"Quand neigeront roses rouges  
et quand pleuvra vin frais !"

"Ne neigent point les roses  
et point ne pleut du vin  
ainsi, m'amour mon doux aimé  
non plus tu ne reviens !"

Au jardin de mon père  
me couchai, et y dormant  
me vint un joli rêvelet  
neige blanche sur moi neigeant.

Et quand tantôt m'éveille, voici  
pur vide pur néant -  
c'étaient les roses rouges jolies  
dessus moi fleurissant...

Revient garçon et passe, tout doux  
dedans le beau jardin  
porte une couronne de roses  
un gobelet de vin.

Du pied il a buté, tout doux  
au joli monticule  
tombe - et neigent roses  
aussi pleut du vin frais...

There was a joy, a happiness in me, as I groped to reproduce what I was reading, which with each passing moment became like a part of me. There was this bare and gentle [*douce*] beauty, at once calm and poignant, a serious [*grave*] beauty made of joy and sadness intimately entwined. I believe that few people are not touched to some degree by a song like this, even though they would defend themselves against it - as we often defend ourselves against an unexpected emotion, when something deep within us that we ignored suddenly enters into resonance, and speaks to us silently about what we would prefer to ignore.

It is the dream, above all else, that has the power to make resonate in us that which must remain hidden, ignored, that which must remain silent. Only the language of dreams, perhaps, has the power to touch these

secret chords in us and make them sing in spite of ourselves. And when, for a fleeting moment, you have allowed them to sing, even if it is a song of pain or heavy sorrow, you suddenly feel light and as if new - washed by great waters, as if an abundant water had passed through your being and dissolved and carried away all that in faith which is knotted and hard and old...

When the poet is about to make resonate one of these chords whose song triggers the inner waters, he instinctively borrows the language of the dream, at the same time limpid and charged with mystery - a language of images and parables, which disconcerts reason by its apparent absurdity, and by its secret obviousness goes straight to where it wants to touch!

There is no need here for the word "death" to be uttered, or any other word which relates to it for the waking mind. Yet it is present, and its misty visage is that of the Beloved. The sleeping and distant Beloved whom you have long since left, and at the same time very near - at once the snow, and the rose that falls in snow and is born of snows... The force that draws you into Her is like a very deep and powerful wave, a wave coming from Her who calls and drawing back to Her. And the call is poignant sorrow and the return is joy that sings in a very low voice and joy and sorrow are one and are that wave that carries you into the Beloved, with the unanswerable force of a childbirth.

And there was no need to evoke, even if only in a word, this longing and the surge of desire for you, the child - for the "boy" that the Beloved calls within Her. It was enough for a dream to speak of Her who sleeps in her father's garden, dreaming of snow and waking up to roses, for awakening also in you this long-forgotten wave, responding to the longing of Her who dreams and wakes up, calls and awaits...

### **(114') The messenger**

This old Silesian song is one of many love songs, old or not so old old, singing of the mysterious and poignant amalgam of the beloved and the death. The one I have just transcribed is perhaps exceptional for the profusion of images charged with meaning, and for the richness of the associations it arouses. It is not my intention here to go through them one by one, after having evoked one or two that touched me most strongly. When yesterday and the day before, my thoughts returned to these hastily read stanzas, it was not then in the direction of deepening an emotion, which at first remained epidermal. Rather, it reminded me of the extent to which the themes of love and death, or of beloved and death, appear linked, as if by some mysterious spell! And beyond the theme of death with the visage of the beloved, they join the theme of birth - of awakening-roses out of sleep-snows, both mysteriously united in the poignant image of the roses falling in snow, on She who at the same time dreams and awakens, asleep in her father's garden.

The taboo may well inculcate the repulsion of death, its incompatibility with life as with love! One must believe that it goes against a deeply rooted knowing, or an impulse as powerful as it is secret, so that with such tenacity what must be separated at all costs seems to want to merge together, taking for that purpose the roundabout ways of the symbol and of the dream, through the songs and myths passed on from generation to generation, from century to century.

No doubt numerous scholarly volumes have been written on the subject of these troubling amalgams, trying to somehow exorcise them. Notwithstanding such efforts, which surely also exist "somewhere" within each of us, the deep meaning of these tenacious associations is perceived well and truly - at least at times when we do not deliberately close ourselves to the emotion within us that welcomes these messengers, speaking to us about ourselves in the elusive and powerful language of dreams.

This "deep meaning" is revealed to us again, directly and with elemental force, by the experience of love, provided that we dare to live it fully and listen to its obvious message. It then speaks to us of the mystery of death and birth, indissolubly linked in the Act that passes on/[*transmet*] life and renews the lovers.

No doubt I am not the first person in whom this "deeply rooted knowing" has risen from the obscure depths where it had long been exiled, to become fully conscious and to permeate all the more strongly my relationship to death and to life, to the world and to myself. I have the impression, however, that written and published testimonies of such knowing on a conscious level must be rare. The only ones I have seen so far are three or four stanzas from Tao Te King by Lao Tzu(\*).

On the other hand (and somewhat paradoxically), I also have the impression that the "love-death" amalgam must, at some point, end up becoming a kind of romantic cliché, a very safe "cream pie" to draw a self-indulgent tear from even the most reluctant eyes. It is a fact that the process, in the end, has been struck by disrepute - so much so, alas, that even among people of delicate sensibility, there is a tendency sometimes to confuse pure gold with its crude tinplate counterfeits. There are those who see old-fashioned and even ridiculous airs in places where there is a lively and fine perception of a hidden reality, and a delicate expression, foreign to all "fashion". A consensus of "good taste" comes to the aid of inner resistances of all kinds, which automatically block the eruption of any lively and authentic emotion, whether joy or sorrow, pleasure or torment, that comes to shake up the familiar routine.

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\* (30 October) I came across these passages from Tao Te King in late 1978. It was a striking, entirely unexpected confirmation, of things that I had felt strongly (some for a long time, some only recently...), and which I seemed to be alone in feeling that way. This "encounter" was experienced as a great joy, a silent exultation. This joy, this exultation carried the gestation and the writing of Eulogy of the Incest in the following six or seven months. The conception took place in the days or weeks following this encounter. On a more modest or humble diapason, I have felt a similar joy these last few days, in "recognising" the emotion that had animated an anonymous poet (dead for centuries) when he sang of those roses that fall in snow, born absurdly, miraculously from the "lauter Nichts/[*pure nothingness*]" - from the "pure emptiness, pure nothingness"; or to put it better, in rediscovering, through my own intimate experience, that same emotion, sign of a same knowing. This is the same knowing that is also found in the Tao Te King, over more than four millennia - with the difference that in the Chinese text, this knowing is expressed in the pictorial/[*imagé*], but by no means symbolic language of a highly awakened consciousness, and not in the language of dreams (which is also the code-language of the deep layers of the psyche).

The content that I recognised in these few stanzas of Tao Te King obviously escaped the translators of the five or six different versions (in French, in German and in English) that I have had in my hands. I am not surprised. Such messages, expressions of an understanding that goes against millennia of conditioning, communicate their true meaning (beyond the words and images used to express it) only to those who already know it through what they have assimilated from their own experience, or to those in whom the work of assimilation is ongoing and who are already close by...

It is also the same mechanism that so often blocks the original force of the game of love and its orgasmic outcome. Fortunately, the mere fact that they remain hidden, banished from the field of consciousness, does not in any way prevent the archetypes that animate the love impulse from being present - from making that which must disappear vanish and disappear, so that the meaning of the game of love can be expressed and fulfilled, and so that the final act can be a creative act, a renewal. But often a secret fear also blocks the very "pleasure" that we think we are seeking, frightened as we are by the very near presence of an unknown and formidable force, which risks (if we do not see to it...) sweeping away like a wisp of straw the One in us who at all costs wants to keep "control". Such a fear cannot tolerate the possibility that the pleasure never approaches the threshold of poignant intensity where it is both pleasure and torment, united to each other in a long and intolerable embrace that seeks deliverance, to finally resolve itself and sink into orgasmic nothingness... (\*)

(27 October) I believe I have understood the secret message of songs and dreams like "This day again and tomorrow...", in the essential that is common to them. The question then remains: what is this force that pushes with such insistence to give voice to this "deeply rooted knowing", which is certainly more ancient than our species; to express it against all odds, notwithstanding the vigilance of the surly and narrow-minded Censor, by breaking with constraints [*prenant la clef des champs*] and giving free rein to the symbolic language of the dream, with its unlimited resources?

If the myths, the songs and the dreams tirelessly breathe into us the same message with innumerable visages, it is also true that the prisoner to whom they are addressed never tires of hearing them! He is a voluntary prisoner, of course, and he doesn't care to listen. He is frustrated with air, space and light, and yet reassured by the four walls that surround an existence without any great surprises or mysteries, except perhaps death, which is at the end, infinitely far away... His prison protects him from the Unknown which is beyond these walls and which he pretends to ignore. At the same time it frightens and fascinates him. It is because the Beyond of its walls frightens him, and that his prison-refuge is dearer to him than life. And yet it fascinates and attracts him, against his will, just as the messengers, who come from time to time to tell him about it, attract and fascinate him. And sometimes he gives in to this unusual attraction, as long as it is in secret from the Censor - the General Supervisor: while he listens casually, he is nevertheless "[*pouce*]" - he has heard nothing and, above all, listened to nothing!

The question I was asking myself just now seems to have disappeared, overshadowed by a compelling image. It reappears, as soon as I remember the effect of the message - that emotion that comes before the message, and the benefit of that emotion.

But the truth is that every emotion that touches a deep chord is a messenger from the Beyond of the four walls, a messenger from the wide. Even though we would endeavour to erase all traces of it in the next moment, it is

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\* (28 October) It is this same fear, manifesting itself as a kind of refusal of pleasure, which at the same time pushes one to isolate pleasure from the whole of the experience of love, in order to reduce the latter to its finality (sometimes tacit, sometimes clearly expressed). "Love" is then reduced to a "search for pleasure" - in short, to an exchange of courtesies between two partners, like inviting each other to dinner in four-star restaurants, if not to the Folies Bergère. This "pleasure", timidly kept on a leash, is as foreign to the original impulse as dry paint chips, scraped off a painting by the hand of the Master, would be to the painting; or as a hairdryer is foreign to the great wind of the open sea, charged with the perfumes of the sea and the land...

beneficent, it has already left its trace, like a delicate perfume - as if these sullen walls had moved away just a little; or as if through some unsuspected opening had reached us, in an aseptic air, some whiff, however small, of the scents of the woods and fields.

(28 October) It is somewhat against my will that, for the last two weeks, the reflection has been taking a direction that was not at all foreseen, without any apparent link with the theme of the Burial, or even (it might seem) with my own person. I know deep down that this is not the case, that I continue to be involved in these notes as much and more than ever. This does not prevent me from being torn between the desire to "bring it to an end", and the desire to delve into what is glimpsed from day to day, to follow the most compelling associations - a desire which is also linked to the concern to not let anything escape which might shed light on my "investigation" into the Burial. What seems the most distant is sometimes also the most intimately close...

The fact remains that for the past two weeks, if not already since I resumed writing after the illness-incident, I have had the impression (a bit painful at times) of doing things "straight away [*dans la foulée*]", hastily; as if each new note was another parenthesis that I opened (in front of an imaginary reader who would cry for mercy) and that I had to close up as soon as possible! It is surely these dispositions, perhaps even more than the unusual visit of quite a few friends to my home in the last few weeks, which are responsible for my hasty writing, which is a bit muddled at times. I had to go back little by little, cleanly retype most of the notes I had written recently. This has further contributed to slowing down the progress, and to holding up my impatience to see the work move forward!

It is also true that these themes which I sometimes pretend to want to treat straight away, as if they were "well known" which I would take the trouble to explain only for the sake of my conscience and for the benefit of a reader who has just "landed" - these themes are both too delicate, and too far-reaching, to bear such casual dispositions. I couldn't help but realise this as the pages went by, and to "rectify the course [*rectifier le tir*]", I mean to readjust my inner attitude, under the pressure of the weight, if one may say so, of what I pretended to be able to tackle on the sly!

This reminds me that this long reflection on yin and yang, in which I have been engaged for nearly four weeks and which is by no means finished yet, is in fact only the clarification of an instantaneous intuition, which seemed to me quite simple, not to say obvious; an intuition that came "in flash" the day after May 12, when I had just written the first note on a certain "Funeral Eulogy". When I resumed the writing of this note, a month ago(\*), willing to follow this association of these ideas, in preference to others that seemed to me of lesser interest, I foresaw that it would commit me to five or six additional pages, at the very most. Now I have gone over sixty...

Yesterday I had been pondering on the question of the meaning of the symbolic evocation of the links between love and death, or between death and birth, or life and death - and also of the meaning of the emotion that such an evocation arouses in us. What is the force at work in the myth, or the song or the dream, that pushes them to "tirelessly breathe into us the same message with innumerable visages", - and what is the force in us, voluntary prisoners of reassuring prisons, that so often responds to them with this emotion, going ahead of the evocation

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\* In the note "The muscle and the gut (yang buries yin (1))", n° 106.

and showing that it "hit the bull's eye", that it touched where it wanted to touch? And also: where does this strange power of the language of dreams come from, the language that evokes without naming, that communicates what no other language can communicate?

To pursue these questions is also to probe further the role of the love impulse as well as that of the dream, and the deep links that link them up; each nourishing the other and being nourished by it, each expressing itself, and communicating with the other, through a language that is common to them and that escapes the Censor. It is also to probe further the role of archetypes and symbols in the love impulse, and that of the "symbolic" satisfactions of the impulse.

Really, all this is taking me far beyond the limits of what I can reasonably hope to "fit" into this "digression" on yin and yang, carrying on (it's time I remembered) right in the middle of a certain Funeral Ceremony! It seems time to leave this new "thread" there, and to return to another "thread" left in abeyance three days ago(\*), which then brings me back to my own person.

### **(115) Angela - or the goodbye and the farewell**

(30 October) For the past day or two, a few lines have been running through my head from a poem I wrote three years ago. I wrote it first in German, and the next day continued in French. It was the first two stanzas that had come up - the third and last seemed to have been erased from memory, except for the first line "Ein Kreis schliesst sich" - "A circle is perfected". (And apart from the last line, which repeated the one in the first stanza). When I woke up last night, my thoughts returned to it again, and I finally got up to look through my papers. I found the poem again without any trouble - for some things storage is good! Here it is.

Fruit dense  
mûr et lourd  
ma vie se penche  
pour le retour  
en Elle

Les sucs doux et épais  
m'ont imprégné  
ont fleuri  
fragiles fleurs de lait  
devenues fruit et vin

Un cercle se parfait -  
de mon giron  
monte douceur  
décrit ses orbes  
et en sourdine se penche

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\* In the note "Paradise Lost" (n° 116), placed after the present note (n° 114).

pour retourner  
en Elle. . .

This is, I believe, the only poem I have written where the thought of death(\*) is clearly present. Here it appears under the name "Elle". In the original version of the day before, it was referred to by the German word "Erde", the earth. The "translation" of the three stanzas in German is far from literal; the first stanza came as follows:

Voll und schwer  
rei fe Frucht  
neigt sich me in Leben  
gen Ende  
Der Erde zu

Die sussen Säfte  
die mich durchtränken  
haben geblüht  
weiche Blilten und wurden Frucht und Wein

Ein Kreis schliesst sich  
aus meinem Schoss  
steigt Süsse  
kreist  
und neigt sich  
gen Ende  
der Erde zu. . .

In the end, as I was just rewriting the original German version, I couldn't stop myself from writing it all the way through, so much so that the next two stanzas seemed to flow spontaneously from the first! These three stanzas are for me a love poem (I have hardly written any other poems than love poems). If this one is addressed to someone other than myself, it is to Her - to Her who silently waits, ready to welcome me...

On the same day I wrote two other poems, one before and one after. They were addressed to a "beloved" in flesh and blood, Angela, "the Angel" - a tall, slender, blonde girl, all that was alive, whom I had met the week before, on the road vibrating with summer heat, where she was hitchhiking. In an hour or two we had had time to say a lot to each other, and we parted after that. I would have liked to give her those poems she had inspired, including another one written the same evening I had met her, and then another one (still in German, our common language), which came the day after the "three (almost) all at once". And I also wish we had loved each other... But I lost track of her, as she must have lost mine.

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\* I should rather write: the thought of my death. Two poems (of a few lines each) written in 1957, the year of my mother's death, are imbued with the presentiment of this death.

One thing the poems that this encounter has given rise to have in common, is that each is either very strongly "yang" or very strongly "yin". They are some of the most intense I have written, and each came in one go, almost without retouching - as if they had been there all ready and had only waited for the signal of this encounter to take shape in tangible words.

At first sight it may seem strange to find among these poems charged with intense erotic tension, this other poem in autumnal tones, about to enter the long sleep of winter. But it can only surprise those who do not feel the deep connection that unites the erotic impulse and the feeling of death. There was, in those days of solitude, an intense perception of life, amplified by the erotic emotion and by the profusion of archetypal images that underlie it - and at the same time, the serene detachment of a fully lived life approaching its end, ready to "return to Her".

Such dispositions of communion with death, our silent Mother, felt as a friend and very close, are surely favoured by a state of great fatigue of the body, bringing us back to things simple and essential: our body, the love, the death... Here, I was coming out of a "long period of mathematical frenzy", about which I have already spoken in the introduction to *Harvest and Sowing* (\*). I was just beginning to recover from a state of physical exhaustion in which this somewhat insane period had left me. It had just come to an end (as suddenly as it had come) under the impact of a dream-parable of lapidary force, whose message I was well willing to listen to(†). These were days of availability, of listening - a "sensitive period" of an intermediary wave: behind me a long and ample "mathematical" wave, and in front of me a no less ample "meditation" wave which was already announcing itself... It was to gain momentum ten days later, with that other dream whose account opens the introduction to *Harvest and Sowing*, that vision of myself "as I am".

These were weeks of intense inner work, of silent gestation, of change. And these love poems, different in tone from all those I had written before, are a fruit and a testimony of this intensity, of this fullness.

They are also the last love poems I ever wrote. Perhaps there was a prescience in me that this was the last time that I would be in love, and that the great fireworks of songs for the beloved would unfold! A prescience that these poems addressed to an unknown girl, whose beauty I could feel intensely without having known her, were at the same time a farewell to the songs of love and to the women I had loved - a farewell to my passion for love which was finishing to be consumed in this sparkling flame [*gerbe étincelante*], and which was going to leave me. And, even more secretly and deeply, that it was a farewell (or a goodbye, perhaps) to all women, merging and becoming One under a new visage. A more distant visage perhaps, drowned in mists, at the other end of the road - but at the same time very close, and very sweet...

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\* See "Dream and fulfilment", especially page (iii). The "period of frenzy" in question extends from February to June 1981. It is also that of the "long march through Galois theory" (see "The legacy of Galois", n° 7). It leads to a long period of meditation on my relationship to mathematics (see the sections "The troublemaker boss - or the pressure cooker" and "The Guru-not-Guru - or the three-legged horse" n°s 43 and 45). This one runs from 19 July to December 1981. The poems to Angela (and the poem to "Her") are from 8 and 9 July (except the very first one, dated 1 July ).

† See the beginning of footnote n° 45, quoted in the previous footnote.



## 2.5 Refusal and acceptance

### (116) Paradise lost

(25 October)(\*) Three days have passed again without me finding the time to continue the momentum of my work. The first day, Monday, was taken up mainly by a visit from Pierre with his daughter (aged two) Nathalie, whom I saw off late in the evening to catch the night train to Orange. It will be time in a few more days to take stock of what this visit brought me - a visit that I was not counting on anymore... For the moment, I prefer to continue the thread of my freewheeling reflection on yin and yang.

This reflection may seem like a philosophical digression, suddenly bursting into a certain investigation[*enquête*] where it would have no relevance - except that it emerged unannounced from some vague associations of ideas around a certain Funeral Eulogy... However, I do feel that it is precisely with this "digression" that I am beginning to go beyond the stage of uncovering all the "raw facts" that make up The Burial(†), in order to finally approach, if only slightly, the forces at work, behind acts and behaviours that seem strangely aberrant... It is surely no coincidence that it is precisely through this "digression" that I was also led, without having planned it, to involve my own person in a deeper way than at any other moment of Harvest and Sowing. This is one of the unexpected fruits of the recent illness episode, which occurred at a time when I was preparing to nimbly bring the investigation I had been carrying on for the past seven weeks to its very close conclusion...

This "digression", therefore, in which some will see a kind of intimate confession, and others a metaphysical speculation, is for me (more than any other part of Harvest and Sowing) lying at the very heart of the Burial, at the heart of the conflict. It is only the perspective that has changed, the "point of view" from which the thing is looked at - but at once changed in such a drastic way, that the thing we had just been looking at seems to suddenly disappear! We will not be long, I believe, in regaining the contact that might have seemed lost along the way, with the "news story"[*fait divers*] the Burial.

But one can also forget the news story, whose main merit will then have been to arouse the "digression"...

Part of yesterday was spent retyping the draft of the previous note, written four days ago, which I finally named "Our Mother the Death - or the Act". Much of that draft was quite heavily crossed out, a sign that the wording had remained a bit muddled, while some important and delicate themes had entered the reflection a bit "indirectly"[*par la bande*], in the stride towards something else. To tell the truth, when I started this note I was

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\* (1 November) This note predates the two preceding ones, written between 26 and 30 October, which form a direct continuation and deepening of the one immediately preceding it, "The Act" (n° 113, of 21 October). Instead, the present note is related to the end of the note of 17 October (n° 112) which precedes the latter, namely "The half and the whole - or the crack". From the latter onwards, the reflection had thus split into two parallel tracks: the one (on the feeling of death and its link to the love impulse) continuing in the three notes (presented as consecutive) 113, 114, 115, and the other initiated with the present note n° 116.

† (14 November) This assertion made "in the stride"[*dans la foulée*] is not well thought out, and is only partially founded. For a more detailed and nuanced overview, see the note "Retrospective of a meditation - or the three parts", of a painting", n° 127.

mainly intending to pick up the thread of the previous note, baptised "The half and the whole - or the crack", written just a week ago. But in the end this thread still remains unfinished, and it's finally about time I picked it up again.

For this note too, I had to retype a good part of the text, for essentially the same reasons, rectifying clumsiness and obscurities along the way. This is the beginning of a reflection on the division in the couple, intimately linked to the division in the person, and more precisely to what I called (in the note "the Act" of four days ago) the "vertical cut": it "cuts", or subtracts, one of the yin or yang "halves" of the original "whole" in us.

At a level that now remains that of an intuitive, non-verbalised understanding, I "understand", it is "clear" to me, that it is the division within the person himself (a division created from scratch, it seems, by conditioning) that is the root cause of the conflict that is omnipresent in human society; whether it be the conflict within the couple or the family, or the conflict within larger groups or the conflict of such groups against other ones, right up to the armed confrontation of peoples and nations against one another. The conflict in the couple, which opposes two antagonistic types against each other, distinct and easily recognisable as such, could not without reason appear as the fundamental parable, as the elementary, irreducible, of conflicts in human society. The "point" of the reflection "The crack" was above all to bring the case of the conflict within the couple back to this other more fundamental, still more "elementary" one: that of the conflict in each person himself, which opposes a "part" of himself to another part.

In the perspective of this reflection of seven days ago, it was natural to think first of all the conflict between the yin and yang "parts" in us, one of the two being accepted and duly put forward and inflated, the other rejected and repressed in a more or less complete way. I had in mind, however, that there were still other antagonisms in the person, linked to other taboos than that of the univocity of sex. It is true that this last taboo, just as strong as that of incest, is even more insidious because of the obviousness with which it is clothed, which seems to dispense with even the care of formulating or naming it, so much so that it seems to be taken for granted! Without having yet taken the care to ensure it step by step, I have the impression (since the reflection of the Eulogy) that this taboo is the most crucial of all; that the division or "cut" that it institutes in the person is the ultimate root of each of the multiple aspects of the inveterate division in the human person. To clarify carefully to what extent this is so, would be a most attractive starting point, surely, for a "voyage to the discovery of conflict". But this is not the place for me to embark on it - not to mention that for the voyages that lie before me, for which I am destined, I see more burning points of departure than this one...

While retyping out the text of this note "The half and the whole - or the crack", I also realised that I had not thought when writing it to explain in any way why I saw the conflict in the person as the deepest cause of the conflict in the couple, and of the conflict in society. This is something which, as I said earlier, is part of the things I have "understood" (without ever having had to "explain" them to myself so far), which have been taught to me and confirmed by the silent and eloquent language of a thousand small daily facts, over days and

years(\*). I'm not saying that it's pointless to make explicit or "explain" here the "why" and the "how", whether in a few pages, or in imposing volumes perhaps. And no doubt a few pages on this subject, here, would be no more and no less "misplaced" than any other page on yin and yang and on conflict, which has already found its place in these notes. Surely I would learn a lot of things there, as I would also learn a lot by pursuing this other theme of reflection, on the conflict instituted in us between yin and yang as the ultimate cause of the division in us. Besides, one of these themes visibly prolongs the other, which makes both of them even more tempting! However, it is not in this very direction that I want to pursue now, if at all. This is not the "thread" that for a week now I have been wanting to pick up on above all, and which still remains unfinished.

When I finished the reflection in this note(†), a week ago, I suddenly felt very happy and cheerful: the reflection had unexpectedly reconnected with something important, which I had somewhat lost sight of in the previous days: the acceptance. It was through the negative bias that this contact was re-established, by virtue of the word that ends this reflection as an unexpected climax - the word "unacceptable". It is because a whole "side" of our person is rejected as "unacceptable" by those around us, and first and foremost, by our parents who set the tone (or by those who take their place, when parents are defaulting) - it is through this non-acceptance that the conflict settles in us. The conflict, the division within us is nothing other than our abdication of a repudiated part of ourselves - the abdication of our undivided nature. This abdication is the price we pay, that we must pay, to be "accepted" somehow by those around us. This very "acceptance" is actually not an acceptance in the full sense of the word, an acceptance of who we really are. It is, rather, the reward for our submission to certain norms, for having conformed and moulded ourselves according to them - the reward, in short, for a deformation, a mutilation of our being, to the image undergone [*à l'image de celle subie*] from their youth by those around us.

In the reflection of the previous notes, the question of acceptance was mentioned twice, and both times acceptance appeared as a crucial thing, the first time it was in the note "The innocence (The nuptials of yin and yang)" (n° 107), where I took up an observation that goes back to a meditation of four years ago: that the blossoming and full development of an undivided force in me could take place in the context of a family torn apart by conflict and latent hatred, only because I was fully accepted by my parents and by those around me, the conflict did not settle in my being until later, after the age of five, in a much more "peaceful" surrounding than my birth family. The conflict among people around was certainly far from reaching (at least in my time) such a

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\* This "understanding" or conviction is not really contradicted, it seems to me, by the observation that I have made many times, that the division in the couple formed by the mother and the father, and the antagonistic attitudes which express it, leave a deep mark on the child, and often dominate the attitudes and behaviour of the adult. It is surely justified to say that to a large extent at least, the division in us is the mark and legacy of the division which, in the days of our childhood, opposed our mother to our father. Thus, the question of whether the division in the person is more fundamental or "basic" than that in the couple, or reversely, may seem a bit like the issue of whether the chicken comes out of the egg or the egg from the chicken!

I am convinced however that in a couple where one of the spouses would be "one", not in conflict with himself, and even though his spouse would maintain an antagonistic attitude towards him, the conflict would not be transmitted to the couple's children. The reason for this conviction, I believe, is that the child in this case would be totally accepted by one of the parents. The appearance of division in the young child seems to me to be nothing more or less than the effect of the rejection of a part of his being by those around him, and first and foremost, by his two parents.

† The note "The half and the whole - or the crack", n° 112.

heightened intensity (even if veiled) as in my family of origin. However, in my family of origin my own person remained outside the conflict. Even though I sometimes took sides, this was not a rupture, it was the spontaneous expression of a being who was not divided, who had never known the bite of rejection by his own people, and of the fear of rejection.

I realise now, with half a century's hindsight, that in my new environment, this force of innocence in me still exerted a radiance, a kind of fascination I would say; like that of a lost paradise, infinitely faraway, for which one would be nostalgic throughout one's life and which, suddenly, calls out to us through the voice and eyes of a child. It attracted strong and lasting affections to me, which followed me into my adult life and until the death of those who loved me for it(\*). But at the same time, it was obvious that this very force could not be tolerated - any more than one would tolerate being in a neatly lined pleasure garden, with its vigorous and exuberant trees or bushes, which one believes he loves while stubbornly pruning it into the shape of a cube, a cone or a sphere...

According to my reconstruction of events(†), this very force held out for perhaps two years, two years and a half, before plunging deep, relegated to the underground, after I had finally decided to be and do like everyone else: all muscle all brains as you can imagine and so much for the tripe - and to have peace! I ended up following suit, I rejected and renounced (by ignoring it) everything that had to be rejected and ignored, by the unfailing consensus of all the adults around me. And also by the consensus of my parents themselves, who had almost stopped giving signs of life, living their true love as far away as possible from their children...

### **(116') The circle**

(1 November) I am resuming the thread interrupted exactly one week ago, when I unexpectedly (on 26 October) launched into a kind of "poetic digression" on the feeling of death in love and in the love song.

I have just reread the previous pages of 25 October and retyped out the last one. It seems to me that a circle is closing, the course of which began a fortnight ago, with the note "Ecllosion of the force - or the nuptials" (n° 107). This course ends with the preceding pages, which take up again and amplify the final "climax" of the note of 17 October, "The half and the whole - or the crack" (n° 112). This climax, or "final word" that closes the reflection of that day, is summed up in the categorical imperative of the final word, the word "unacceptable".

This fine word seems to me to perfectly encapsulate, among the disconcerting multitude of conditionings of all kinds that have shaped our lives, the determining cause of the division in us: it is the non-acceptance, the rejection of our own person, in the first years of our life(‡). It takes the form of the non-acceptance, of the rejection of certain forces and impulses within us, which are an essential part of our being, of our power of knowing and creating. Their repression, taken over on our own account by the care of an anxious and

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\* I see seven people who have given me their affection in this way, only one of whom is still alive today.

† I made this reconstruction of the key events of my childhood in March 1980.

‡ My own case was exceptional in this respect, as I was not exposed to such attitudes from my immediate environment until I was six years old.

implacable inner Censor, is a mutilation of this power in us. Often its effect is that of a genuine paralysis of our creative faculties(\*).

This unacceptable power, or these "faculties", are also nothing other than the humble capacity to be ourselves. It also means living our own life, through the humble and full use of our own faculties, rather than a stereotyped, programmed life, driven above all (and often exclusively) by reflexes of repetition, of imitation. These enclose us and isolate us like a heavy, stiff and impermeable carapace, from which we would never be able to separate ourselves(†).

The carapace was formed in our early years, becoming thicker as the years went by. Its initial function was undoubtedly to protect us from aggression (often well-intentioned) by those close to us, to ensure that they would tolerate us more or less benevolently. But this carapace however not only protect us from the outside world - it also has, and more profoundly and essentially perhaps, the function of isolating us, of protecting us from ourselves: from this knowing and this force within us, declared "unacceptable", having no place to be, by the silent consensus that makes law around us. It was in our childhood, and has become more and more over the years, a two-sided carapace, one "exterior", the other "interior". They protect the "I", the "Boss", on the one hand from the aggressions he fears from the outside world (and he tends to become more timid with each passing year!), and on the other hand, above all, from the disturbing and inadmissible fantasies and incongruities of the "Worker"; the bad kid, to put it better, totally impossible to predict, still disturbing even though he is kept at a distance by a triple layer of thick horn, guaranteed to be resistant to fire and water...

(2 November) After the note "The innocence" (n° 107), highlighting the role my acceptance by my immediate environment played over the course of my early years, there was also a second moment where "acceptance" and "non-acceptance" were at the centre of the reflection. This was in "The acceptance - or the yang in the yin," (note n° 110), where I made a partial assessment of the changes that had taken place in me since the day of the "reunion" with the child king. They go in the direction of a gradual "return" to a "state of childhood".

This return is by no means a "regression" to a previous state, which would have the virtue of erasing the traces in me, the traveller, of the path that was mine. It is only through the ripening/mûrissement], the fruit of inner work, that we can regain contact with an innocence that seemed to have disappeared, with a child in us that seemed long dead and buried. And there is no maturation that is not also a slight return - a return to the child, and to the simplicity, to the innocence of the child. Thus a life fully lived is like a cycle that is still "perfecting" itself; it is old age returning to childhood, it is maturity returning to innocence - and ending in a death, perhaps, that prepares for a new birth, as a winter prepares for a new spring...

In this sort of "assessment" of a path of return that is not completed, it appeared that the "end word" was acceptance, just as the end word of my path of rupture, of the path of departure, was that of non-acceptance, of rejection, of refusal. My maturation was nothing other than the process, the inner work, by which I gradually accepted, welcomed, the things in me that for a long time I had refused, eliminated as best I could, ignored.

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\* (2 November) Often also, and more ostensibly, it manifests itself in "blocking" effects - the inability both to "function" in a given situation in which we are engaged, and to disengage from that dead-end situation...

† Except for the hours of sleeping and dreaming, when the carapace lightens: sometimes even disappears...

This is by no means a "cusp", a path travelled once that I would retravel again in the opposite direction; a "regression" therefore, to reuse the expression used earlier. It is rather like the upper arc of a circle, extending and continuing the lower line already traced, born from it, becoming like its nourishing base, and the springboard of a new leap[*élan*]...

(3 November) Yesterday's notes ended with an unexpected image, which arose from my thoughts without my having called it. I welcomed it with some reluctance at first, out of concern that the vision of reality that the image in turn immediately suggested would be artificial; that the image would "force my hand" and make me say things that would be "far-fetched". But once the last lines were written and I stopped for a few moments, I knew that I had put my finger on an unexpected and important aspect of a certain reality; an aspect that I may have known, but not fully assimilated, an aspect that I tend to neglect, or forget.

For many years (118) I have had the tendency to value what goes in the direction of "acceptance", and on the contrary to see in a mostly negative light what goes in the direction of a "refusal". Without it always being clearly expressed, perhaps, I felt these two types of attitudes, the acceptance and the refusal, to be "contraries", "opposites", one of which would be "good" for myself and for all, and the other "bad".

In this informal way of apprehending things, I remained prisoner (without realising it, of course) of the perennial "dualistic" vision of things, the one I had also previously called the "warlike" vision, which opposes as antagonists things that a deeper vision reveals to us as complementary and inseparable aspects of the same reality. When I began (on 25 October, ten days ago) the present reflection on acceptance and refusal, I had just realised that these are indeed the wife and husband of one of those famous yin-yang "couples" or "cosmic" couples, which have been discussed for a month - since the beginning of this "digression" on yin and yang. So I anticipated that the reflection would focus on this aspect of things. Over the last two days, it seemed to be moving away from it. But now the lines that end yesterday's reflection, with the image of the two arcs of a circle that extend each other, have unexpectedly brought me back to this initial intuition, which had remained unexpressed.

I have had the tendency to see the refusal that dominated my life, from my eighth to my forty-eighth year, in a mostly (if not exclusively) negative light: as a sometimes crushing weight that I carried around for forty years of my life, and from which I finally got rid of (or rather, began to get rid of) in the past eight years. That particular "day" began to reveal itself to me after the discovery of meditation and after the "reunion" with the "child" in me. It was the very moment when I began to discover the process of refusal in my life, expressed in a kind of "superyang conformity". This aspect of things is by no means imaginary. To perceive it where before there was a "blank", a total vacuum, was one of the fruits of the maturation that went on during these eight years. There is, nevertheless, another aspect of the same reality, no less real and important, the "positive" aspect of the "powerful principle of action". This aspect appears for the first time (and very discreetly) in the meditation of 5 October "Yang buries yin - or the Superfather" (n° 108), when I wrote:

"The "I will be like "them""(and not "like me") also meant: I will "bet" on "the head", no worse in me than in anyone else after all, and fight myself and "them" with their own weapons!"

It was this very motivation that was the driving force behind my excessive investment in mathematics from 1945 to 1969 - the force that nourished a impulse/élan of discovery for a quarter of a century(\*). Whether one chooses to see such an investment in a "positive" or "negative" light, what is clear is that, there was indeed impulse, intense action. On the apprenticeship side of life, there was this "sometimes crushing weight", never examined, not to say total stagnation - and this same "weight" at the same time nonetheless fuelled an impulse of knowing, gave it its living force.

Since my "departure" in 1970, I have had the tendency to minimise, and sometimes to deny the "value" that should be attributed to such an impulse, in the direction of a so-called "scientific" discovery and understanding of the external world. I have tried several times, during the course of Harvest and Sowing, to identify the common aspects between such a discovery and self-discovery, and also how they differ(†). It is surely justified to say that the impulse of discovery in a scientific direction (be it biology, or "psychology"...) leads us away from ourselves and from an understanding of ourselves. When the role of such an understanding is fully understood, one might therefore be tempted to see in the impulse of scientific discovery (and in any other that would "take us away from ourselves") an "evil", or at least, an "obstacle" to a maturation, and thus, to a full blossoming of ourselves. (At least in the case, which has been mine for a long time, where this impulse mobilises most, if not all, of the psychic energy.) However, it is also true that everything we experience is raw material for our apprenticeship of life and of ourselves. It is a material that it is up to us to allow to be transformed into knowing, by allowing a work of maturation to begin and to continue within us. This is also why I do not regret anything I have experienced, seeing in the end that "everything is good, and there is nothing to throw away"; including also the deserts of long periods of spiritual stagnation, which were the price I paid without skimping (and with my eyes closed...) for my excessive investments in a devouring passion. Now I see that these very deserts had something to teach me, that perhaps only they could teach. I couldn't have done without it - at most perhaps I could have started this "second arc" of the circle after a few years, which I had been pushing off for several decades.

It is also on this very day that it appears that the acceptance of myself and of others, which was born and developed in the years of my maturity, was "nourished" by the refusals that had marked the longest part of my life - this "lower arc" of the circle mentioned yesterday, and its "nourishing base". Certainly, in the first six years of my life, there was a total acceptance of myself, which had no need of previous "refusals" in order to be, and to unfold and assert itself. On the contrary, its blossoming could take place precisely because it was not countered, not cut by the scissors of a certain refusal. But this "acceptance" that was in me as a child is not "the same" as that of my mature age. It lacked a dimension, which the mere acceptance of my person, by those who had surrounded my childhood, could not have given it. It was a knowing of the refusal, the rejection of myself (or a part of myself) by others, or by myself. This knowing came to me through the experience of refusal, and also through the experience of contempt, which is one of its many faces.

Perhaps some people are born with a knowing, an understanding of refusal, which allows them to remain one, innocent and knowing, despite the refusals their childhood is exposed to. I know very well that this was not my

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\* It was, more exactly, the egotic component of this momentum, the egotic "factor" of this "living force".

† See especially the sections "Desire and meditation", "The forbidden fruit", "The solitary adventure", nos 36, 46, 47.

case. I could not avoid the experience of refusal and contempt by others and by myself, as a breeding ground for the blooming of an understanding (however imperfect) of refusal, and of contempt.

### **(117) The spouses - or the enigma of "Evil"**

I have just probed an unexpected aspect of the relationship between refusal and acceptance in my own life, which had appeared unexpectedly in yesterday's reflection. The "refusal" in question here is not, however, a refusal in the full sense of the word; I mean, a fully assumed refusal - not even close. This refusal was also a long flight from the thing refused. It consisted in not seeing it, in ignoring it, and thus, to a certain extent, in making it disappear from the field of my conscious apprehension and also, from the field visible to others. It was the cause and the outcome of a state of disharmony, of disequilibrium - in this case, a "superyang" disequilibrium, which marked my adulthood, and of which certain crucial mechanisms remain in action even today. This "refusal" therefore does not appear here in any way in a role of symmetry, or even yang-yin complementarity, opposite to the "acceptance" (of myself and of others) discussed earlier. The latter, on the contrary, is part of a process of getting to know myself, and goes in the direction of the restoration of a disturbed harmony. It is therefore an acceptance "in full knowing of the facts", an acceptance in the full sense of the word - and not another flight, in the opposite direction to the flight sometimes called "refusal".

There is a more obvious relationship between "refusal" and "acceptance" than the one probed earlier. It appears when both are taken "in the full sense of the word". They are then simultaneous and complementary aspects of the same harmony, of the same fully assumed attitude. (Whereas sometimes they were two consecutive aspects of a path or a progression, passing through a state of disequilibrium, of disharmony, in order to move towards a renewed equilibrium). From this point of view, there is no "true" acceptance, which would exclude the refusal, which would close itself to it. And there is no "true" refusal that is not born of acceptance, that is not a tangible manifestation of it; that is not one of the two "faces" - the "yang" face - of the same indivisible thing that has two faces, and whose "yin" or "mother" face is acceptance(\*).

An "acceptance" which excludes refusal is not an acceptance, but an indulgence [*complaisance*] (to others or to oneself, or both), or a complicity or connivance (when it comes to the "acceptance" of others). Total acceptance of a being, be it oneself or another, does not in any way mean unconditional approval of one's actions, habits and inclinations. Such unconditional approval is in itself a flight, a refusal to take cognisance of an (often eloquent) reality, and by no means an acceptance. Far from creating a "force field" conducive to renewal, to regaining contact with a forgotten unity, it reinforces an inertia, and contributes to keeping one in a rut.

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\* It is interesting to note that this "natural" distribution of yin-yang roles in the acceptance-rejection couple (expressed in French by the feminine and masculine genders of the two terms of the couple) is reversed in the image that had spontaneously presented itself to me at the end of the previous day's reflection. That there can be such reversals is not that surprising - just as in a woman-man lover [*amante-amant*] couple, whose love relationship is not fixed, there cannot fail to be moments when in the love game the roles are reversed, to give free rein to the "yang" erotic impulses that live in the woman lover, and the "yin" erotic impulses that live in the man lover. I already discussed the importance of such occasional role reversals, in the note "The acceptance (the yang in the yin)" (n° 110, last paragraph of the first part of this note).



A refusal that is not at the same time an opening, that is not also like a hand (or "a perch") extended to others, or like a surge/*sursaut* that marks a point of rupture and renewal in one's relationship to oneself - such a "refusal" is really a cut, that "cuts" and isolates both the one who refuses, and the one who is refused. It is again a flight, from a reality that is felt to be unpleasant, even disturbing, fraught with threats to our well-established life, to our conveniences - a reality from which we believe we can escape by a cleaver cut: "there is no need for this"... And yet, there is! And our imperative "refusal" in no way prevents things from being what they are, even at the risk of displeasing us. Quite the contrary, like the indulgence of automatic approval, such a refusal reinforces the inertia against creative change, it is like a verdict: unacceptable you are, and as such you will remain...

I don't claim to have the harmony of acceptance and refusal fully achieved in my person. Quite the contrary, I know that this is not the case - and I am not sure that I have met a person who would achieve this harmony. To achieve it, is also to have resolved, in one's own person, the great enigma of "evil": of iniquity, of lies, of wickedness, of spinelessness, of contempt - and of the suffering of those who are struck and who are speechless. It is also, surely, to have fully understood the "good" that is in what an inner surge so often designates to us as "evil".

To refuse the war, while seeing and accepting that it is everywhere and in everyone; that the very people I love carry it within them and propagate it, just as I myself have taken it up, carried it, propagated it and transmitted it. To refuse the war, while accepting that it is there, while loving its innumerable and blind soldiers. This and none other, surely, also means: to have come out of the war, to have come out of the conflict - to have stopped propagating the war.

### **(118) Yang plays the yin - or the role of the Master**

(4 November)(\*) The appearance of this "tendency"(†) occurred in the early 70s, therefore in the years following my "departure" from the mathematical scene. Under the influence of a very different environment and friends than those before, there was a drastic shift in the set of "values" I claimed to hold. In retrospect, I can describe this shift as a passage from a "superyang" or "patriarchal" value system, to an almost opposite one, with a strong "yin" dominance - a "matriarchal" system. Among the influences that played a role in this reversal, there are also some sporadic readings of Krishnamurti - see on this subject the note "Krishnamurti - or liberation turned into hindrance" (n° 41).

If I did allow these influences to play out, which were to bring me to such an "ideological" shift, it is undoubtedly (without realising it at the time) that there was a deep and urgent need for renewal in me, and first and foremost, the need to be freed from the weight of inveterate "superyang" attitudes. This same need had surely already come into play in 1969, when in the midst of intense and fecund mathematical activity, I

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\* This note comes from a footnote to the note "the circle" (n° 116). See the reference at the beginning of the notes of 3 November.

† The tendency to value "acceptance", as opposed to "refusal".

suddenly "dropped out/*décroché*" of maths to take an interest in biology(\*) ; then the following year, leaving (without any spirit of return) the mathematical scene and even scientific research. There was then a sudden and drastic change of environment and activities, which I have had occasion to allude to several times during the course of "Fatuity and Renewal" (the first part of Harvest and Sowing).

However, it would be inaccurate, or only partially true, to consider these spectacular changes of environment, activities and finally "values", as a "renewal", a "liberation". I have already expressed myself clearly on this subject in the section "Encounter with Claude Chevalley - or liberty and good intentions" (n° 11). In the more penetrating light of the present reflection on yin and yang, I can say that the change that probably appears to be the most significant of all, that of yang values evacuated (even before they were spotted in myself, let alone examined) in favour of yin values - this change, however, in no way altered the (superyang) structure of the "self", and at most tempered somewhat the attitudes and behaviours that resulted from it. It is true that my understanding of the outside world had changed considerably, in the sense of a sudden enlargement, but this transformation remained fragmentary, limited almost exclusively to the intellectual level, that of "options". It could not be otherwise, as long as this transformation was limited to my vision of the "outside world", in which my own person did not figure, or figured only incidentally or superficially, mainly through my "social role" and its ambiguities and contradictions. No more than in the past did I have the slightest suspicion that in my own person, there could be ambiguities and contradictions! Quite the contrary, I was animated by an unshakeable conviction that my person, itself, was free of any contradiction (whereas I was nevertheless beginning to discern contradictions in others, almost everywhere around me); and in particular, that there was a perfect agreement between my conscious desires and my conscious knowing of things, on the one hand, and my unconscious (if there was one in my case, if it was not a simple exact copy of my conscious...).

The first crack in this conviction only appeared in the spring of 1974, when I finally understood that something must be wrong in me too, and not only in others, as the cause of this inexorable deterioration of my relations with all those close to me (to which then my life seemed to have been reduced, during my entire adult life). The effects of this salutary crack remained limited at the time, in the absence of a real curiosity towards myself, which would have been a feast to go and look into [*s'y fourrer*], to see what was behind it, and in doing so to see a heavy edifice, made of preposterous and never examined illusions, collapse...

This stubborn blockage of natural curiosity stemmed mainly, surely, from the fact that I had never before encountered such a curiosity in others, which might have made me suspect that in life just as in maths, whenever a problem comes up, there is something to look at and, in the process, learn a lot of unexpected and very useful things - in other words: that there was such a thing as self-discovery. I had read Krishnamurti at the time, and had come to realise that some of the things he said were true, profound and important. So I tended to

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\* I first became interested in it through the end of "molecular biology", under the influence of my biologist friend Mircea Dumitrescu, who had initiated me to this fascinating world.

take him at face value all the way. Pretty much, I had tacitly adopted the Krishnamurtian(\*) worldview. At the time I am talking about, this very baggage did act as a "hindrance" to a real liberation, to a renewal in the full sense of the word. I explained myself on this subject in the note already quoted (which I have reread just now), where I endeavoured to identify the role of the "Teachings" (of Krishnamurti) in my own itinerary.

The first "awakening" in the full sense of the word came only two and a half years later, with the discovery of meditation. It was also the discovery of self-discovery; that there is an unknown thing that is "me", and that I have the power to penetrate this thing, to know it. This crucial discovery was made at a moment when all teaching (with or without a capital letter) was forgotten. It was also the moment when, for the first time, the "edifice", built of received ideas and "teachings" of all kinds, maintained by an immense inertia, collapsed - and the moment also when an active curiosity appeared, often mischievous, always benevolent.

It was after this turning point, with the blossoming in me of a curiosity towards my own person first, and moreover towards "life", as a natural fruit, that I was able to see with new eyes both Krishnamurti and his message. I have learned, with hindsight, to appreciate the richness of the message, and at the same time to discern its limitations and deficiencies, as well as certain fundamental contradictions in the Master ("the Teacher", for his disciples and followers). The heaviest of these deficiencies and contradictions seems to me to be the one I just touched again earlier: it is the absence of any curiosity in the Master himself. There is nothing in his writings to suggest that in remote[*reculés*] days, this vision was born in a person - a person caught, like you and me, in the net of ready-made ideas and contradictions never spotted; that the vision was decanted from error in the course of intense, sometimes painful work, against the current of immense forces of inertia; that the stages of this work, or the "thresholds" crossed in the course of these labours, were so many unexpected discoveries each overturning a whole set of inveterate ideas, perpetuated by the universal mechanisms of imitation, and repetition(†).

All these things, the child was once aware of[*sues*], and even knew[*connues*] them, having lived them intensely. But the Master has forgotten them, and keeps no memory of them. Rather than being a child, who passionately discovers and learns and in discovering transforms himself, he wanted to be the immutable Master who knows, of immutable whole truth[*science infuse*], and who devotes his life to spreading his Teachings, for the benefit of the common mortals. He made himself what his followers and disciples, those who believe in him, wanted him

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\* (5 November) The effect in my life of this "adoption" of a vision, becoming a kind of cultural baggage, has remained very limited. My attention was drawn to certain aspects of reality that had escaped me entirely before, but without engaging in any in-depth work of sorting and assimilation, which would have the power of renewal. If between 1970 and 1976 (between my "departure" from the mathematical scene and the discovery of meditation) Krishnamurti was important in my itinerary, it was not so much because of the "baggage" I borrowed from him, but because he had become (without my knowing it, of course) a tacit model, to which I conformed without wanting to appear to be - the model, in short, of the "Guru-not-Guru", of the Master who defends himself from being one.

† (5 November) These very mechanisms are obviously part of the basic mechanisms of the psyche, in humans as well as in animals. They pre-exist any conditioning, any apprenticeship (like that of language by the young child, and that of almost all the acts of daily life), which could not be established and carried out without them. They were no less present and effective in the young future Master than in anyone else.

to be: the incarnation of a static, repetitive, and thus reassuring message, the apostle of a new ideology. A Guru-not-Guru, in short, as I myself (emulating his example, maybe<sup>(\*)</sup>) was once...

(15 November) I have named the preceding note (of 4 November) "Yang plays the yin - or the Master". As it should be in a meditation on myself, the main name of the note concerns my own person, referring to a certain "game" that I played, however, some years after my departure from the scientific world, in 1970<sup>(†)</sup>. As for the second name "The Master", it can be interpreted indifferently as referring to my person, by a designation of the role or the pose that I held in this game of "yang playing yin", or to that of Krishnamurti, who served as my tacit model.

In fact, the values that emerge from Krishnamurti's books are almost exclusively yin values. At the time of my first reading of Krishnamurti (in 1970 or 1971), it was for the first time that I saw such values put forward, and identified with penetration the limits and flaws of the yang vision of the world which was mine (and that of "everyone else", with similar variations). This is surely the reason for the very strong impression that this reading of a few chapters had made on me. Six or seven years later I also had the opportunity to read the beautiful biography of Krishnamurti by Mrs. Luytens. It confirmed a certain impression of him that was already evident in his books (noting that he never appears in person). Today I would express it by saying that the basic tone in his temperament is strongly yin. In addition, throughout all his writings, we see, as a constant Leitmotif, the emphasis on qualities, attitudes and values with a yin coloration, and the depreciation (explicit or by omission) of qualities, attitudes and values with a yang tonality.

Krishnamurti's life and teachings thus achieve the rather exceptional attitude of "yin buries yang", which is in the opposite direction to the by far more common attitude of "yang buries yin", of which my own life (until at least my forty-eighth year) offers an equally extreme illustration. Krishnamurti's "superyin" options<sup>(‡)</sup> have the great merit of going against the basic values of the surrounding culture. This doesn't prevent them from appearing to me to be no less repressive (of one part of his person by another part) than mine have been.

There is, however, a very pronounced and striking "yang" aspect to Krishnamurti's life, which no doubt was first imposed on him by the role of figurehead, of (future) "spiritual master", decided upon by his prestigious theosophical tutors when he was still a child. Subsequently, after the great turning point in his life marked by discoveries that completely changed his vision of things (discoveries that later became "The Teachings"), this role of "master", or "guide" was (it seems) entirely internalised, taken up again with the propagation of a doctrine that was personal to him, and not taken over from his theosophist masters. This propagation represents an intense, even exhausting activity. It hardly seems to me to be in the direction of an equilibrium of yin and yang, but rather appears to me as a constraint imposed on an eminently contemplative temperament, by an "I" as

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\* (5 November) Certainly, the dubious nuance of this "maybe" is out of place! See on this subject the penultimate footnote written today.

† The moment of the discovery of meditation, in October 1976, marks an abrupt decline in this game, which continues as best it can, on a more discreet register, until 1981, when it is finally detected and defused. See on this subject the already quoted section "The Guru-not-Guru - or the three-legged horse", n° 45.

‡ These "options" undoubtedly go back to his childhood, and more precisely, to his first contacts with his theosophical tutors.

strong and invasive in the master as in anyone else. Seen in this light, the present note "Yang plays yin", which deals mainly with Krishnamurti, and could also be called "Yin plays yang".

Thus, on two occasions and in two different ways, I have played "games" in my life that are like an inversion of attitudes that dominated the life of the person who, at a certain period of my journey, was to become the tacit model of my (equally tacit) brand image, and of certain attitudes and poses in me. But through styles of expression that are the inverse of each other, I now recognise an obvious kinship. One is in the presence of a repression (unconscious, of course), generating a rupture of the natural equilibrium of yin and yang(\*). The other is in the choice of a role, and in the weight of this role, its braking or even blocking effect, in a blossoming, in a maturation, in the progression of an understanding or a knowing. This role (or this pose) was the same for me as for the person who served as my model, from whom I may have simply borrowed it as it was. This is the role of the Master.

## 2.6 The yin and yang mathematics

### (119) The most "macho" of the arts

(5 November) It has been a while since I wanted to talk about yin and yang in mathematics. The two aspects of yin and yang in a mathematical work, or in an approach to mathematics, only appeared to me in the course of the last weeks' reflection on yin and yang. I anticipated that probing this double aspect to some extent in these notes would be the most natural way to "get back to business[*revenir à mes moutons*]", in these notes which are meant to form a retrospective on "a past as a mathematician".

What has been quite clear to me since my first reflections on yin and yang (five years ago), is that "doing maths" is perhaps the most yang, the most "masculine" of all known human activities to this day. In fact, any entirely intellectual activity, such as scientific research in particular and, more generally, any activity commonly described as "research", is an activity with a very strong yang predominance. I was going to write: "marked by a strong yang disequilibrium", and this is indeed the case when this activity absorbs almost all of a person's energy. This yang predominance (or disequilibrium) is shown by the evocation of a good number of yin-yang couples, for which it is clear that it is the yang term above all, not to say exclusively, that is "present" in an intellectual work. I will limit myself to pointing out a few of them, all of which belong to the same "group" (or the same "door to the world[*porte sur le monde*]"), which I call the group "the vague - the precise". (NB in this and the following couples, it is the term yin that comes first).

- sensitivity - sense (or intellect)
- instinct - reflection
- intuition - logic
- inspiration - method
- vision - coherence
- the concrete - the abstract

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\* In this very kinship, we are certainly in very large company!

- the complex - the simple
- the vague - the precise
- dream - reality
- the indefinite - the definite
- the unexpressed - the expressed
- the formless - the formed
- the infinite - the finite
- the unlimited - the limited
- the whole (the totality) - the part
- the global - the local (or the fragmentary).

I have just gone through my yin-yang repertoire, and again found a good bunch of other couples that make one feel the superyang character of pure intellectual activity. I will only mention the first of all those I thought of earlier: the body-mind couple.

Having said this, it seems to me that among the various types of intellectual activity, it is the mathematical work that represents the ultimate extreme-yang. This is undoubtedly due above all to its character of extreme abstraction, to the fact that it is, to a very large extent, independent of any "support" by sensory experience and a rational observation of the external world, I mean the world in which we live and where our bodies move. This extreme character in abstraction distinguishes mathematics from any other science, and mathematical work from any other intellectual work, to make it a science or a work "of pure reason". In contrast to the experimental and observational sciences, it is also the only science whose results are established by demonstrations in the most rigorous sense of the term, proceeding according to a rigorously codified and in principle infallible method, the so-called "logical" method, in order to arrive at certainities that leave no room for doubt or reservation, or for the possibility of exceptions that would have escaped the cases observed so far. These are all extreme-yang features brought together in mathematical work, and in this work alone.

Certainly these very features had something that attracted me from childhood, I who had opted completely for "the head" and for the extreme yang! (\*) Especially after the experience of the war and the concentration camp, faced with discriminations and prejudices that seemed to defy even the most rudimentary reason, what fascinated me most about mathematical activity (from the little that I was able to know of in my high school years), was the power it gave me, by virtue of a simple demonstration, to win over the support of even the most reserved, to force the assent of others basically, whether they were well disposed or not - provided only that they accepted the mathematical "rules of the game" like me. These rules, from my first contacts with school mathematics, in 1940 at the lycée in Mende (where I was able to go, while being interned in the Rieucros camp five or six kilometres away), it seemed that I knew them, felt them instinctively, as if I had always known them(†). Surely, I felt them better than the teacher himself, who recited without conviction the commonplaces in use at the time on the difference between a "postulate" (in this case, that of Euclid, the only one of which he and

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\* Except of course for the military and warlike variant, parades, uniforms, chest-high standing to attention [*garde-à-vous au torse bombé*], and impeccably organised massacres and mass graves...

† These first contacts took place shortly after my childish reflections on squaring the circle, mentioned in note n° 69.

we had the good fortune to hear about...) and an "axiom", or "the demonstration" of the three "cases of equality of triangles", by following the textbook as a first communion student would follow his breviary.

Five years later, seduced by the sudden prestige of atomic physics, it was nevertheless for physics studies that I first enrolled at the University of Montpellier, with the idea of initiating myself into the mysteries of the structure of matter and the nature of energy. But I soon realised that if I wanted to initiate into the mysteries, it was not by following courses at the University that I would achieve it, but by working by my own means, alone, with or without books. As I did not have the flair, nor the equipment, to learn physics in this way, I deferred it to a more propitious time. I then started to do maths, while following "from afar" a few courses, none of which could satisfy me, nor bring me anything beyond what I could find in the usual textbooks. But I still had to pass my exams...

### **(120) The beautiful unknown**

(6 November) Looking through yesterday's notes again just now, I was able to make sure that I had not fallen into a certain confusion between mathematical work, a very strongly yang-dominant activity, and "the mathematics/[la mathématique]". It is surely no coincidence that in both French and German the word for it is feminine, just like "the science/[la science]", which encompasses it, or the even broader term "the knowing/[la connaissance])(\*), or also "the substance/[la substance]". For the mathematician in the proper sense of the term, I mean for the one who "does/[fait] mathematics" (as he would "make/[ferait] love"), there is indeed no ambiguity about the distribution of roles in his relation to mathematics, therefore to the unknown substance of which he acquires/[fait] knowing, which he knows by penetrating it. Mathematics is then as much a "woman" as any woman he has ever known or even just desired - whose mysterious power he has ever felt, drawing him into her, with a force that is at once very gentle/[douce], and without reply.

I first became aware of the profound identity between the impulse that attracted me to "the woman", and that which attracted me to "the mathematics", a few months before the encounter with the stanzas of the Tao Te King that were to trigger me for the Eulogy of the Incest (and along the way, for my first systematic reflection on the "feminine" and "masculine", whose Chinese names "yin" and "yang" I did not yet know). It was six years ago, while writing a two-page text, entitled "As a programme", by which I meant: for the (C 4) "Initiation to Research" course, of which this text constituted an introduction, or more exactly a declaration of intentions concerning the spirit of this "course". After writing this text, which came to my pen the most spontaneously of all, I was struck by the abundance of images emerging from each other, charged with erotic connotations. I realised that this was neither a coincidence, nor the result of a simple deliberate literary intention - that it was an unequivocal sign of a deep kinship between the two passions that had dominated my adult life. Without thinking at the time of deepening the matter by systematic reflection (which appeared only a few months later, on the occasion of the writing of the Eulogy), nor even (I think) of formulating clearly to myself what was suddenly

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\* On the other hand, "learning/[le savoir]" is masculine, and it is indeed "the husband" in the yin-yang couple "the knowing - the learning". The German is less clear-cut here, since the two terms "Kennen", "Wissen" are neuter (as substantivised verbs).

perceived, I think I can say that in that moment I learned, without any fanfare, something important - I had "discovered" something(\*), something that had entirely escaped me before.

Of course, like everyone else, I'd heard about Freud and libido sublimation and all that, but it has nothing to do with that. Even tons of books on psychoanalysis and all things like that cannot do without such moments, when all theory, all "baggage" is forgotten, and suddenly something "clicks!". It is in these moments that our knowing of things is renewed. It has nothing to do with reading books, listening to exposés, that is to say: increasing the learning/*savoir*/(†).

When I think of "the mathematics", I certainly do not mean the totality of learning that can be described as "mathematical", recorded from antiquity to the present day, in publications, preprints or manuscripts and correspondence. Even if we eliminate the repetitions, it must certainly amount to a few million pages of compact text; a dozen tons of books perhaps, or even a few thousand thick volumes, enough to fill a spacious library: nothing to get a hard-on for sure, quite the contrary! Talking about "mathematics" only makes sense in the context of a vision, an understanding - and these are essentially personal, not collective. There are as many "mathematics" as there are mathematicians, each of whom has a certain personal experience of it, more or less vast or limited, one of the fruits of which is his own understanding, his own vision of "the mathematics" (the one he has known), always more or less fragmentary. It is a bit like "the woman", which may appear to some as a mere abstraction, or as a hollow formula and yet has a deep, powerful, irrefutable (for me at least) "reality", of which every woman encountered or known is an incarnation and represents one aspect; and the same woman in another's experience undoubtedly represents yet another incarnation, yet another aspect.

My purpose here is not at all to confront the difficulty of "integrating" this vast multiplicity of experiences, understandings and visions of "the mathematics" into a totality, a unity - and this, moreover, at a time when we are witnessing (it seems to me) a kind of frenzied "divergence" of mathematical production, and when no

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\* It was then a "discovery" in the "yin", "feminine" mode - which is done by the welcoming of a new knowing into us, in a disposition of silent openness to what comes into us. Such moments have been rare in my life, I think. In any case, the moments of discovery that I have in my memory are almost all of a yang, "masculine" tone.

† This observation is not contradicted by the fact that it is quite possible, and even probable, that this "getting aware/*prise de conscience*/" (the passage to the conscious level of something perceived in the unconscious) was facilitated by the existence of the Freudian consensus, of which I had heard without it really making me feel neither hot nor cold. Learning can encourage the blossoming of knowing, but it is much more common, it seems to me, for it to suffocate in the bud any vague desire to blossom - in the manner of ready-made "answers" which suffocate in the bud the blossoming of a (good) question...

It is a remarkable thing that, while "everyone has heard" a little about the role of the erotic impulse in creativity (artistic or scientific, let us say), there was no trace of it in the consensus held in the milieus of which I was a part at one time or another. However, there was no lack of striking facts that could have put me on alert/*la puce à l'oreille*] a long time ago. In this respect, until three years ago, the periods of intense creativity in my life, and especially the periods of inner renewal, were marked equally by a powerful influx of erotic energy. Nevertheless, my mathematical activity was never accompanied by conscious erotic images or associations. But I remember being somewhat disconcerted, in the 50s, during a working session of the Bourbaki group, by a colleague and friend who mentioned to me, as the most common thing in the world, a peculiarity in his mathematical work: when he had come to the end of a difficult task, he felt an imperious desire to make love (with or without a partner) - and this all the more strongly as he was more satisfied with what he had just done.



mathematician can flatter himself to know, even if only in broad outline, the totality or the essence of what has been accomplished of substance in our science. My aim was rather to examine to some extent the interplay of yin and yang in mathematical work, that is to say, also in the relationship of the mathematician (or of such a mathematician, starting with myself) to "the mathematics". The thing under examination is therefore "the mathematician" or "such and such a mathematician" (in his relation to mathematics), rather than "the mathematics" itself.

### **(121) Desire and rigour**

(7 November) At the level of our intellectual faculties, of reason, to "know" a thing is, above all else, to "understand" it. And in a work of discovery that is placed in this register of our faculties, the élan of knowing that animates the child in us (independently of the motivations proper to the "I", to the "Boss") is the desire to understand. This is perhaps the main difference that distinguishes the intellectual impulse to know from its elder sister, the love impulse. This desire to understand pre-exists any "method", scientific or otherwise. The latter is a tool, shaped by desire to serve its purpose: to penetrate the unknown accessible to reason, for the purpose of understanding. The knowing is born from the desire to know, and therefore from the desire to understand when it is the reason/*raison* that wants to know. The method, the instrument of desire, is by itself powerless to give birth to knowing - any more than the doctor's forceps, or even the expert hands of a midwife, can give birth. But sometimes they usefully assist the birth of the newborn, when the time is ripe and they know how to come at the right moment...

Many, if not all, high school and university students must have felt the rigour of mathematics, which was drummed into them by sullen teachers, as something which is a priori entirely external to their humble selves, incomprehensible and arbitrary, dictated by a peremptory and pitiless God to a Euclid promoted to Grand Censor-in-Chief, with the mission of making countless generations of schoolchildren, ingesting as best they could, pale at the task, Culture with a capital C. I must have been one of the few who had not passed through this stage in my relationship with school mathematics - who had felt instinctively, from the first encounter and within the narrow framework of a sixth grade math book, the original function and meaning of the rigour: that it was a flexible and astonishingly effective instrument, in the service of an understanding of those things called "mathematics" - things that reason alone can fully know. This "rigour" is also like the soul and the nerve of what I called, in the reflection of the day before yesterday, "the rules of the mathematical game", and what earlier I called "the method". Having only glimpsed them, it was as if I had always known them - as if it was my own desire that had delicately, lovingly shaped them, like a key that had the power to open up for me an unknown, mysterious world, whose foreseen/*pressentie* richness was to prove inexhaustible... And it was really my own desire that continued to refine this tool throughout my years in lycée and university, before any encounter could make me suspect that somewhere there were congeners - people who, like me, found their pleasure in probing

the Unknown that this very key, apparently unknown to everyone (including my professors), alone had the power to open up(\*).

### **(122) The rising sea...**

(8 November) It's been three days since I started thinking about, in principle, "yin and yang in mathematics", and I have the impression that it never stops starting again and again, while I am partially absorbed by other occupations and tasks. With all the preliminaries, I still haven't come to the point I wanted to make from the beginning: that in my own mathematical work, the yin, "feminine" note dominates!

I realised this a few weeks ago, in the margin of the present reflection on yin and yang, and in relation to this "association of ideas aroused by the three-part Funeral Eulogy", which was the starting point of this long digression, (See the beginning of the note "Yang buries yin (1) - or the muscle and the gut".) To tell the truth, this association of ideas (to which I will have the occasion to return) was more or less based on the intuition that my approach to mathematics was strongly yang-dominant. This intuition was quite natural, since it was my superyang choices that had motivated my long-term investment in mathematics. Nevertheless, this intuition, or more precisely this idea, was wrong - it sufficed for me to take the time to examine it a little to realise that the opposite is true.

A surprise, it was: a surprise! I didn't mention it "on the spot[à chaud]" in my notes, so as not to cut off the thread of reflection, at the time when I was trying to identify the way in which I perceived yin and yang and the philosophy that emerged for me. But here we are at last!

This misconception about the nature of my approach to mathematics must have slipped into me, unexamined and as a matter of course, from the time when I started paying attention to the yin-yang aspect of things, five or six years ago. It must be a residue of my yang, virile image - a residue that has continued to linger there, out of sheer inertia, because I haven't taken the trouble to sweep up that corner...

Perhaps the reader will have the impression that I am misleading him, since only three days ago I explained at length that mathematical work was the most superyang of superyang activities - that in the relationship to mathematics it figured as "the woman", and the mathematician as an enterprising[*entreprenant*] lover - and now I suddenly raise the question of whether, in the case of my modest person, my work or my "approach" is yin or yang, and conclude (as the most natural thing in the world) that it is yin, who would have believed it! If there is an apparent confusion here, it comes from a lack of understanding of this universal fact: that in every thing, even the most yin or yang in the world, the dynamics of yin and yang are at play, through the nuptials of the two original forces. Thus the fire, the most yang of all things and the very symbol of yang, is yin in some of its aspects (it is the "yin in the yang"); and conversely the water, which is the very symbol of yin, is yang in some of its aspects and functions (it is the "yang in the yin"). There is no need to develop these two particularly

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\* However, the little maths I had learnt in high school and at university had been already enough to make me understand that in the past at least, there must have been people like me, those who were in fact called "mathematicians". Mr. Soula (one of my professors at the University) had spoken to me about Lebesgue, who had solved the last open problems in mathematics, including in the theory of measurement (on which I had been working since I left the lycée, in 1945). But in those years (1945-48) my desire to clarify by my own means the questions that I had asked myself was so exclusive, that it excluded any kind of curiosity about the existence, the work or the person of mathematicians of the past or the present.

instructive examples here - surely, the reader intrigued by these observations (which may seem peremptory or sibylline) will only have to follow for himself the associations of ideas that are attached to fire, and water, to discover for himself in these two cases the reality of yin in yang, and yang in yin. And if he is a mathematician, or if he is only familiar with intellectual work (even if he is not a mathematician, or even a scientist), he will have no difficulty in discerning the existence of complementary yin and yang modes of approach to any kind of intellectual work, however "yang" it may be in comparison with other, less fragmented types of activity.

A possible starting point would be to take up again the fifteen or so yin-yang couples pointed out at the beginning of the reflection of three days ago(\*), when I noted that for each of these couples, it was the predominance of the yang term that took place in intellectual work (and this is particularly true in the case of mathematical work), when one compares such work to other types of activity, such as making love, singing, painting (a picture, or a mural, it doesn't matter), gardening, etc. This does not prevent us from remaining within a specific activity, such as doing maths, let's say (where everything is yang, as is understood), we can distinguish a equilibrium (or sometimes, a disequilibrium) of either yin or yang traits, which vary from one mathematician to another and sometimes, also within the same mathematician, from one work to another.

For example, in some works it is the logical structure of the theory developed that is emphasised, in others it will be the intuitive aspects, there is a disequilibrium, manifesting itself in the reader or listener by a very familiar feeling of malaise (and sometimes in the author too), when one of its indispensable aspects is grossly neglected, to the "benefit" of the other. (When both are grossly neglected, one throws the book in the bin, or leaves the room with a slam of the door!) When both aspects are strongly present, either explicitly or between the lines, this manifests itself in a very familiar feeling also of harmony, of beauty, of equilibrium. This is so, regardless of the "basic tone" that dominates the approach taken, whether that tone is in the direction of "logic", or "intuition" (or also "structure", or "substance"). There is no need to develop this instructive example, to describe for example where the rub lies[*où le bât blesse*] ( that is to say, to identify the "malaise" recalled earlier), when one or the other of the two aspects is neglected; the reader already knows this well from his own experience! Observations along the same lines cannot fail to be drawn for most of the yin-yang couples considered three days ago. Perhaps even for all of them, even if some are more delicate and will undoubtedly require a more thorough examination to be fully apprehended than the intuition-logic couple.

I now have to try to make this fact a little more explicit, or rather "get it across" - that in my way of doing maths, it is my "feminine", yin traits, more than my "masculine" traits, that are leading the dance. If I were to follow this impression all the way to its end, testing it from as many aspects as possible, the natural idea (which had indeed crossed my mind yesterday) would be to review, among the yin-yang couples known to me, those which may represent (among others) an aspect or mode of apprehension of an intellectual work (there must be about fifty of them I suppose), and see for each of them which of the two "spouses[*conjoins*]" of the couple predominates in me. I anticipate that in all cases, one of the two will indeed, on examination, prove to be predominant.

Thus, in the intuition-logic couple, I notice at first sight that both aspects are strongly present in my mathematical work. This is a sign of an equilibrium, of a harmony, among other signs that go in the same

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\* See "The most macho of the arts", note n° 119.

direction. As it should be for a yin-yang couple, for me (in my work I mean), the two spouses are really inseparable - the logical structure of a theory develops step by step and in conjunction with the deepening of an understanding of the things it deals with, that is to say, in conjunction with the development of an increasingly fine and complete intuition of it. Perhaps in my published works, in accordance with the canons of the mathematician's craft, it is the yang aspect, the "structure" or "logic" or "method" aspect, that is the most apparent, the most obvious to the reader. However, I am well aware that what leads and dominates in my work, what is its soul and *raison d'être*, are the mental images that are formed in the course of the work to apprehend the reality of mathematical things.

Of course, I have never skimped on managing to identify as meticulously as possible, by means of mathematical language, these images and the apprehension that they give. It is in this continual effort to formulate the unformulated, to specify what is still vague, that perhaps the particular dynamic of mathematical work (and perhaps also, of all creative intellectual work) is to be found - in a continual dialectic between the more or less formless image, and the language which gives it a form and along the way arouses new, more or less blurry images which deepen the previous one, and which also call for a formulation to give them form in their turn... It is moreover this perpetual work of defining through language, as precisely, as perfectly as possible, what at first appears as an indefinable and formless "presentiment", as an unformulated "feeling", as an image drowned in mists... it is this very work which since my childhood and still today is what fascinates me the most in the work of mathematical discovery. But if the "effort" here always seems to be on the "language" side, therefore on the formulation, structure, logic side, which form the key ingredients of the mathematical method; and if (by force of circumstance) it is there above all that the visible aspect of a mathematical text supposed to restore[*restituer*] a mathematical work (or at least its fruits) is to be found, all this does not prevent that (for me at least) it is not in this very aspect that the soul of an understanding of mathematical things is to be found, nor the living force or the motivation in action in the mathematical work. I believe that among my works, very few had been those where this relationship was reversed, where I had developed a "formalism" by letting myself be guided only, or foremost, by its internal logic, by the desiderata of coherence, or by other aspects of the formalism itself, rather than by a content, by a substance, manifesting itself through the images, the intuitions of a "geometrical" nature. In any case, all my life I have been incapable of reading a mathematical text, no matter how innocuous or simplistic it is, when I cannot give this text a "meaning" in terms of my experience of mathematical things, that is to say when this text does not arouse in me mental images, intuitions that would give it life, as a living flesh of muscles and organs gives life to a body, which without it would be reduced to a skeleton. This incapability distinguishes me from most of my mathematician colleagues, and (as I have already had occasion to mention) it is this that often made it difficult for me to fit into the collective work within the Bourbaki group, especially during the joint readings, where I was often left behind for hours on end while everyone else followed at ease.

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I have just followed some associations of ideas on my mathematical work, linked to the couple "intuition-logic", and to some neighbouring couples which introduced themselves in the wake of this one; the formless - the formed, the indefinite - the definite, the unformulated - the formulated, the vague - the precise, inspiration - method, vision - coherence... It would surely be instructive to go through one by one (as I had thought of doing) all the possible and imaginable "couples" in relation to an intellectual work, and to probe for each of them in

what way and to what extent either of the two spouses is present in my mathematical work, and whether or not one of the two seems to "set the tone", and which one. Even beyond a more delicate apprehension of the particular nature of my mathematical work, such a "work on pieces", surely, will not fail to make me also deepen my understanding of the nature of mathematical work in general, and also my apprehension of each of the couples thus reviewed. But such systematic work would obviously take me too far, and would go beyond the reasonable limits of the present reflection. It seems more natural to me to try to find here, and to "get across" if possible, the associations of ideas and images which have convinced me (without having to go further) that in my mathematical work, it is indeed the "feminine" traits of my being which tend surreptitiously to set the tone, and to find in this way a kind of unforeseen "revenge" (where one would have expected it the least!) for the repression they had to undergo in other spheres of my life.

Take for example the task of proving a theorem that remains hypothetical (to which, for some, mathematical work seems to be reduced). I see two extreme approaches to doing this. One is that of the hammer and chisel, when the problem posed is seen as a large nut, hard and smooth, whose interior must be reached, the nourishing flesh protected by the shell. The principle is simple: you put the cutting edge of the chisel against the shell, and hit it hard. If necessary, you repeat the process in several different places, until the shell breaks - and you're happy. This approach is especially tempting when the shell has bumps or protuberances, through which to "grab it [*la prendre*]". In some cases, such "tips [*bouts*]" to grab the nut are immediately obvious, in other cases, you have to carefully turn the nut back and forth in all directions, prospecting carefully, before you find a point of attack. The most difficult case is when the shell is perfectly round and hard and uniform. No matter how hard you hit it, the chisel's edge will slip and barely scratch the surface - you'll eventually get tired of the task. Sometimes, nevertheless, you end up succeeding, by dint of muscle and endurance.

I can illustrate the second approach by keeping the image of the nut that needs to be opened. The first parable that sometimes came to mind is that you dip the nut in an emollient liquid, just water why not, from time to time you rub it so that it penetrates better, for the rest you leave it to time. The shell will soften over the weeks and months - when the time is ripe, a touch of the hand is enough, and the shell will open like a ripe avocado! Alternatively, you can leave the nut to ripen in the sun and rain and maybe also in the frosts of winter. When the time is ripe, it will be a delicate shoot that emerges from the core flesh and pierces the shell, as if playing with itself - or to put it better, the shell will have opened up on its own, to let the shoot through.

The image that came to me a few weeks ago was yet different, the unknown thing that I wanted to know appeared to me as some expanse of earth or compact marl, reluctant to be penetrated. One can go at it with pickaxes or crowbars or even jackhammers: this is the first approach, that of the "chisel" (with or without a hammer). The other is the sea. The sea advances insensitively and soundlessly, nothing seems to break nothing moves the water is so far away you can hardly hear it... Yet it ends up surrounding the resistant substance, which gradually becomes a peninsula, then an island, then an islet, which ends up being submerged in its turn, as if it had finally dissolved into the ocean extending as far as the eye can see...

The reader who is at all familiar with some of my work will have no difficulty in recognising which of these two modes of approach is "mine" - and I have already had occasion in the first part of Harvest and Sowing to

explain myself on this subject, in a somewhat different context(\*). It is the "approach of the sea", by submersion, absorption, dissolution - the one where, when one is not very attentive, nothing seems to happen at any moment: each thing at each moment is so obvious, and above all, so natural, that one would often almost scruple to write it down in black and white, for fear of seeming to be buzzing [*bombiner*], instead of hitting a chisel like everyone else... Yet this is the approach that I have practised instinctively since my youth, without ever having really had to learn it.

This was also, basically, the Bourbaki approach, and my encounter with the Bourbaki group was providential in this respect, by confirming, and encouraging me in this "style" which was spontaneously mine, and in which otherwise I was in danger of finding myself more or less alone of my kind(†). It is true that this was a situation (being alone of my kind) which had long been familiar to me, and which did not bother me so much. As to whether my instinctive approach to mathematical work was going to be "efficient", that is to say above all (according to the criteria in force, and especially for judging a beginner mathematician) whether I was going to be able to resolve "open questions" to which no one had yet been able to answer, I could not know that in advance, and I did not worry too much about it. My natural inclination was instead to ask my own questions, rather than trying to solve those that others had posed. And it is indeed through the discovery of new questions, and of new notions as well, or through new points of view or even new "worlds", that my mathematical work has proved fruitful, even more than through the "solutions" that I have been able to bring to questions already posed. This very strong impulse to discover the right questions, rather than the answers, and to discover the right notions and the right statements, much more than the demonstrations, are also very strongly marked "yin" traits, in my approach to mathematics(‡). This is also, no doubt, why I am particularly sensitive, when I see the best of what I have been able to bring to mathematics, being treated casually or with disdain by some of those who were my students, that is to say by exactly those who were the very first beneficiaries.

In any case, it was only in retrospect that I realised that my natural approach to mathematics also "worked [*marchait*]" when I felt attracted, inspired by a question that others had asked when, in short, it had "clicked" and the question had thereby become "mine". If I tried to make a more or less exhaustive list of such cases, I suspect it would be quite long. At a glance, there are four such situations that seem to me to "stand out"

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\* See the section "Dream and proof", n° 8.

† In this extreme-yin approach, I tended to go further even than most of my friends in Bourbaki were willing to go. This is probably [*sans doute*] one of the reasons why I ended up leaving the group, towards the end of the 50s.

‡ I have the impression that it is no different for any other research work I do, and especially for what I call "meditation".

in their scope(\*). In all four cases, the hypothetical theorem ended up being proven, for the most part, by the "rising sea" approach, submerged and dissolved by some more or less vast theory, going far beyond the results that it was first intended to establish. I have also noticed that the ideas, notions, formulas and methods that I developed in these situations (or in others as well), have long since entered the domain of the "well-known" mathematics, which "all the world" knows and uses à gogo, without caring about their origin(†).

### (123) The nine months and five minutes

(9 November) There is another common point with the four cases mentioned yesterday, of open questions that were resolved (or rather, "dissolved") by the "approach of the rising sea". This is the role played by J.P. Serre in each of these four cases. It was primarily a role of "detonator", to get me "started off" on these questions, to use the expressions of a footnote in the Introduction mentioning this role (see "The end of a secret", section 8 of the Introduction). In fact (as I now see it) it appears that Serre played such a role in the genesis of the principal key-ideas and great tasks that I developed between 1955 and 1970, that is to say, between the time when I left functional analysis for geometry, and the time when I left the mathematical world.

I could say, hardly exaggerating, that between the beginning of the fifties and around 1966, thus for about fifteen years, everything I learned in "geometry" (in a very broad sense, encompassing algebraic or analytic geometry, topology and arithmetic), I learned from Serre, if I didn't learn it by myself in my mathematical work. It was in 1952 I think, when Serre came to Nancy (where I stayed until 1953), that he began to become a privileged interlocutor for me - and for years, he was even my only interlocutor for themes falling outside functional analysis. The first thing I think he talked to me about was Tor and Ext, which I was making a world of, and yet, look, it's as easy as pie..., and the magic of injective and projective resolutions and derived and satellite functors, at a time when the Cartan-Eilenberg "diplodocus" had not yet been published. What attracted me to cohomology at that time, were the "A and B theorems" that he had just developed with Cartan, on Stein's analytic spaces - I had already heard of them I think, but it was through one or two tête à tête with Serre that I

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\* The questions I have in mind here are, in chronological order of their solution, the following:

1. Validity of the Riemann-Roch-Hirzebruch formula in any characteristic.
2. Structure of the "prime to characteristic" fundamental group of an algebraic curve over an algebraically closed field of any characteristic.
3. Rationality of L-functions of finite type over a finite field (which constitutes a part of the "Weil conjectures", and an important step towards the proof of these conjectures, completed by Deligne).
4. Semi-stable reduction of abelian varieties defined on the field of fractions of a discrete valuation ring.

† I myself have often practised this carelessness about the origin of the "well-known" I used, except in cases where I nevertheless knew the origin first hand, having more or less witnessed the birth, or when I myself was the father. As I have seen many times over the past few years, and especially in the course of my reflection on the Burial, this elementary delicacy has often been lacking in some of those who were my students or close friends in the mathematical world, even when it was a question of things they had learned from none other than me, and whose origin they knew with no possibility of a doubt. See the reflection on this subject in the note "The Gravedigger - or the entire Congregation", n° 97.

felt all the power, the geometrical richness that was concealed in these so simple cohomological statements. At first they had gone completely over my head, before he told me about them, at a time when I did not yet "feel" the geometric substance in the sheaf cohomology of a space. I was so enchanted that for years I had intended to work on analytic spaces, as soon as I had successfully completed the work I was still doing in functional analysis, where I was definitely not going to linger! If I did not really follow these intentions, it is because Serre in the meantime had turned to algebraic geometry and had written his famous fundamental article "FAC", which made understandable and highly attractive what had previously appeared to me to be extremely off-putting [*rébarbatif*] - so attractive, in fact, that I did not resist these charms, and then turned to algebraic geometry, rather than to analytic spaces.

If I didn't hold back, I would have gone on, one thing leading to another, to write the history of my relationship with Serre, which would hardly be anything other than the history of my mathematical interests, from 1952 to 1970. This is not the place for that. I would only add that, as is only fair, it was from Serre that I was put "in the bath" of the four questions mentioned above. It was not, of course, a matter of pointing out the precise statement of the question, and then that's it. The essential thing, was that Serre each time strongly sensed the rich substance behind a statement which, point blank, would probably not have made me feel either hot or cold - and that he managed to "pass on" this perception of a rich, tangible, mysterious substance - this perception which is at the same time a desire to know this substance, to penetrate it. This is perhaps the most crucial moment of all in a work of discovery, the moment when "it clicks", when one has no idea yet, however vague it is, through which to take the unknown, through which to enter it. This is truly the moment of "conception" - the moment from which gestation work can be done, and is done if the circumstances are right...

If Serre has played an important role in my work and in my mathematical work, it is much more, it seems to me, in the appearance of these crucial moments, when the spark passes and obscure and invisible labours are set in motion, than by the technical means unknown to me that he happened to provide me with at the right moment or by the ideas that I borrowed from him, in the later stages of my work.

One of the reasons, no doubt, for the particular role played by Serre, is that I have little liking for learning about current mathematical events by reading, nor even for learning the ABCs of a particular "well-known" theory by reading in books or memoirs that deal with it. As far as possible, I like to be informed by the living word of people who are "in the know". I was lucky enough, from my first contacts with a mathematical milieu (in 1948) until my departure in 1970, to never lack a competent and willing interlocutor, to keep me updated on things that might interest me. This may have created a dependence on these interlocutors, but I never felt that way(\*). In fact, the question of "dependence" could hardly arise, as long as my interlocutor and I were equally animated about what he was teaching me. Teaching the eager-to-know is beneficial for both, and is an opportunity for the "teacher" to learn, as well as for the one being taught.

The "reason" given earlier explains well the importance of interlocutors in my past as a mathematician, but not the exceptional role played by Serre, which seems to me to exceed by far that of all my other "interlocutors" combined! What is certain is that Serre and I complemented each other marvellously. We had many strong common interests, and I felt in him the same demand, the same rigour that I put into my work. Apart from that,

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our work followed very different "styles". I have the impression that our approaches to mathematics and our work complemented each other, but never really encroached on one another. The kind of work I was doing (and the way I was doing it) was quite different from the kind of Serre's work. He might lay the first foundations of a theory in a text of fifty pages or so, or even spend a year writing a medium-sized book elegantly and concisely presenting [*exposant*] some subject that inspired him - but certainly not spend the best part of five years of his life, or even ten years or more, developing far and wide in volumes a whole new language (which had been quite dispensable up to that point), in order to found a new and fertile approach to algebraic geometry, say. He introduced a good number of new and fecund ideas and notions without allowing himself to be drawn into "carrying" them to the end, all the way through. On more than one occasion, however, these ideas and notions served as a starting point, for a work of vast dimensions which suited me marvellously, and for which there could have been no question of Serre himself launching into it.

An association irresistibly comes to me here. In the light of the reflection of the last few days, I see my relationship to mathematical work and to my "works" more as "maternal", than as "paternal". The moment of conception, however crucial it is, represents for me a tiny portion of the "work" during which the thing in gestation, the "child" to come, grows and develops. This work is very much like that of a pregnant woman's pregnancy, a work that starts in motion when the child is conceived, and continues through nine long months... The time it takes to bring what was a foetus to term and to give birth - that is to say, to bring a child into the world, a living and complete child, not just a head or a torso or a baby skeleton or whatever. This role of the mother, obviously, is very different from that of the father (even the best father in the world...), who more or less just contents to cast a seed, and then goes off to other occupations.

Obviously, Serre's mathematical work, his approach to mathematics, is strongly yang, "masculine" dominant. His approach to a difficulty would be more like that of the chisel and hammer, very rarely that of the sea that rises and submerges, or that of the water that soaks and dissolves. And he seems content to cast a seed, without much concern as to where it will fall, or whether it will trigger conception and labour, or even whether the child that might be born of it will be in his likeness or bear his name.

An image can help us to apprehend an important aspect of a certain reality, but it does not exhaust the reality. This reality is always more complex, richer than any image that would express it, and so it is with the images that came to me, without having sought them out, to express two different approaches to mathematics - Serre's, and mine. It so happened that Serre carried out work that needed breath [*demandaient du souffle*], just as it happened that I sowed ideas, some of which germinated, and were carried out by others. No more in my approach to mathematics I lack "virility" (while the background note is "feminine"), than Serre lacks "femininity" in his, making equilibrium with his "virile" background note.

It cannot be otherwise in a creative approach to an unknown substance, be it mathematics or otherwise: there is no discovery, no knowing, no renewal, except through the joint and inseparable action of the original yin and yang energies and impulses in a single being. It is in the intimate fusion of the two that resides the beauty of a being, or of a work - that delicate, elusive quality, which signals itself to us by that particular feeling of harmony, of satisfaction. This quality is present in all of Serre's work that I have known, whether in person or through the texts he has written. I have known few mathematicians where it is so consistently present, and with such force.

#### (124) The Funeral of Yin (yang buries yin (4))

(10 November) Yesterday's and the day before's reflections are far from exhausting the set of characters strongly marked in my mathematical work, which are yin in nature. To probe them further, following the momentum of the present reflection on yin and yang in mathematics, would also be an excellent opportunity for me to deepen an understanding of the nature of mathematical work in general. This theme of yin and yang in mathematics, which I thought I would cover in a day's reflection, and on which I have already spent five consecutive days under the impression that I had only barely begun, has just revealed itself as one of those many seemingly innocuous themes, which become broader and deeper the closer one approaches and enters into them. There is no question, certainly, of my hastily exhausting this juicy theme (or even of my merely "going round" it, on the double), in the very middle of a Funeral Ceremony that I would not like to drag out beyond all measure!

I would just like to point out again (without comment, I promise!) two of those "strongly marked characters" in my mathematical work which go in the "yin", feminine direction. One is a predilection for the general, rather than for the particular (which makes a "pair" or "couple" with it). The other trait seems to me to be still stronger, or to put it better, more essential, more neuralgic [*névralgique*], and also more vast (in the sense that it contains the first). If there is a "quest" that has run through my entire life as a mathematician, from the age of seventeen (fresh out of lycée) to the present day, an incessant quest that has marked all my work (published or unpublished) since its beginnings, it is that of unity, through the infinite multiplicity of mathematical things and the possible approaches towards these things. To detect, to discover this unity beyond the diversity, of an often disconcerting richness (without amputating any of this richness), to recognise the common traits beyond the differences and dissimilarities, and to go to the root of the analogies and resemblances for discovering the profound kinship - such has been my passion, throughout my life. The very differences, expression of an unlimited and elusive diversity, have ended up appearing like the branches and twigs, ramifying to infinity, of the same tree with its vast boughs, where each, and every branch and every twig, leads me towards the trunk which is their common. By instinct and by nature, my path was that of the water, which always tends to descend, the path towards this trunk, towards these roots. And if I liked to linger along the way, it was rarely at the top to explore leaves and delicate twigs, but above all at the big branches, the trunk and the main roots, to get to know their texture and feel through the bark the rising flow of the nourishing sap. (\*)

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\* I believe I can discern in this quest for unity through the diversity, a distinctive trait common to the three passions that have marked my life, including then the passion for love, and meditation. Perhaps even, apart from any passion, this is for me a way of apprehension of the reality, where I tend to see above all, and to attach my attention and give weight, to common traits and to kinships, rather than to differences (without being tempted to hide [*escamoter*] them). I have noticed that the most common tendency of many is the opposite tendency, the yang tendency, which often goes to the point of ignoring or denying profound kinships. (Superyang tendency, characteristic of our culture. It is often accompanied by a reflex to level out differences, to align everything on the same supposedly "perfect" or "superior" model, for the benefit of a factitious "unity", which is an excessive impoverishment as well as a violence). These differences in emphasis between an interlocutor and me have often been the cause of dialogues of the deaf, where two parallel monologues are developed which never join up...

To tell the truth, I am still not sure what to make of this newly discovered fact, how to situate it - that in my approach to mathematics, in my way of "doing[*faire*] maths", the basic tone in me is strongly yin, "feminine". This is in line with a certain intuition which I have already alluded to - that the basic tone of my deepest being, I mean the "child" in me or the "Worker", which is to say that which is creative and beyond conditioning (which is to say beyond the "I", the "Boss") - that this basic tone is also "feminine" rather than virile.

Perhaps I have everything in hand now to clarify what is really going on, by carefully examining all the signs that point either in one direction or the other(\*), in order to recognise the scope[*portée*] of each, and what emerges from them together. And if by such work I do not arrive at the tangible result of a "yes" or a "no", surely it will not have been useless for all that, in order to arrive at a better understanding of my ignorance, which at this moment still remains blurred, not situated, for lack of having meditated on it. Perhaps I will do this work, once the work on Harvest and Sowing is finished, and on the momentum of this one. But here again, this is not the place.

But if I have been led to this reflection on yin and yang, it is in the course of a reflection in which I have endeavoured above all to understand certain relationships, between myself and others (among those who were my students, in particular). It is therefore the possible repercussions of the "new fact" that has just appeared, on my relationship to others and on that of others to me, that I am especially interested in here. And this is also where my embarrassment lies for "placing", for exploiting this fact. It is perhaps due to the fact that, probably no one but me has ever noticed such a thing - not on a conscious level, but at least on the level of formulation. I have never received any echo that I could interpret in this sense, as far as I can remember - nor do I remember (with a single exception perhaps) any echo that would send me back a "yin" image of myself, whereas the character I have camped[*campé*] since my childhood (if not very early childhood) has been strongly yang; so much so that even now, this "virile" character seems to be like a second (?) nature, which continues to dominate my life in many ways.

It is true that the mere fact that a trait in someone (me in this case) is not perceived at the conscious level does not necessarily prevent it from affecting the relationship with others. And that this trait is indeed perceived in the mathematical world, among mathematicians who are more or less familiar with my work, and that this very perception has "oiled stained" among a distinctly wider mathematical public - I do not have any doubt about that. When I wrote, in "The Funeral Eulogy (1) - or the compliments" that "the anonymous pen that has taken care of my funeral eulogy has gratified me overabundantly with what today is given over to disdain", I could not have known at the time, how to identify in a lapidary formula what exactly was "what today is given over to disdain" by the mathematical fashion, among the things to which I attach value. But the very next day, through

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\* Several of my strongly marked yang traits seem to me to be acquired traits, coming from conditioning, and more precisely, from the superyang brand image dating back to my childhood. Among these traits, there is an excessive investment in the action; the very strong projection towards the future, that is to say towards the accomplishment of my tasks; the predilection for a work of discovery above all intellectual and the invasive role of the thought; dispositions of closing towards what does not appear directly related to my tasks of the moment, and in particular my inattention to the landscapes, seasons etc. There is however a yang trait that seems innate to me and not acquired, it is the very strong affinity relationship that links me to fire, unlike my relationship to the water, which is definitely not "my element". Moreover, it seems that my astrological chart is marked by a very strong yang disequilibrium, all the signs that enter it being "signs of fire", to the exclusion of any sign of water.

this "association of ideas" to which I will have to return(\*) , I had sensed (without perhaps having formulated it to myself, and without it yet appearing as clearly as it does now), that "this something" was none other than everything that was recognised (at an often unformulated level) as being a "yin", "feminine" way of doing mathematics - a way tacitly assimilated to "bombinage", to "nonsense" (to take up the compliment of my pupil and friend Pierre Deligne, with regard to the text at the basis of all his work), to the "cranking[*manivelle*]", "ease" etc.

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And the Funeral suddenly appears to me in a new, unexpected light, in which my person itself has become secondary, in which it becomes a symbol of that which must be "given over to disdain". This is no longer the funeral of a person, nor that of a work, nor even that of an inadmissible dissidence, but the funeral of the "mathematical feminine" - and even more profoundly, perhaps, in each of the many participants applauding at the Funeral Eulogy, the funeral of the disowned woman who lives within himself.

### **(125) Supermum or Superdad**

(11 November) Exceptionally (for once, it is not usual...) I woke up early this morning, after having slept barely four or five hours. The unexpected outcome of yesterday's reflection immediately set in motion an intense work, to "place" and assimilate this new fact that had just appeared, just enough time to warm up a hearty soup and have a snack before going to bed, at three o'clock in the morning. And early in the morning, this same work pulled me out of sleep, then out of bed...

If I speak of an "unexpected" outcome and a "new" fact, it must nevertheless be added that since the very beginning of this interminable "digression" on yin and yang, there was in me a kind of restrained expectation of a "denouement", or at least the expectation of a "junction" which was to be made with a certain procession, which had assembled in a Funeral Ceremony. It might have seemed that I was drifting further and further away from the scene of the Funeral, or even that it had been definitively forgotten - and yet no, it was always there, as if in mute or watermark[*filigrane*]. I had never really left them. Their silent presence was manifested by this discreet and constant expectation, this feeling of tension, of suspense, which carried me towards this point, still nebulous, where the "junction" would finally take place. I could pre-sense the approximate location of this junction point - it was around a certain "association of ideas" (mentioned more than once, but never formulated) that had been the starting point, the initial motivation for this unexpected voyage through yin and yang and through my life. This voyage was, in short, going to be like a great circle again, returning (more or less...) to its starting point; or rather like a turn in a descending spiral, taking me a notch deeper into the thing probed, "to the very heart" (if my presentiment did not deceive me) of this Funeral.

But as I am just beginning to prepare to "land", and at the turn of the last paragraph of a "note" that is still very much a "digression" or even a "rehash[*ressassage*]", here I have suddenly landed in the middle of a funeral ceremony and well and truly in the heart of it, a bit like an extraterrestrial who has catapulted himself there right

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\* See the beginning of the note "The muscle and the tripe" (n° 106), where this association is mentioned for the first time.

in front of the priest in his chasuble and in front of the congregation of the faithful; or worse still, like a deceased person, believed to be dead and (almost already) buried, who suddenly lifts the lid (and wreaths and touching epitaphs come tumbling out! ) and there he is in person, in a white shroud and sparkling eye, like an imp, all alive and rising out of his box the moment you least expect it!

Thus, the culmination of yesterday's reflection was at the same time the denouement of that suspense of which I have spoken, a very particular suspense which is very familiar to me in the work "in the way of the spreading/[s' étale] sea", whether it be mathematical work or any other. But in the very wake of this relaxation of a long suspense immediately appeared a perplexity. It is this perplexity, above all, which has absorbed me ever since, I believe, and which, at ungodly hours, has drawn me from bed to the typewriter. That there is perplexity is in fact not surprising - it happens, more or less, every time a situation suddenly appears in a new light, which at first sight would therefore seem to contradict an old vision. The very first task imposed, is then to probe these contradictions carefully, to examine to what extent they are real, or only apparent, that is to say, expressions of an inertia of the mind which balks at recognising the "same" thing under two different lights. This indispensable work is completed when all the dissonances have been resolved in a new harmony (even if it is still provisional), in a vision that encompasses and reunites the previous partial visions, correcting or adjusting them if necessary, and eliminating those that prove to be fundamentally false. In such a renewed vision, the "old" that gave birth to it, that is to say the more fragmentary visions that are united in it, acquires a new meaning itself(\*).

To return to my "perplexity", here it is. The "denouement" or "new day" consisted of an image that suddenly appeared - that of the Burial with great pomp of the "symbol" of the "mathematical feminine", incarnated in my person, and projection at the same time of the "disowned woman" in each of the participants of the Funeral; or to put it another way, it is the image of the symbolic Burial of a kind of Super-Mother, as an expiatory victim in short and in place of the woman-but-rarely-mother who vegetates in the obscure subterranean of each of the participants who have come to applaud at the Funeral. This image seems to contradict another, opposite, still blurred, one that had gradually formed in the course of the reflections before June (culminating in the note "The Gravedigger - or the whole congregation"): that of a Super-Father who is both admired and feared, both attractive and detested, "massacred" by his children, whose mutilated remains are given over to derision during the "same" funeral. Placed side by side (if it were even necessary), these images with their violent colours will seem to border on the crazy and delirious, and I can easily imagine the scalp dance that these phantasmagorias in the psychoanalytical mode will not fail to provoke, assuming that there are readers who have had the breath to follow me this far!

I will gladly leave them to their dance, which will add an exotic note of the best effect to this unusual burial, and in the meantime I will rather follow an association which had presented itself since last night, of a nature I believe to reconcile, to even bring to love and marry each other these two images or facets, supposedly antagonistic, even irreconcilable.

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\* Compare with the reflection in the two sections "The Child and the good Lord" and "Error and discovery", n°s 1 and 2.

## 2.7 The reversal of yin and yang

### (126) The reversal (1) - or the vehement wife

(12 November) I had thought of pursuing in my notes that association mentioned at the end of yesterday's notes, of a nature to "reconcile" and "bring to love" the two images, apparently antagonistic, which had emerged from my burial. Just as I was about to begin the notes in this direction, I felt a reluctance, which I would not like to ignore.

The association concerned my mother's relationship to my father, and the meaning of the destruction of the family that took place in 1933, through my mother's will overcoming my father's acquiescence (reluctant and embarrassed at first, then eager and total). This crucial episode marked a kind of reversal in the couple formed by my parents, where my father had figured as an incarnation of the heroic, ostentatiously adulated, virile values, and where my mother (a wilful and domineering character if ever there was one) was dressed in the colours of the subjugated and happy woman, over a daily life marked by continuous confrontations. The acquiescence to the sacrifice of the children marks the moment of the collapse of the God and Hero, followed by a veritable orgy of triumphant contempt for the one who, the day before, was still playing the swooning adulator, and who from then on took the place of the fallen hero, emasculated and happy to be so, reduced to the despised role of "woman", from which she herself at the same time was relieved...

The little I have said is so schematic, so quintessential I fear, that it is more likely to give rise to innumerable misunderstandings than to help us understand the hidden mechanisms/*ressorts* of a certain burial. However, I feel that this is not the place to develop even slightly what I have just sketched in a few words. To render with a minimum of finesse a complex reality, blurred with pleasure [*à plaisir*] by the two protagonists, would require a new and long digression, of a magnitude that the context does not justify. I don't feel inclined to dive into it now, and all the less so as it is a situation that involves others than myself, and where my own responsibility (as a co-actor) does not really seem to be engaged. I myself, and my sister, appear not as actors, but as instruments in my mother's hands to bring down the ardently admired and envied Hero, in order to substitute herself for him, and make him an object of derision.

If this scenario, patiently uncovered five years ago(\*), is the most extreme and the most violent of its kind that I have experienced, I have nevertheless had ample opportunity since then to detect very similar scenarios in other couples. The work done on my parents' lives has helped me a lot to open my eyes to the things that before had completely escaped me. On the spot however, I was dumbfounded, and with good reason! Today I would tend to believe that, apart from the particular violence with the colours, the kind of antagonistic relationship that I uncovered in the couple formed by my parents is more or less typical in the couple relationship, or at least extremely common. So the reader who, like me, has ended up using his or her faculties to probe the hidden mechanisms of couple antagonisms, or of female-male antagonism, will not be otherwise surprised (not to say shocked) by the little I have said here.

If I try to ignore what is particular to each case, and to identify the common points in the female-male antagonisms that I have seen from close up and in which I have understood something, I come up with this.

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\* See on this subject the two notes "The surface and the depth" and "Praise for writing", n°s 101 and 102.

1. In women, the dispositions of admiration and envy towards the man, due to a prestige (often overrated) that he is endowed with, due to his situation (as a male, notably) and the qualities (real or supposed) that justify it.
2. Often there is an element of resentment, even hatred, due to an amalgam (unconscious, as it should be) between the man (lover or husband, for example) and the father. The antagonistic relationship between the mother and the father is taken over by the daughter, who is identified (in a more or less complete way) with the mother. Often added to this are more direct motives for resentment (towards the father) (his tyrannical attitudes, lack of affection, attention or solicitude etc.). Subsequently, these (and other) feelings of antagonism, "ready to use[*prêts à l'emploi*]", are projected as they are onto the (actual or potential) partner, whether or not the latter "looks the part[*la tête de l'emploi*]".

So when earlier (in 1.) I wrote that the woman's dispositions (of admiration and envy notably) towards the man were "due to a prestige etc.", this is only partly true. It seems to me that most often, the driving force in these dispositions comes from the relationship to the father (even if he is long dead and buried), and that its coming into play depends only to a limited extent on the particular personality of the partner.

3. In compensation for her feelings of inferiority (entirely subjective, needless to say) and veiled antagonism, even animosity or hatred, there is a fear of exercising power over the partner (whereas it is he who, by more or less tacit general consensus, is supposed to hold the authority). The exercise of power by the woman is done by all the means at her disposal (the most powerful are her body and, above all, her children(\*)), and it is almost always covert. The gratification that accompanies it is therefore most often unconscious, but it is no less real and important. Often the game of power becomes all-consuming, it becomes the main content of the woman's life, the one that absorbs almost all her energy, and to which everything else (including the love impulse and the children) is subordinated, even sacrificed, without hesitation.

4. The most extreme, the most torn case, is that in which admiration and envy towards the male, where she has to dominate him while appearing to submit to him, is accompanied by contempt, even disgust and hatred, for what is feminine - for her own condition as a woman. However, it is exactly only by playing on her "femininity" that she can hope to subdue the man, or at least to manipulate him to her liking! Thus, in order to satisfy her strongest egotistic impulse, of "making the partner work" (or even of subduing him, of breaking him...), she is forced to enter fully into a role that is detested, felt to be contemptible, as unworthy of her. It is in this extreme case of refusal of her own condition and nature, that of a superyang and anti-yin option, that she will seek an illusory escape from the conflict she carries within her, by employing all her forces to reach a reversal of roles: she herself substituting for the man, the hero and master, once admired and envied and now fallen, himself reduced to the role she had for a long time worn as an abject livery, to the contemptible role from which she would at last be freed...

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\* The main common "means" however is here passed over in silence, being of a more subtle nature, difficult to evoke in a few words. It consists of a certain all-purpose "tactic", examined in the later part "The claw in the velvet" (notes n°s 137-140) of the reflection on yin and yang.

The sketch I have just made is also schematic, capable at most of evoking a certain reality for those who have already perceived it on their own here and there, without perhaps having yet tried to determine it somehow by a summary description such as this one, if I wanted to give it some relief, I should at least try to specify the different levels (almost all unconscious) on which this set of mutually antagonistic feelings and desires are played out. Moreover, in this tangle of inexorable egotistical mechanisms, from which the love impulse seems to be rigorously [*rigoureusement*] absent, I should also try to situate it; to see to what extent and in what way it contributes to the endless roundabout (like the force of the wind perhaps, captured by the wings of an ingenious mill to make a heavy millstone turn forever...), and to what extent it also happens that the wheels sometimes stop and fall silent, to give free rein to something else.

And finally, I have entirely omitted to talk about what is played out in him, the "partner" or protagonist, as if he only existed in relation to her, as the object of attraction and repulsion, of admiration and envy of the woman facing him. One of the reasons for this omission is undoubtedly that: it is she who, in this carousel of the couple, plays the active role, investing herself fully in it, often finding her true *raison d'être* in it (for want of a better one), whereas he sees nothing but fire in it, busy as he is elsewhere and, moreover, as naïve as can be(\*), reacting in quick succession without trying to understand, and (what's more) without understanding in fact, not even (it seems to me) at the unconscious level. At least that's the impression I've always had, ever since I started paying attention to the couple's carousel! But it is also true that I know much less about the role of the man, since I have only been able to observe it closely in the case of my modest self, whereas I have had the opportunity more than once, on the other hand, to know from the very front row the role of the woman.

In any case, even though I would take great care, on ten pages or in a whole volume, to flesh out my rather schematic description, it would still be a waste of time for a reader who has not yet, in this matter, "made use of his faculties" and who has never seen anything of the kind. As for the reader who is somewhat "in the know", surely the little I have said about it, notwithstanding clumsiness and obscurities, will suffice to put him back into the bath of things he had already perceived by himself, and to arouse in him images and associations no less rich than those which were present in the background, at the time of writing my lapidary description.

It doesn't take much more, it seems to me, to see the "missing link" appear between the antagonism to the "Superfather" (finding its expression in the aforementioned symbolic burial), and the contempt, the refusal of the "feminine", and more profoundly, the denial of "the woman" in oneself (which perhaps will find expression in the symbolic "Burial" of a "Supermother", under a plethora of double-use dithyrambic [*dithyrambiques*] epithets...)(†).

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\* (23 November) Of course, if the carousel is spinning, it's because (however "naïve" he may be) he is enjoying it as much as she is - and she's making it her job to see to it! It seemed to me that the two main "hooks" by which she "holds" him (and by which she too is held...) are vanity, and a need for emotional and love security, guaranteed by a stable partner. And then there are the children...

† (23 November) That no more was needed turned out to be somewhat hasty, so much so that a week later, this conclusion and this "missing link" were entirely forgotten! For the "missing step" to arrive at a more convincing "missing link", see yesterday's note "The reversal of yin and yang (2) - or the revolt" (n° 132).



### **(127) Retrospective (1) or the three strands of a picture**

(13 November) The time seems ripe now to try to trace out in a few broad outlines a vision of the Burial that is both clearer and more nuanced, that (as I wrote the day before yesterday) "encompasses and reunites the previous partial visions, correcting or adjusting them if necessary... ". I can see three such previous visions, which must be recognised as partial aspects of a whole.

The first aspect that emerged, the most obvious and also the most simplistic, was the aspect of "reprisals for a dissent", which was the aspect put forward above all in the note "The Gravedigger - or the entire Congregation" (cf. note 97 p.) - the last note before the illness episode. It is also the one, among those of processions I to X (those before the incident), which seems to me to capture most profoundly the collective motivations, those of the "Gravedigger" alias "The (almost) entire Congregation".

I have just now looked at this note again. The second aspect, which I might call "(more than just symbolic) massacre and (symbolic) burial of the Superfather", does not appear. This is perhaps because this component in the motivations for a Burial does not really concern "the entire congregation", which was at the time the focus of my attention, but above all (if not exclusively) "those who were my pupils". These, it is true, even leaving aside their undisputed leader, my friend Pierre, played a leading role in the implementation of the Burial, which could not have been done without the active contribution of some, and without the acquiescence of all. (See on this subject the note "The silence", (cf. n° 84 p.).) It is therefore through them, above all, that the "Superfather" aspect seems to me crucial for an understanding of the Burial.

The first aspect, the "reprisals" aspect, came to my attention since Yves Ladegaillier's setbacks in 1976(\*); I have tended to forget this aspect since then, but periodically it has come back to my memory, during the following years. It eventually moved beyond the formless stage of what is "felt" but no more, and became the substance of a clear and nuanced understanding, in the quoted note on the "Gravedigger". The second aspect, or "Superfather" aspect, began to appear only in the course of the reflection in Harvest and Sowing(†), and at first(‡) without any connection with the Burial as such, which I was to discover only in the following months. This aspect gradually emerges from the mists throughout the reflection on the Burial, and finally takes a striking form with the notes "The massacre", "The corpse...", "...and the corps" (87, 88, 89). These notes are from 12, 16 and 17 May, the one on the "Gravedigger" is from 24 May; the illness episode appears on 10 June, and puts an end to the continuation of the notes for more than three months, which resume on 22 September. It is at least probable that if this episode (more than unwelcome!) had not appeared, at a time when I was ready to follow up with an assessment of the whole and to draw a final line, my vision of the Burial would have stopped at the one that had emerged in the two weeks between 12 and 24 May - at a vision in "two strands/*volets*", which remained each in its own corner, without the idea of my trying to put them together.

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\* See the two notes "You can't stop progress!" and "Coffin 2: the truncated cuts", n°s 50 and 94.

† (29 November) To tell the truth, this aspect had already been present in the form of an epidermal intuition for many years in my relations with Deligne, but without my ever dwelling on it before the Harvest and Sowing reflection.

‡ In the two sections "The enemy Father (1) (2)", n°s 29, 30.

There was however a diffuse feeling, like a barely perceptible mist, that the final word was still not really grasped; the feeling of that of "groping in the dark" (the expression must have appeared once or twice in the course of my notes on the Burial). The final note of the Gravedigger must have had the effect of a slight gust of wind in the mist, which can give the illusion that the mist has dissipated, when in fact it has only shifted a little. Or to put it another way: the aspect taken up in this note appeared in such clarity and with such relief, that the impression (by no means illusory) of a tangible, penetrating understanding of that aspect, and the feeling of satisfaction that accompanied it (a feeling that was certainly quite apparent at the end of the note) - that this impression and this feeling created a kind of euphoria, of one who feels ready to reach the goal, and made me more or less forget the other strand, however important, the "Superfather" aspect, which had been left "in the cold[*pour compte*]"!

The third strand appeared only three days ago (five months to the day after the appearance of the unfortunate illness-episode). It is the "(symbolic) Funeral and (quite real) Burial aspect of the "feminine", where "feminine" is visualised in a kind of "Supermom", and Herself embodied by my modest person! This very aspect appeared at the end of a long and entirely unforeseen "digression" on yin and yang, in which an effort had finally materialised to arrive at an intelligible expression of a certain "association of ideas" stemming from a certain "Funeral Eulogy", which was supposed to close the Funeral ceremony. This famous "association" or "intuition" (to which I first allude at the very beginning of the note "The muscle and the gut" (yang buries yin (1)), 106) has still not been made explicit - but everything is ready for it, and it has been a while since I promised I would get to it!

Anyway, along the way, a number of facts and intuitions have appeared, some of them new and unexpected for me, and all of them have made me get back in touch meaningfully with important aspects of my life, as well as of existence in general. One of these facts - that the "basic tone" of my mathematical work is "feminine" - seems to contradict one of the intuitions at the basis of this association which is still waiting for its time: the intuition that as a mathematician (as for the rest), I was a thoroughly yang character; an intuition therefore which is linked to the "Superfather" aspect of the Burial. And this same fact, which seems to contradict this association (from which the whole reflection on yin and yang stems!) also conjures up in a flash that third strand which had escaped me until then, the "Supermom" aspect. In the same stroke, the junction with a "Burial" that seemed to have been forgotten for almost a hundred pages is also made (at the end of the ends)!

For the "rising sea", it is rising seas - one must hope that the final result, I mean this promised "vision" that I am about to bring out of limbo, will be kept up to the means, namely a whole sea of philosophical-freudian digressions on yin and yang... The tide was set in motion (with the kick-off note "The muscle and the gut") on October 2, the crucial "new fact" made its appearance in the following days(\*), while I am getting ready to finally put in black and white this famous "association" (which appeared five months before, on May 12 or 13, after the reflection of the note "The Funeral Eulogy (1) - or the compliments", on the same day as the crucial note "The massacre"). But this fact is only "unveiled" in the notes five days ago, on November 8, after three preliminary notes on yin and yang in maths (written during the previous three days). This is the note "The rising

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\* I seem to recall that as early as the day after, in the note "The innocence (the nuptials of yin and yang)" (n° 107), the fact in question had appeared, and was part of the "various signs" referred to in that note (without further elaboration on them), which "made me suspect more than once that... it is the "feminine" qualities that dominate in my being...".

sea... " (122). The day after, on 10 November, with the note "The funeral of yin (yang buries yin (4))" (124)), the "Supermom" makes its appearance (but the word is only mentioned in the note of the following day, "Supermom or Superdad?" (125)). And so here is the "third strand" of the Burial!

It is without any deliberate intention that I have committed myself, under the impulse of the moment, to this retrospective of the reflection on the Burial, in the perspective of the successive appearance of the three main aspects of it (as I see the things at the moment). Such occasional retrospectives, in the course of a long-term meditation, have each time proved most useful, in providing an overview of the process of the reflection, and at the same time a new perspective on some of its main "results"(\*). Perhaps what will strike the hypothetical reader of this retrospective above all, is that I made the detour through such a long digression, rather than coming straight to this famous "association" (still to come) and not talking about it any more, to finally arrive at the famous "final trait" under the Burial; a trait that I was so eager to draw out in the note "The Funeral Eulogy (2)" of September 29, where I was just taking up the harness of the reflection left in suspense in June! It was in this very state of mind that I began the subsequent note three days later, "The muscle and the gut", which begins with an allusion to this association, without giving any details on its subject.

If I did not give it then, and have pushed it off day by day and week by week for a month and ten days already, it is by no means by a deliberate intention, which would have appeared at one time or another. If I try to fathom the cause, I would say that I must have felt instinctively, without even having to tell myself, that at the point where I was then, to write the association in question out of the blue would have made no sense; that it would have been like a mere "statement", purely formal or verbal, while the rich substance covered by words that would have come to me by a pure effect of memorisation, would have remained unnoticed, unperceived. The reader, if he is a mathematician (or a scientist, if he is not a mathematician), has surely experienced many times such a situation and the discomfort it arouses, when we are confronted with a statement which we can easily see is perfectly precise, where moreover we somehow know the meaning of each of the terms used, and of which we nevertheless feel that the "meaning" and the substance escape us completely. The situation is perhaps even much more frequent with texts that are not technical in nature and yet express a tangible substance, strongly perceived by the author; with the difference, however, that it is much rarer for the reader to realise with the slightest degree of clarity that the meaning of what he is reading escapes him. In our case, there was even more - for myself as well, who for months had not been "in the bath" of the Funeral Eulogy and of the associations that had been attached to it, and who for years had not really "plunged" into the reality of yin and yang (while brushing against it with each passing step...) - even for me, what I could have written then to "say" this association, would have been a verbal thing, not really felt or perceived. To resolve to do so, or to put it better, to force myself to do so, would have been a purely formal way, out of a sense of conscience, of discharging

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\* This kind of retrospective seems to me to be very rare in a mathematical work, and I myself have only been practising it since the writing of "Pursuing Stacks" (started in the spring last year). A common working practice, on the other hand, and which has a similar effect, from the point of view of a "new perspective" on the ideas and results of a mathematical work in progress, is to take up "ab ovo" all the notions and statements of the theory one is developing, in the order which appears as the most natural, at the point of understanding at that very moment. Often such a work, which may appear to be purely routine, leads to a substantial deepening of the understanding, for example by making apparent, through the requirements of internal coherence of the new ordering, the notions, properties, relations etc. that are equally "natural", and that had not been seen previously. Sometimes also, by making apparent the fortuitous or artificial character of certain hypotheses, or the narrowness of a whole initial context, the work of "restatement" leads to an unsuspected widening of the initial purpose, which gives the theory initially developed a new dimension and scope.

myself of a sort of obligation, in short "buckling" a chore[*pensum*] while taking care to "give good weight", not to lose on the way such an "association" which (I remembered it well!) had been juicy and smoky, and which had since a long time ago had the time to cool down and moulder in a corner of the memory!

If what I remembered was indeed to serve to deepen an understanding that remained fragmentary, it is clear to me that I could not then do without these hundred pages of "digressions". They form the most profound part of the whole reflection pursued throughout Harvest and Sowing. I cannot yet predict whether the vision of the Burial that I am about to unravel in their wake, will leave me with a feeling of complete satisfaction, or whether there will remain obscure corners or dissonances, which I may give up trying to illuminate or resolve, at least for the time being, or in Harvest and Sowing. But in any case, just as in my mathematical work, I know that each of these hundred pages, like each of the six hundred (or so) of the text of Harvest and Sowing now being written, has its own unique place and message and function, and that I could not have done without any of them (whether or not there are readers to follow me there!). While the goal pursued was far away (if not totally forgotten...), each of these pages brought me its own harvest, which only it could bring me.

### **(127') Retrospective (2) or the knot**

(17 November) I have just gone through four rather difficult days, with a lot of agitation around me. There was no question of continuing on my path, my work on the notes was limited to a little stewardship: rereading of the part of the text which must be entrusted to the typing for good[*au net*], correction of that which is done. Between the "first draft" of the text of each note, reread before I move on to the next note, and the final definitive text, ready for duplication, I therefore do at least three readings, attentively in all three, making adjustments of expression during the first two at least. I will end up knowing the text of Harvest and Sowing very well! But above all, I am doing what is necessary to make sure that the text that will be entrusted to duplication will be truly the best I have to offer, including in its form. With the exception of one of the notes in the Burial, for all the sections and notes in Harvest and Sowing that I have written and reread, I had a feeling of complete satisfaction at the last reading. I felt that I had each time managed to say what I had to say in a way that was as clear and as nuanced as I was capable of doing, without hiding anything that was clear, understood, known to me at the time of writing, nor anything that remained obscure, vague, misunderstood or even entirely mysterious, unknown...

The only exception is the note "The half and the whole - or the crack" of 17 October, from which the "thread" of the meditation was split in two, on the two themes that I have named (in subtitles in the following notes "the key of yin and yang") "Our Mother the Death" and "Refusal and Acceptance"(\*). This is the last part of this note, the two or three pages where I talk about the division in the person as the ultimate root of division and conflict in the couple, in the family and in human society. This is an intuition that first appeared to me in the early years after my "departure" from the scientific world, and which has developed, confirmed and deepened over the years, right up to the present day. It has become so "obvious" to me (although I have never taken the

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\* The need to group together the notes that make up the "digression" on yin and yang by subtitles was felt only a few days ago. This also led me to readjust the names that I had given to these notes, which are therefore quoted in some places under names that are a little different from their final names (but still with the right number). At the same time the ideal name of this set of notes also came up, namely "The key of yin and yang".

trouble to examine it carefully and in all its facets), that it has entered into my reflection somewhat as a matter of course, without any effort to present it in such an "end/*bout*/" as to make this "obviousness" appear at all. But if the reading of these pages leaves me with an impression of vagueness, of dissatisfaction, it is surely not a simple question of "presentation" that is awkward. Rather, I feel that I wanted to jump with both feet over a substantial reflection on this complex theme, a reflection for which I have the feeling that I have all the elements in hand to do it, but which is not yet done! In the note of 25 October ("Paradise lost" (116)), which is directly linked to the note of 17 (in order to develop, from the latter, the theme of "Refusal and Acceptance"), I first try as best I can to "make up for" the gaps I had noticed in the previous note - but without finally saying much more than simply this: that as far as a possible "voyage of the discovery of conflict" is concerned, "it is not in that very direction that I want to pursue now", never mind, it will be for another time!

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In the previous note of four days ago, I had gone through three aspects, or "strands/*volets*", of the picture of the Burial that have emerged so far. Afterwards, I remembered that already at two moments during the reflection on the Burial, I had felt, and written, that I was touching the "knot" of the conflict. This was in the notes "The knot" and "The Funeral Eulogy (2) - or the strength and the aureole" (65, 105). These notes joined the reflections (seemingly "quite general") in an early section of Harvest and Sowing, "Infallibility (of others) and contempt (of self)" (section n° 4). It is the contempt for oneself, the unawareness/*méconnaissance* of the strength that lies within us and gives us power to know and to create, that is also the source of contempt for others, of the endless reflex-compensation of "proving" one's worth by putting oneself above others, by making use of (for example) the derisory power to demean or crush, or simply to inflict pain or to harm.

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### **(128) The parents - or the heart of conflict**

(18 November) Twelve hours of sleep last night - I needed it, after several rather short nights! I feel I've been repumped with energy which was starting to fray a bit - I'm more up for it than I was yesterday, to pick up again the famous "thread" where I left off.

In the two moments that I mentioned yesterday there was a kind of "flash" in me so clear and so strong, that the idea would not occur to me to question it - I mean, to question that it was revealing to me something real, external to my person in this case; that it was not something purely subjective, the product (let's say) of a simple deliberate intention to see the application of some psychological "theory" that I held dear - that it was, in short, the "butterfly" providentially carried off in its net by the butterfly hunter(\*)! To doubt such signs, whether in meditation or in maths or elsewhere, would simply be to abdicate my power to know and discover. I am fortunate enough to know this power, and if there is one thing I have every confidence in, it is in it.

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\* See for this image the note "The child and the sea - or faith and doubt" n° 103.

I could think of seeing in this "flash", in what it taught me, a fourth "part" of the picture of the Burial, which would be added to the other three (reviewed in the note of 13 November). But straight away I see it as intimately connected with the two aspects "Superfather" and "Supermother" - and this obvious connection goes far beyond the person of my friend. This unawareness of the "power to know and create" in us, which I mentioned again yesterday, is nothing other than the unawareness of our fundamental unity, the fruit of the nuptials in our being of the "yin" and "yang", "feminine" and "masculine" qualities, energies and forces. For what is "man" in us, by itself, does not make us capable of knowing or creating, any more than what is "woman" in us, by itself, gives us this power. It is not a factitious and derisory half of our being that has the power to know and to create, but it is the whole, the totality of our being, that has this power. It has it, not as the result of a quest, of a long journey, of a becoming, which we would go through in a state of temporary powerlessness that would gradually accumulate "power" along the way; but this power is ours by nature, we have received it as a free gift, from the day of our birth(\*).

And this "contempt for oneself", or "unawareness of oneself", is also nothing other than the refusal opposed to this gift, the refusal of this fundamental unity, and of the power which is its inseparable companion. Or rather, it is like the inseparable shadow of this refusal, it is the knowing of an impotence(†), instituted by this refusal; a timorous knowing certainly, blurred, not assumed, which takes good care to stop at the known (very badly known...), frightened as it is to plunge deeper, to gain knowing of the hidden unknown power, and blocked by this deliberate, cultivated impotence.

The most common form that this denial of our unity takes, in our superyang society, is the burial day after day, hour after hour of the "yin", the "feminine" in us. This was precisely the "supermother part", alias "Funeral and burial of the "feminine"" and more particularly and above all, of the feminine in ourselves.

But I really feel that there is a direct and deep link between the contempt for oneself and the "Superfather part", alias "massacre and burial of the father". It is this strongly presensed[*pressenti*] link that I would now like to try to identify. To put this "presentiment", this intuition, in another way: there must be a direct and profound link between the division in us, and the antagonism to the father.

It is clear that this "antagonism" finds an opportunity to be expressed as much with regard to the biological father as to the person who took his place in childhood, or with regard to any other person who, at one time or another and for one reason or another, takes the place of a more or less symbolic "replacement father", onto whom the original antagonistic impulses are projected. My aim is therefore to identify the root cause of these antagonistic impulses and attitudes, so common that one might sometimes be tempted to consider them as universal; a cause that goes deeper than a simple set of concrete grievances, which are indeed often quite

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\* And probably[*sans doute*] even long before our birth...

† As I wrote one line later on, this knowing is "blurred", in its essential content it remains unconscious. Often, however, a small piece of it emerges (like the tip of an iceberg whose base remains carefully immersed...), through some sort of profession of faith of impotence, which more than once left me speechless. They are made in the tone of a peremptory and unanswerable statement[constatation], behind which one senses a kind of vehement, fierce closure - as if this impotence which is thus claimed as an intangible and sacred "fact", were the most precious asset, which one would not renounce at any price...

tangible, that one may have against those who gave him his life [*l'auteur de ses jours*]. More than once, I have seen that these grievances are often more in the nature of a plausible and welcome rationalisation, for an antagonism whose real root, cause of its vehemence and tenacity, lies elsewhere.

I could formulate in yet another way this intuition that I am trying to identify, in the form in which it presents itself to me spontaneously: it is that I have the intimate conviction that in the person who is "one", undivided, in the person who accepts himself in the totality of his being - in him, the conflict with the father, or with the mother, is resolved. He is autonomous, "free" from either of his two parents. The umbilical cord that continues to link us to our parents, long after childhood and adolescence (and most often, all the way through adulthood and into death) - in him this link is broken. The moorings are broken, which until a short while ago still held us back from truly setting out, with our own voyage, to the discovery of our Mother the World(\*).

This intimate conviction cannot be reduced to "wishful thinking", it is not the projection of a wish (renamed as "conviction" for the occasion). Its origin is certainly in my experience, and first and foremost in what I have seen in my relationship with my own parents. I am thinking here of the profound transformation that took place in my relationship with my parents in the years following the turning point eight years ago, marked by this "awakening of yin" in me, then by the discovery of meditation in the months that followed, and finally by the "reunion" with my childhood two days later(†). I realise that this turning point was marked by an immediate autonomy, in contrast to an earlier dependence on received and adopted ideas and the like [*notamment*]. The deepest of all these dependencies was the dependency on my parents, whose values and options had shaped mine and my own vision of the world, and from whom I had also taken over "en bloc" and as it was, that is to say, without change, the Epinal image they had of themselves, of the couple they formed and of their relationship to their children. Since my childhood, I had been "functioning" on this set of values, options and images, which were not the fruit of my own life experience and of a work of assimilation of it, but simply a "baggage". This baggage was largely made up of clichés and self-indulgent illusions, which I had taken over

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\* It is a strange thing that in French, the three words "le monde", "l'univers" and "le cosmos" are all masculine. The equivalent words in German, "die Welt", "das Ail", "der Kosmos", are of the three genders feminine, neuter (which is often a kind of "super-feminine" in German), and masculine. This seems to me to correspond better to the nature of the things referred to by these terms. When we speak of the "cosmos", the connotation (apart from space cells and extraterrestrials, of recent invention) is that of an order, governed by laws - ideas which correspond well to the masculine (in which the two languages agree). On the other hand, "the world" and "the universe" suggest the idea of a whole of which we ourselves and everything else are a part; of something, moreover, that it is up to us to discover, to penetrate, to know. In these respects, which seem to me to be essential, both terms refer to things that are "yin", "feminine" in nature, most especially in relation to us. I would be hard pressed to discern why the French language nevertheless assigns them the masculine gender.

In this connection, I would like to point out another strange "anomaly" (?), this time apparently in German, where "le soleil" and "la lune" are said "die Sonne", "der Mond". They have reversed genders compared to those used in French, which would seem to be the most "natural". For, the sun is immediately associated with the idea of heat, of fire, which are typically yang in nature. Perhaps this "anomaly" is common in Nordic languages, because in cold countries, where the heat of the sun is never felt as scorching, burning, but is expected as a blessing, a source of life, the sun is felt (with the earth) as a kind of nurturing mother, who provides creatures with the warmth they "nourish" themselves with as much as with the nourishment that comes from the earth...

† I discussed these crucial episodes in my life in the notes "The reunion (the awakening of yin (1))" and "The acceptance (the awakening of yin (2))", nos 109 and 110, and in the section "Desire and meditation", n° 36.

"with confidence" from my parents, and which very often in my life replaced a direct and living perception, a creative perception of things around me.

It is true that this "autonomy" of which I speak appeared immediately with the discovery of the power of meditation. It was total (I think) in everything I took care to examine, but it does not prevent many received ideas, and in particular and above all those coming to me from my parents, from remaining in place at first by pure effect of inertia, for lack of having been examined yet. There were so many things to look at, there was no way I could look at everything at once! Not to mention that after a few months of intense work, I allowed myself to be distracted by "the life that went on" - the love affairs above all, as you might suspect(\*). For the next two years or so, my meditations were confined to a few occasional reflections of very limited scope, when I found myself confronted with some acute conflict situation, and felt an urgent need to clarify it. It was only after August 1979 (almost three years after the discovery of meditation) that I began the "great cleansing" of the preconceived ideas, about my parents and myself in particular, which continued to clutter me up and block my view of this fascinating world in which I live. The work on my parents' lives absorbed me for seven months, until March of the following year. I was then on the eve of my fifty-second birthday. It was with this work that the autonomy I spoke of, which in a sense had remained only "potential" for three years, became fully actual, complete, irreversible. It was also through this work, and only through it, that I was able to love my parents in the full sense of the term, that is also to say: to accept what they were, or had been, with all that this had implied (and that I was then beginning to glimpse), and in particular, implied for me, their son.

If I felt the need to do this work (128.1) and if I was able to do it, it was because three years before, I had known how to accept this gift of life received at my birth, and refused for forty years - the gift of my unity. Or to put it another way, it was because I had been able to accept my own nature. It was through the acceptance, the love of myself, that I was able to accept, to love my parents(†).

I can also say that it was only through this work that there was a "resolution of the conflict with my parents" - a conflict whose existence I did not suspect even a few years before, when my parents had both been dead for more than twenty years. It is true that the base note in my attitude towards my parents, from my early childhood, had been one of admiring respect, of appreciation[*valorisation*], of unreserved identification, and after their death, a kind of tacit worship of their person and memory. This is not the kind of relationship that is customarily referred to by the term "conflict", suggesting a base note of antagonism, of enmity. In this appreciation coming from my person, my parents of course found their account, they found it very good and in the order of things - and there must be few parents who would not want to be in their place, or who do not congratulate themselves when they are! It was only after this work on my parents, and even more so after the

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\* My love life, in the years following the discovery of meditation in 1976, was more intense, and also more eventful[*mouvementée*] than at any other period in my life. It must have represented a dispersion, a diversion from the initial impetus of meditation, which was not to be resumed (with its proper magnitude) until August 1979, with the long-running meditation on the lives of my parents. (See on this subject the notes "The surface and the depth" and "Praise of writing", n°s 101 and 102). Yet, in retrospect, I realise that I could not yet "do without" this dispersion - a certain passion, a certain hunger within me had to be consumed, and that along the way, I continued to learn, through those whose lover I was, what I had learned only imperfectly during my past life. At the point where I was, I doubt that meditation on this past alone could have taught me whose things.

† This ties in with the reflections at the end of the note "The acceptance (the awakening of yin (2))", n° 110.



work on my childhood that followed, that I was able to realise fully, with full knowing of the facts, how false, how fake[*factice*], how not "real" was this idyllic relationship I had had with my parents. It could only have survived by stubbornly erasing from a touching picture[*tableau*] a quantity of things that did not "fit", including painful periods (of acute antagonism, often felt as a rupture[*déchirement*]), or chronic "blunders", which recurred in the relationship between my mother and me with the same implacable regularity (even if the frequency was less) as it had once been the case between her and my father. Not to mention things that had entirely escaped my knowing on a conscious level, such as the "big cross" I had drawn on my parents at the age of eight, after two years spent in a foreign environment, with a hasty letter from my mother three or four times a year as any sign of life of either of them...

But the deep reason, the real reason, that makes me call the relationship with my parents between the summer of 1933 (when I was five years old) and the winter of 1979/80 (when I was fifty-one) "conflictual", is not that during these forty-six years there were conflicts between me and one or the other or both of them together - whether these conflicts were frequent or rare, violent or latent, conscious or unconscious. It is rather that this relationship was not and could not be assumed (as it was, I mean, without being profoundly transformed). It could only be lived and seen as I lived it and as I saw it, by the effect of a constant, tenacious repression of my faculties of knowing and understanding; by a stubborn refusal to take cognisance of the true nature of this relationship, or at least, of certain essential aspects of this relationship, involving in an essential way each of my parents as well as myself, and the image that I maintained of us. To put it another way, the form that this relationship had taken was perpetuated by a stubborn, incessant escape, from a most tangible reality; a reality that was just as stubborn in making itself known to me again and again, without my ever really learning from it during my parents life. The episodes, sometimes heartbreaking, of clear and undeniable conflict opposing me to one or the other, were only some of the more or less eloquent signs of the "conflictual" nature of the relationship with my parents, that is to say of this repression and escape that took place in my own person.

To put it another way, a "conflictual" relationship to others, in the deep sense of the term, is a relationship that is "divided", one that perpetuates itself equal to itself through a process of repression, of escape from the reality, and which conversely contributes to perpetuating these processes in itself. The signs of "conflict", of "division" in the relationship, can be in the nature of an antagonism, as well as in that of an allegiance; it may be a deliberate expression of criticism or even disesteem or disdain, as well as a deliberate expression of approval or admiration.

And here I am again, without having sought or foreseen it, to what we might call my philosophical "hobby[*dada*]": that the conflict between people is only the 'sign' of the conflict in each of the protagonists, or again: that the "source" of the conflict in the society is the conflict, the division in the person. (The parents in all of this ended up disappearing without a trace!).

This view of things seems to overlook entirely the more simplistic and by far more common view: that the conflict between two people is the result of "interests" or desires in one and the other, which are "objectively" antagonistic that is to say, such that the satisfaction of one can only be achieved at the expense of the other. This is the universally accepted way of looking at it, whether it is a conflict between two distinct people, or an inner conflict within the same person. Thus (in the first case) these incompatible "desires" may be, in either of them, the desire to dominate, to set the tone, to call the shots - certainly a most common case, including between

parent and child (and just as much, between wife and husband, or between female and male lover). By the way, I do not deny all reality, all usefulness to this way of seeing things, in certain cases at least. But I see that it only concerns a superficial reality, while a deeper reality escapes it entirely. To suggest an example in this sense, I would point out that the desire to dominate (or to shine, or more generally, to put oneself above others) has its root precisely in this "contempt for oneself", in this "unawareness of oneself" mentioned earlier, from which one tries to escape by attitudes and behaviour of such a nature that blurs and compensates for this secret disesteem for oneself. Thus, beyond the "objective" conflict of antagonistic desires, we see in this case the conflict in the person taking shape, as a creator of desires of such a nature that they can only arouse and feed the antagonisms to others.

Of course, with these few comments I am not going to exhaust the delicate and important question of the relationship between the two aspects of the conflict, which I would like to call the "superficial" aspect and the "deep" aspect - and this is certainly not the place for this. Rather, I feel the need to return to the theme of conflict with the father, or conflict with the parents, from which I was drifting away. At one point I could have given the impression (and even let myself be carried away by it for a few moments!) that the conflict with a parent, or with Pierre or Paule, was all the same. I know however that this is not the case! I know that the conflict with the father, the conflict with the mother, is at the heart of the conflict within ourselves.

I spoke earlier, in this direction, of my "intimate conviction" (which I would as well call a knowing in me, a thing well understood), that in the one who is not divided in himself, the conflict with the parents is resolved. This knowing, I have said, comes to me above all (I believe) from the experience of the resolution of the conflict in my relationship with my parents(\*). Another way of putting it is that the acceptance of our parents (that is to say, the cessation of conflict with our parents) is a part of the acceptance of ourselves. They are (in relation to us) both our origins, and our conditioning (or a good part of it, at least). The first of these things (our origins) is inseparable from our person, whatever our path and destiny; the other (our conditionings) is deeply rooted in us, and as such is part of our person as well as our origins. To deny the true reality of our mother or our father, whether the refusal is expressed in antagonism or in allegiance, is also to deny an essential part of ourselves and of what has been our life as far back as we can remember...

There is still more. It was through our mother and father, before all others, that the conflict that was in both of them was transmitted to us. (This is what was expressed a few moments ago by the terse term "our conditionings"!) Thus they are linked to the conflict in ourselves, more closely than any other person in the world. And the first outward projection of this conflict in us, the oldest and most crucial of all, is the conflict to our mother and father. So it seems to me that the conflict within ourselves, and the conflict with both our parents, are indissolubly linked - they are like one and the same conflict. Sometimes I have expressed the "intimate conviction" that when the conflict within us is resolved (or at least, when it is resolved at its root, in the "yin versus yang" division), then our conflict with our parents is resolved as well; or, to put it another way, that the resolution of the conflict within us comes through [*passe par celle*] the resolution of the conflict with our parents. But I am convinced that the reverse is also true: that as soon as the conflict with our parents is

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\* See on this subject the following footnote.

resolved, the conflict within us is resolved at the same time(\*). It is in this way that I see the relationship to our parents as a key role in our spiritual journey, a unique role that belongs to no other among our relatives, be it spouse or child, or friend, teacher, or student.

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### (128.1)

(1 December)† The importance for me of "getting to know my parents" was revealed to me by a dream, which came to me on 28 October 1978. It was a dream about the agony of my father. This agony stretches over days and nights of painful struggle, surrounded by the busy indifference of those around him, while by the tacit consensus of all he is considered "already dead" - "it was like a verdict, which would have made his death effective, cutting short all doubt". When I woke up, I recounted the dream, but for the next three months I evaded any reflection on it, to the point of making it sink into the penumbra of a half-forget. In short, I then "buried" the death of my father, of which this dream spoke to me, within this dream (which evoked a crucial aspect of my waking life) I "buried" my still living father. There was resistance of considerable force against the clear and penetrating message of this dream, which was of overwhelming beauty. They were resolved after a first night of persistent meditation on the meaning of the dream, on the following 31 January, followed by four more meditations in the next three weeks.

This dream made me understand that my relationship with my father and mother was a frozen, "dead" relationship, cut off from a living reality whose perception was repressed - just as (in the dream) the perception of an agony declared null and void was repressed, and the spontaneous action that resulted from it: to assist the one who, painfully and abandoned by all, is fighting to live.

The first thing to put an end to this isolation in me, was to get to know my parents. I had no idea at the time of the dimensions of the task, I imagined that "in a few hours" I could get "to the heart of the matter"! The idea of

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\* I might give the impression here of posing as "the one who has resolved the conflict within himself". It is quite true that it is without reservation that I say that the conflict with my parents is resolved, totally. It is also true that the conflict in myself continues to be felt in many ways, it has not disappeared. This is something that is certainly well apparent on every page of Harvest and Sowing, and it is also something that I have had more than one occasion to emphasise in this or that case. This would seem to contradict the statement commented on in this footnote, "that as soon as the conflict with our parents is resolved, the conflict within us is resolved at the same time". Yet, in a certain sense (the one I had in mind when writing these lines), it is indeed true that "the conflict in me is resolved". At least, something essential in this conflict, at its very root, is well and truly resolved, by this knowing of my unity, by this acceptance of myself. If the conflict is likened to a tree with strong and deep roots, it can be said that when the root is cut or dried up, the tree is already dead, whereas through the inertia acquired, the trunk and the main branches still remain in place, dry up and disintegrate little by little through time/*le temps de...*. I can feel this gradual "drying up" of the conflict over the years, like a once strong and lively hold that is loosening little by little. The writing of Harvest and Sowing seems to me to be one of the stages in this process, among many others over the past eight years. Another image to try to describe this same reality, is that of a deep calm that gradually spreads out, like the calm of a deep sea, which is not affected by the eddies that agitate the surface. I expressed myself in a more detailed manner on this subject in the two notes "The reunion (the awakening of yin (1))" and "The acceptance (the awakening of yin (2))", n°s 109, 110.

† This note is derived from a footnote to the previous note n° 128 "The parents - or the heart of conflict".

getting to know myself, particularly through my childhood, did not cross my mind at the time. This need was felt later, and it was to follow spontaneously from the voyage I was about to undertake. This journey began only six months later, in August 1979, because of the long digression (which was by no means useless in many respects) which constituted the episode "Eulogy of the Incest". (See for this one the note "The Act" (113).)

Along with the dream of October 18, 1976 (triggering the "reunion"), this dream about the agony of my father is one of the two dreams that most strongly affected the course of my life. The resistance to his message was much stronger, it seems to me. The message of the first was received within hours of waking up, while the second was pushed back for months. It did not begin to be fulfilled until nine months later, by my departure on a voyage of discovery that continues to this day...

It is only in these last few days that I have come to the rapprochement between the meaning of this dream and the reality of the Burial that I am trying to penetrate in the present reflection. This funeral in which I am the "principal deceased" appeared to me a while ago as a "return of things" (see the note of the same name, (73)). This time, I see a "return of things" again, but from an entirely unexpected angle. Indeed, in the Burial I appear alternately as "The Father" and as "The Mother". The idea had never occurred to me that I had ever been in the analogous position of a son, "burying" alive (whether symbolically, or by tacit consensus) his father or his mother, quite the contrary! And I had strong reasons indeed for being persuaded of the contrary, reasons which I mention for the first time at the end of the note "the massacre" (in the context, it is true, of the massacre of the Father, and not of his burial). (I returned to this in a more detailed way in the note "The innocence (the nuptials of yin and yang)" (107).) In writing these last two paragraphs about my early childhood, in the note "The massacre", surely I must have given the impression (and even, been under that impression myself at the time) that my relationship with my father was free of conflict throughout my life. This is what a superficial look at this relationship might also suggest. But already in the note commented on here, "The parents - or the heart of conflict", where I do not confine myself to such epidermal impressions, it becomes clear that this is not the case, that this view of things (which was indeed mine until 31 January 1979) was one of the illusions I was happy to entertain for the most part of my adult life. This illusion became clear to me the moment I finally took the trouble to examine the meaning of the dream about the agony of my father - the most beautiful of all the dreams that life has given me so far. This dream presents the hold of the conflict on my relationship with my father with a striking realism - and it also makes me experience the resolution of this conflict. The conflict is resolved by the effect of a rupture in me with the consensus decreeing the death of my father, a rupture that suddenly opens the door to something else - and by a gesture of love from my father, signifying to me that he had heard the cry that my constricted throat could not let out to him...

The deep kinship between the experience of this dream, a striking parable of a frozen relationship with my parents (which suddenly comes back to life...), and the reality of the Burial that I have been probing for nearly nine months, now appears to me with the force of an evidence. It is remarkable that during all this long reflection and until these very last days, the thought of this kinship did not cross my mind. I ended up "stumbling upon it" by sheer chance, in connection with a footnote in which I intended to point out, for all practical purposes, the role that once again a certain dream had played (in triggering a reflection on my parents), among so many others over the past eight years that have been like providential beacons on my path. This *[propos]* had the effect of putting me somewhat back in contact with the experience and substance of this

dream, which I am still very far from having exhausted. Once this contact had been re-established, it was hardly possible, given the context, for the kinship with the Burial not to become apparent.

It is true that this kinship, for the moment, concerns a certain "knot" only, whereas in this dream and in the reality it transcribes, there is the knot, and its resolution. This resolution, moreover, which the dream had made me experience, the flavour and strength of which I have known since that very night, it was up to me and to no one else to make it a lived reality in my waking life as well, in my relationship to my father and my mother. I was free to do so, or not to do so - and for months, the second option was my choice! Today - five years after that resolution - it is surely still the same, in this somewhat symmetrical situation where I am involved, while I am the one who acts as the Father buried by a consensus-verdict, where I had been the son who piously buries his father alive in the flesh! And perhaps this time again it is through a meditation on the meaning of my experience, in this case, on the meaning of this Burial, that this other knot in which I find myself engaged will be resolved, and that perhaps another part of the weight of my past will dissolve.

As to whether this meditation will be of any use to anyone else but me - to such and such a protagonist, perhaps, of this Burial in which I am not the only one to be buried, and where legions are the buriers who have flocked to the Funeral - that need not be my concern; nor should I worry about whether such and such a knot as I see in another will be resolved or not. That is his job, I have enough of my own! But if by any chance it should resolve itself while I am alive, surely I shall be one of the first to be informed and I shall be glad of it...

### **(129) The enemy Father (3) - or yang buries yang**

Decidedly, in the previous pages(\*), I have barely touched on the theme of conflict with parents, and not even that of the conflict with father, which had been my starting point. The associations of ideas that I followed from there would seem to have led me away from it, rather than to have dug into it. In what I have just said about the conflict with the parents, the role of the mother and father are interchangeable, just as it is indifferent whether the "we" referred to in these pages refers to a man, or a woman. However, in our relationship to parents, the mother and the father are far from playing a symmetrical role, and the role played by each of them depends in a crucial way on whether "we" are a boy or a girl (who have since become a man, or a woman).

In the case in question, the conflict with father (expressed by the symbolic burial of the latter, or even by his massacre) interests me first and foremost in the case of those whom I know to have actively participated in my burial, who are all men. Therefore, the father, in the structuring of the self, is the one with whom one identifies, on whom one models oneself, in one's relationship to others (and more particularly, to women), and in one's relationship to oneself. It is very rare that this identification is made without any significant "blunder", and antagonism to the father is one of the traces of this, tenacious if ever there was one. This is not the place to try to go into the details of these blunders, of all that often tends to go wrong, even for the little boy who is best disposed to take his example from dad; nor to examine the form[*expression*] they tend to take in the relationship with the father. My own experience on this subject is so atypical that I would perhaps be less well placed than anyone else to make such an inventory, since I do not have an intimate sense, from my own experience, of the

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\* Those of note n° 128, of which this is an immediate continuation.

ins and outs and the particular "flavour" of any of the main cases(\*). My experience here is mainly indirect, through what I have observed around me, and first and foremost in the relationships of my children to me.

Beyond the particular nature of the "blunders", and the grievances and resentments towards the father drawn from them, there is a common aspect, however, that I have strongly perceived on many occasions, where all deliberate "explanatory" statements were entirely absent. It is that the antagonism of the boy or man towards the father, who has served him somewhat as a model and whom he reproduces, in the "positive" or "negative" (by imitation, or by opposition), whether he wants to and recognises it or not - this antagonism is nothing other than an aspect, particularly eloquent and crucial, of an antagonism towards himself. More precisely, it is the outward sign, through the (more or less clearly expressed) rejection of the father, of the rejection of a part of himself; of the part, surely, by which (unbeknownst to him, or against certain conscious or unconscious choices) he resembles his rejected model - his father.

So, I'm back on my feet - I see this presensed link between "contempt for oneself" (or "refusal (or unawareness) of oneself"), and "antagonism to the father" becoming clearer - but I have fallen back on an unexpected side. I was prepared to find a more or less direct link between this antagonism to the father, and the refusal of the self in the form of the refusal (or the "burial") of the feminine in one's own person. Instead of this, I seem to be falling back (though I should have expected it, with "good logic") on the refusal of the masculine. However, I am well aware that this refusal, which is less obvious and more hidden in men than the refusal of the feminine in them (which I have had occasion to talk about), is only slightly less rare, and that it weighs on them just as heavily. Often it is added to the other, so that, in whatever way the self is structured, whether in yin or yang colours, one is sure to be unacceptable to oneself! Or to put it another way, this refusal of the father, or the refusal of what is "masculine", "virile" in oneself and makes us resemble the father, often goes hand in hand with the unreserved adoption (in the absence of a "yin" counterbalance, rejected) of a system of values that is "yang", "macho" with a touch of zinc!(†)

The idea comes to me that this contradiction (truly frightening indeed, once said and written in black and white!) is no doubt also the real nerve in this merciless competition, which is one of the characteristics of our supermacho society (and this as much in the high spheres of science, as anywhere else...). For if "climbing[*monter*]" and "surpassing[*dépasser*]" are superyang values par excellence, these values would undoubtedly not be internalised with such vehemence, nor would they be put into practice with such brutality (even if it were muffled, when it comes to the "high spheres"...) if in the rival who is in a better position than we are, whom we have to surpass or even oust, we did not at the same time see looming before us the formidable shadow of the Father, at once admired, envied, and secretly hated - the one who was there before us, and whose very existence, as far back as we can remember, has been the great challenge in our lives.

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\* Compare with the reflections at the end of the note "The Massacre", n° 87 .

† (29 November) This is by far the most frequent case of which I am aware.

### (130) The arrow and the wave

(19 November) I felt quite impatient again to continue the reflection where I had left it. It has been a week, in fact (since the note of 12 November, "The vehement wife (the reversal of yin and yang)" (126), that I have had the feeling day after day that I am about to enter "into the heart of the matter" - to come to the overall picture of the Burial that I had promised myself, which would bring together the partial "strands/*volets*/" that had emerged in the course of reflection - and a week also that the "point" in question is being pushed back day after day. Every day when I finish my note (since I have to stop and go to bed, when the time gets late), I feel that I have done a work that I couldn't avoid doing, that I have "advanced" a step - but at the same time I have the impression that the "point" where I want to get to has receded as well! The obvious temptation here, is to continue at one go until I arrive at the famous "heart of the matter". But after the "health incidents" of the last three years, I also know very well that this is the blunder to avoid.

Actually, I know very well, deep down, that I'm in the middle of it, in the "heart" of the matter in question. I'm just gnawing at the bit that I've done it all. This impatience to have reached the end of a task, this *élan* towards this "point" or "heart of the matter", intensely perceived in front of me - close by, or far away, it doesn't really matter - this attraction of the "goal" on me which projects me forward, like an arrow dashing towards its target - this very aspect which seems to me to be the most intensely "yang" of my person, characterises my way of being outside of work time. It is a prominent aspect of the "boss", of what is conditioned, acquired in me. Nothing, in what I know of my early childhood, could have presaged this character, which appeared later in my childhood, and which has so strongly marked my entire adult life to this very day.

In the work itself, this aspect seems to have almost disappeared. I have the impression that the little that remains here and there is neither more nor less than the sign of the occasional interference, discreet I must say, of the boss in the course of the work (where, to tell the truth, he has no use for it!). The work itself, at the discretion of the Worker who through my hands works at his own rhythm, is done according to a completely different breath. The impatient ardour fades away in favour of a calm, peaceful and obstinate. There is no longer an arrow, hastening towards a target, but a wave that stretches out very far and advances to who knows where, where the moving force that animates it carries it - a wave followed by another wave, followed by yet another... There is no hesitation in this movement, in every place and at every moment it has a direction all of its own which carries it, or draws it forward. In every moment there is a progression, towards what one cannot say, there is a "work" accomplished in a movement that ignores the effort - and there is no goal. The very idea of a "goal" here seems strangely preposterous - where on earth would one place it?! The goal has disappeared, just as the arrow. If there is an arrow, it is not a vibrating arrow that shoots into the heart of a target to come crashing down and get ruined in it - but in each place of this moving mass of waves following one another there is an unequivocal movement and force, there is a direction in a progression, as precise and sharp as an arrow, invisible and yet imperious that would mark this direction, this force, this movement.

Thus, it seems to me that in my work, I am as "yin", as "sea and motion/*mouvance*", as one can be. This has been the case, I believe, with all the work of discovery in my life, with all the work I have engaged in with passion, and above all, with my mathematical work and meditation work. And now that I have unexpectedly described in an image, imperious and sudden, how I feel about this work, it seems to me that this image at the same time also describes the movement of my life, from the day of my reunion with myself, and perhaps

already before, perhaps from the moment of my "salutary uprooting" from a cosy home[bercail/](\*). At the very least, it describes the "how" of my life at the deep level, that of the "calm" of which I spoke (just a few hours ago) in one of the footnotes to yesterday's note - a calm that is not affected by the turmoil that takes place on the surface. In this deep stillness, there is movement and progress, but there is no purpose - the goal has disappeared.

And I also remember now that it was this same image that came to me in March, when I spoke of the manifestations of my two passions, meditation and mathematics, as "the up-and-down movement of waves following one another, like the breaths of a vast and peaceful respiration..."(†). Now, eight months later, I think I recognise in these images the spontaneous movement of my being, in what is most spontaneous, in what is truly original in me - in what comes from the child eager to know, before the concern for appearances and the craving for becoming touches him...

### **(131) The mystery of conflict**

(20 November) Yesterday evening was spent almost entirely rereading the notes of the previous day, correcting them on the way, retyping a page that was decidedly too overloaded, writing the footnotes (planned from the previous day) - and already it was midnight! But I was hasting to move forward again that same evening, if only a little, and went back to my typewriter, to resume the interrupted "thread" of the previous day. And then something completely different came up - the image of the arrow and the wave. For a long time I had recognised myself in the image of the arrow, whereas the image of the wave seemed to correspond to a temperament quite different from mine. It is one of the surprises, which appeared in the course of this reflection on yin and yang, that it is however this image of the wave that expresses in the most striking way, and with the most accuracy, the "base tone" which prevails in my being, when "the boss" is far away, or at least when he gives way to something else. The image rose, as if it had been there all ready, waiting only for the words that would finally make it take shape. They came without haste and without hesitation, as I simply endeavoured to describe, as faithfully as possible, without retracting or distorting anything, what still remained in the state of a diffuse feeling.

The description was completed, it was around two in the morning. I reread these two pages that same night, there were no alterations to be made, so to speak. The most delicate passage was the one where I tried to describe this intuition of a continuous infinity of "arrows", closing like a "field" of forces. It was an idea that presented itself with force, and which seemed reluctant to let itself be evoked by language. I felt, however, that this was an important aspect of the whole image, the "yang in the yin" aspect. In the wave there is "the arrow", there is an élan that carries it forward, following a motion of its own and which is not that of one arrow, but rather that of a whole multiplicity, a continuous multiplicity that restitutes with flexibility this motion of the wave. And I also knew well that in my work I was also an "arrow"; but I was following a different mode than the one I had imagined until now, for lack of having ever taken the time to look at this work with any attention, to impregnate myself with it as if it were another than me, in order to perceive the tonality that is its own. If I

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\* See note of the same name, n° 42.

† See the end of the section "My passions", n° 35, from which these lines are extracted.



have not done so earlier, in the eight years that I have been meditating, it is undoubtedly because I have remained unknowingly the prisoner of an inveterate deliberate intention: that of identifying myself with the "boss" in me, rather than with the child-Worker; that is also to say, when I speak of "me", to think first and foremost (perhaps even exclusively, very often) of the one I am when it is the "boss" who is in the forefront. More or less, these are also precisely the moments outside of my work.

The necessities and vagaries of teaching (among other things) ended up, however, since the discovery of meditation, drawing my attention to certain traits of my work - namely, those features which I felt were universal in nature, that they should be present in all creative work, in all work of discovery(\*). But before the present reflection on yin and yang, I had not yet thought of discerning in my own work the distinctive traits, which make it different from that of any other. One of these traits, which seems to me the most crucial of all, is finally identified in the note of 8 November "The rising sea..." (122). The image first evoked in that note, in the typical context of a conjecture that needs to be proven, is taken up again in yesterday's notes, in a different light, outside any particular context.

I am finally taking up the thread of the reflection, where it left off the day before yesterday. I had set out(†) with the intention of trying to identify the deep cause of antagonism to the father, beyond the particular grievances upon which one may feed [*nourrir*] against him. Following the associations of ideas that presented themselves with force, I first moved away from this aim, being led above all to speak of the conflict with the parents, father or mother indifferently. This "conflict" can take the form of allegiance (as it did in my case), as well as antagonism. Since my work on the life of birth parents, this "conflict with parents" appears to me as being truly "at the heart of the conflict" in ourselves. Resolving the latter, I am convinced, is no more, no less than resolving the conflict with the parents, that is to say: to be free from them, to be fully autonomous spiritually, to pursue one's own voyage...

Returning again to the antagonism to the father, in man, I have regained contact with an intuition that has dawned on me many times over the last few years: it has occurred to me that the deeper meaning of this antagonism to the father is the refusal of that in us which makes us resemble the father, of the appearance and the virile traits of our person. I have made this last part of yesterday's reflection(‡) a separate note, with the name "The enemy Father (3) - or yang buries yang" - thus also suggesting, by this name, the link with the two sections "The enemy Father (1), (2)" (n°s 29,30), where this theme of the "enemy father" appeared for the first time.

Thus, the aspect of the Burial which was discussed at the beginning of the day before yesterday's reflection, namely the aspect of "contempt for oneself", or "unawareness of oneself" or "refusal of oneself", appears as a

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\* The first written text, I believe, in which I mention some of these traits, is that of October 1978, "As a Programme" (alluded to in the note of 6 November, "The beautiful unknown" n° 120). After that text, I did not bother to spell out and elaborate in black and white my observations on this subject before the Harvest and Sowing reflection this year. Its first eight sections are essentially devoted to this theme, not to mention many other comments scattered throughout this reflection.

† In the note "The parents - or the heart of the conflict", n° 128.

‡ In fact, this is not the note from yesterday, but from the day before yesterday, on which I am about to follow up here.

kind of hyphen, or better still, a "hinge", between the two preceding strands, the strand "Supermother - or burial of the "feminine"" and the strand "Superfather - or massacre and burial of the father". This hinge-like nature becomes apparent as soon as it is clearly perceived that in the first of these strands, "the feminine" is above all else, "the feminine in us" (as was indeed perceived already in the note of 10 November "The funeral of yin (yang buries yin (4))", where the "Supermom" strand makes its appearance); and furthermore, that "the father" is above all the symbolic substitute for the "masculine in us". Thus the two aspects in question are perfectly symmetrical strands, corresponding to the two obvious "cases of the figure" of the "refusal of the self" - namely, the refusal of "the woman" (alias the Mother) in us, and the refusal of "the man" (alias the Father) in us(\*). And the theme of the conflict to the parents, which is a kind of conjunction or superposition of the two distinct themes of the conflict to the mother, and to the father, also appears as a kind of hinge. Or to put it better, according to what was seen in yesterday's reflection(†), this theme appears as inseparable from that of the refusal of the self, the one and the other being two distinct aspects of the same undivided reality, that of the conflict in ourselves.

In all of this, it would seem that the original intention, to "identify the root cause of antagonism to the father", still remains outstanding. I could say that antagonism to the father is one of the forms taken by the antagonism to the self, or the refusal of the self. Therefore, the initial question seems to split into two. On the one hand, for what "causes" does the refusal of the self take, in certain cases, this particular form? To probe it, is also to enter in a somewhat detailed way into a certain number of different typical situations, which are likely to give rise to such antagonism.

On the other hand, we come back to the question, which is even deeper and more crucial, of the "cause" of the refusal of the self, that is also to say, of the cause of the conflict, of the division within us. I think I have grasped at least the common mechanism, by which the generational conflict is transmitted - the refusal of ourselves in us is nothing other than the internalisation of the refusal of ourselves by our surroundings from our early years - of the refusal of at least certain aspects and impulses in us, which form an essential part of our original being, of our creative faculties. I touch on this aspect of things (among others) in the "Refusal and acceptance" part of "The key of yin and yang", and more particularly in the first two notes "Paradise lost" and "The circle" (116), (116').

To have grasped this common "mechanism" of the transmission of conflict, does not at all mean to have understood the cause of conflict in us and (through us) in human society. Why, at all times and in all places (by the unanimous testimonies that have come down to us through the ages), does "the Society" not tolerate that those who constitute it are whole beings? That is to say the beings in full possession of their creative faculties, who do not repress at great cost a part of what they are, considered as so shameful (or so dreadful...) that it is better to ignore that it exists, and tacitly rule/*statuer* that it does not...

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\* I recall that it is by no means rare for the two kinds of "symmetrical" refusals to superimpose on each other in the same person. Given the devaluation of yin in our society, it must be quite rare, in any case, that the refusal of yin is not present in a more or less pronounced form. So I would be tempted to see in the antagonism to the father a sign (at least presumptive) of a double refusal of yin and yang.

† See the second to last footnote.

This is for me one of the great mysteries of existence, the greatest mystery perhaps(\*)).

There was a time, just a few years ago, when my attitude towards the universal reality of repression and conflict was one of militant revolt - revolt against that "sword", which sought to cut in two that which, by its nature, should be one, was one. This was also my attitude, when I wrote the Eulogy, five years ago(†). It was through the subsequent long-term meditative work, on the lives of my parents, that this attitude changed. Through this work, which day after day brought me into intimate contact with the manifestations of the conflict in my parents, and which patiently led me from the manifestations to their meaning and to their cause - through this work I finally came to feel the mystery of the conflict. The revolting attitude had disappeared, as if it had never been. It had been an epidermal reaction, a simple dispersion of energy. A revolt - against whom? Not against a person or a group of people, against the famous "Them..."! We are all in the same boat, and we have been here for one or two million years... Revolt against "God"? That would have been the last straw.

Deep down, I have known well, for a long time (I can't even say since when, even though for a long time I have pretended to ignore it...) that everything in this world has its own good reason to be, and even, if you understand the essence of things, surely everything is good as it is. Death and the "afterlife" of death (if there is such an afterlife) is one of these things. It is a mystery, and if there is a "faith" in me about this matter, it does not in any way consist of "articles of faith" about the existence (or non-existence) of an afterlife and its particulars, but simply of this simple assurance: that things are perfect as they are, including everything about death, and also everything about birth, which is just as mysterious. For a long time, however, I had excluded "the conflict" from the number of these things - I took it to be a kind of "blunder", an inadmissible blemish[*blémisure*], a stubborn and crazy (even revolting) "quack[*couac*]" in the concert of Creation. It was enough for me to finally gain a somewhat intimate knowing of the conflict, instead of wasting my time pretending to fight with it, for my relationship with it to be profoundly transformed.

The mysteries of death and "after death", of birth and "before birth", are not unique to our species. The questions they raise have a meaning for all living things, perhaps even for all things, from the electron to the

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\* This suggestion is purely subjective, it simply reflects the fact that, among the "great mysteries of existence", this is the one that I feel in a particularly strong way, in a way that goes beyond mere intellectual curiosity. It is the only one that arouses in me a desire to fathom it, to know it, to know "the last word" (insofar as it can be known, with the limited faculties that are mine). The difference is the same as in mathematics, between the open questions that "I can feel well[*je sens bien*]" (into which I could launch myself immediately), and those that I "understand" in the technical sense of the term, whose scope I perceive (at a superficial level), but which "do not make me hot or cold". The Riemann hypothesis is part of the latter (no doubt due to my great ignorance of analytical number theory), and the "theorem of Fermat" was part of it until a few years ago. It is my "abelian" reflections that have changed my attitude towards the latter, while my ignorance of the work it has given rise to is still as great as before.

† This episode is mentioned several times in Harvest and Sowing, the last being in the note "The Act", n° 113.

nebula. The mystery of conflict, on the other hand, seems to me to be specific to man, to the human species(\*). It appears to me as the great mystery of the particular meaning, the particular destiny of our species. The "explanations" that have been given, by ethnologists and psychologists, at least those I have heard of, are obviously nothing but rationalisations, to justify the repression undergone and internalised, as indispensable for the smooth running and for the very existence of the society; a bit like in a society of one-armed or one-legged people, there will be no shortage of eminent theorists to prove by A plus B (without anyone thinking of contradicting) that a society where people have the use of both arms (or both legs) could in no way function well(†). These are poorly construed [*cousues de fil blanc*] justifications, endeavouring to conceal a mystery with explanations that present themselves as "scientific". In fact, the question of the origin and meaning of conflict (or of repression) in human society remains purely rhetorical, as long as the person who pretends to ask it has not gone through an intense and thorough work of getting to know the conflict in himself, and the origins of the conflict in him. In the absence of such knowing of oneself, this question (just as the questions on the nature of liberty, or of love, or of creativity) is a modern equivalent of the medieval question of the famous "sex of angels" - an exercise in style with nothing more, to manage to "fit" what must be fitted in anyway. This question is not strictly speaking a "scientific" question, a question whose examination does not presuppose a maturity, but simply a certain preliminary knowledge, and a certain level of power or intellectual agility(‡).

In this case, it is not a question of trying to guess somehow the mechanisms by which repression has been established in human society, that is to say to find an explanation for the fact of repression. Even if we could come to a plausible, even convincing scenario, I wouldn't feel that it would be much of an advance anyways. It might shed some light on an interesting aspect of the mystery - the "mechanical" aspect, in short - without penetrating it nevertheless. Neither the detailed results of palaeontology and molecular biology, nor even Darwin's profound ideas, really penetrate the mystery of the appearance of life and its creative flourishing on the earth, over the past three or four billion years. What interests me, in the mystery of conflict, is not the mechanical, scientific aspect, an aspect that is as external to my person as the famous "theorem of Fermat". But

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\* (3 December) It may be objected (with good reason) that the conflict, in the form of aggression and confrontations between individuals or groups of individuals, exists within species other than our own. When I speak of "conflict" here, I am thinking of the specific form it takes in human society, and in particular of its deep links with the division and repression in the person - repression of the major part of his being, and in particular repression of his means of the perception of reality, and of the perception itself. The various forms of repression seem to me to be rooted in the one that seems to me to be the most crucial of all, the so-called "sexual" repression, which inculcates shame of one's own body and of the functions and impulses of the body (or at least, of some of these functions and impulses). These are mechanisms unknown outside the human species, as far as I know. I may be wrong to use the terms "conflict", "division", "repression" almost as synonyms, or at least as terms that designate different aspects of the same reality. I explained a little about the meaning of the word "conflict" for me in the note "The parents - or the heart of the conflict", n° 128.

† Just as in the days of slave societies, for "the best spirits" (who were also served by slaves) as well as for others, it was taken for granted that "no society without slaves". Apparently, it was only when Plato had the unexpected good fortune to find himself a slave that he began to see things differently.

‡ (3 December) That the question of the meaning of conflict is not a matter for science might give rise to the expectation that we can find elements of an answer in myths and in religions. It seems to me however that this is not the case. From what I know, it would seem that one of their essential functions, not to say their main function, is to establish a "law" which, for the most part, consists of a "package" of prohibitions through which the repression, in a particular society, is materialised. This law, which is presented as being of being sacred in essence, does not have to justify itself, nor explain its "meaning", and even less so the common meaning between this law and other laws which govern other societies.

it is the question of the meaning of conflict. This meaning concerns me in an immediate and essential way, as it concerns each of the countless men and women, who have torn and killed each other over the course of countless generations, and who have passed on to their children the conflict taken from their parents.

That there must be a meaning to the conflict, and that I can know this meaning at all, is surely part of the "faith" I spoke of earlier. This is something obvious to me - and that very familiar "sense of mystery", that there is something deep to be probed, tells me at the same time that this "something" is precisely that meaning. The "faith" in question overlaps with a faith in my faculties, when they reveal to me, here without a shadow of a doubt, that there is a "meaning" in front of me to discover.

Perhaps one day, this meaning will become apparent, as if I had always known it! This mystery does not at all seem to me to be distant, unapproachable. It presents itself to me as something very close, which it would be up to me to know it more intimately. And surely I can now perceive a way to approach it, or rather an aspect that already seems to be giving me a friendly sign. After all, the conflict has much to teach me, and it has already taught me a lot...

### **(132) The reversal (2) - or the ambiguous revolt**

(22 November) This makes two consecutive notes in which I see myself embarking on excursions that are completely outside the programme - this time I'll be careful to start at the outset with what was planned, for once. I would like to examine one of the "typical situations" mentioned (without further precision) in the previous note, situations likely to give rise to an antagonism to the father, and more profoundly, a (more or less radical) rejection of the virile traits in oneself (a rejection that finds its symbolic expression in the rejection of the father). I had remembered the situation in question as early as the reflection of 18 November, ending with the note "The enemy father (3) - or yang buries yang". My intention then was to put my finger, in this 'typical situation' at least, on a direct link between rejection of the masculine and rejection of the feminine.

The case in point that is closest to me, and on which I had also worked at length, is that of my mother. All her life, she had wallowed [*complue*] in a barely disguised contempt for everything that is feminine, she had modelled herself on masculine values excessively, and at the same time her relationship with men had been, since her adolescence, a "viscerally" antagonistic one(\*). I had the great fortune that my mother spoke to me very freely about her life since her childhood, and to also have at her disposal very detailed autobiographical notes up to the first years of her life living together with my father, not to mention a voluminous correspondence. This, in addition to what my own experience in contact with her has given me, is a material of exceptional richness, which I am far from having exhausted. I have, however, done enough work on it to have felt, without any doubt, that the double refusal in her that I have just mentioned, refusal of the feminine and antagonism towards the man, had its roots in a torn relationship with the father. The latter, an endearing man in many respects, generous, honest, and affectionate, had become embittered in the course of a long social decline in post-war Germany (the one of 14-18, I mean), as it had been for so many. In fact, this decline had already

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\* In contrast to her contempt for the feminine, this visceral antagonism, which is shown through a vehement and eventful love life, remained unconscious throughout her life. I only became aware of this during my work from August 1979 to March 1980.

begun before, from a well-to-do man with a carriage to a travelling shoeshine boy. Under the spur of worries and disappointments, his irascible temperament sometimes turned to family tyranny, of which his wife, in poor health, bore all the brunt[*frais*]. My mother, deeply attached to her father as well as to her mother, was repulsed by these episodes of paternal tyranny, suffered in silence by her mother, who sometimes could not take it but never complained. The child was passionately identified with her mother, the victim of paternal arbitrariness, and at the same time the role played by her mother (the role of victim, the passive role - "the role of a woman"... ) appeared intolerable to her. There was this identification with the mother, expressed in a revolt, a visceral antagonism towards the father, and at the same time there was this burst "never shall I be like her" (who undergoes without rebelling), a burst which could only mean at the same time "never shall I be like women".

But even more profoundly, there was also the desire for that power of the father, of the man, which allows him to dominate at his own pleasure. And my mother's life was dominated and devastated by this devouring passion to dominate; and above all, to dominate and break the man - the very man who aroused in her such a surge of raging revolt, the man who by his nature was supposed to dominate her, her - as her father had dominated her mother, suffering, pale and powerless, his power.

I was going to write here that the reflection now "joins" the one pursued in the note "The vehement wife (the reversal of yin and yang)", of 12 November (126). As I no longer have a very clear memory of this note, I have just reread it. Strangely enough, I had forgotten that this note was prompted (just like today's note) by the "case in point" of my mother. I had felt reluctant to develop this case to the slightest bit, ten days ago. If I have come back today, overcoming this reluctance (which I had also forgotten in the meantime!), it is undoubtedly because there was an aspect that had remained blurred in the situation under examination. I had also forgotten that the starting point of today's note, "the intention to put my finger ... on a direct link between the refusal of the masculine and the refusal of the feminine", had already been the initial motivation for the reflection of ten days ago, following naturally on from the questioning that ended the previous day's note "Supermom or Superdad?" (125). In fact, the last sentence of this reflection of 12:

"It doesn't take much more to see the 'missing link' between...", it would seem that I thought I had accomplished my task of the day (of establishing such a link). If I have entirely forgotten that I had already updated this link, and even that I had asked myself this question already before the note of four days ago (on which I followed up by today's reflection), it is undoubtedly because I had not yet been fully convinced by the brilliant conclusion I have just quoted, formulated not more than six days before this note "The enemy father (3) - or yang buries yang". The situation becomes clearer by quoting the whole sentence:

"It doesn't take much more to see the 'missing link' appear between the antagonism to the Superfather (finding its expression in the aforementioned symbolic burial), and the contempt, the refusal of the "feminine", and more profoundly the denial of "the woman" in oneself (which perhaps will find expression in the symbolic "Burial" of a "Supermother", under a plethora of double-use dithyrambic[*dithyrambiques*] epithets...).".

In this conclusion, there was one step missing, which made it hasty: it was the link between "the antagonism to the Superfather" and the refusal of the "masculine", a link that only made its appearance in the reflection with the quoted note of 18 November "The enemy Father (3) - or yang buries yang". The antagonism to the Father then appeared to me as the symbolic expression of the much more crucial reality of the refusal of the yang,

"masculine" side, in one's own person. In the "symmetrical" case of the refusal of the feminine, this link between the symbolic expression and its profound meaning had been perceived from the appearance of the "Supermother strand/*volet*!", in the note of 10 November "The funeral of yin (yang buries yin (4))" (124). This is how the two "opposite" stands that appeared in the note of the 11th "Supermom or Superdad?", namely the burial of the Father and the burial of the Mother, were seen the day before yesterday as symmetrical manifestations of the refusal of the self (or contempt of the self), taking on the double visage of the refusal of the masculine and the refusal of the feminine in one's own person.

In the note of the 18th "The enemy Father (3) - or yang buries yang", I had moreover limited myself to the case of a man "subject" - whereas the most extreme case known to me is that of my mother! My mother had in fact been entirely forgotten in this reflection, and even for ten days already (if not hidden under the term "my parents" in the note of 17 November).

It is the knowing I have of my children and their relationship to me, which made me feel four days ago a link between the antagonism to the father, and the refusal of the masculine in oneself. To tell the truth, for each of the four (among my five) children that I have had the opportunity to know quite closely, I have more than once felt over the last few years, behind attitudes of inveterate antagonism towards me, their father, a refusal of the virile side of their being, and above all, of the élan in them which launches them out to encounter the world - and which makes them resemble a father who is rejected! I had never asked myself the question whether this was a general fact; or rather, there was a sort of unspoken presumption in me that it must be so, without my ever feeling the need, before the reflection of four days ago, to formulate the thing clearly, let alone to examine it with any care. To tell the truth, this kind of "general" question was not at all one that I asked myself in the meditation, whose purpose had been more down-to-earth: to understand myself, and this above all through my relations with others - and by this also, to some extent, to understand "others", that is to say those with whom I was entering into relations.

Of course, in the reflection of four days ago, when I suggested that there must be this link, that the antagonism to the father was an expression of a more profound conflict, namely the rejection of "the man" in oneself, it was again a mere presumption, suggested by my very limited experience. This link seems to me at least plausible, and more particularly in men, but I do not claim to "see" this link in general. I do not have this "intimate conviction" on its subject, which I so often choose as my very sure guide. In the case of my mother for example, I can see that antagonism to the father was the source of an occult and virulent antagonism towards virile traits in the man, but by no means for such traits in a woman, quite the contrary. It is true that the mere fact of valuing manly traits to the full, and cultivating them excessively in oneself, may not mean, necessarily, that one fully accepts the yang side of one's being; that would mean, after all, also accepting the "yin in the yang" that is spontaneously found in any "dominant" yang trait, which of course was not the case with my mother.

But the reflection is taking a somewhat dialectical turn here, which I don't really trust [*ne m'inspire pas confiance*]/! I prefer to refer instead to the direct perception I have of my mother's person, as refined by my reflection on her life and on that of my father. I don't recall ever feeling a refusal in her of anything, within herself, that was inherently "manly". On the other hand, I have strongly perceived in her this contradiction, or rather this rift, of one who cultivates within herself (like so many weapons), and who cherishes more than her life, the very traits which, in men, arouse in her such a vehemence, a so very violent craving to fight and break -

and whose life has been crumbled (and prematurely consumed) by this fever of encountering and confronting ceaselessly and reducing to mercy in others this same force, on which she has staked her all and which devastates her own life, as it devastates the lives of all those dear to her.

## 2.8 Masters and Servants

### (133) The reversal (3) - or yin buries yang

(24 November) The cases mentioned in the reflection of the previous note, from the day before yesterday, are not the only ones I know of, which confirm this presentiment that a superyang disequilibrium in the father (whether or not this disequilibrium takes despotic forms), reverberates in the children by a refusal of the yang, which in its turn can express itself under many different faces. In the case of the boy, in the cases I know of and which are present in my mind at the time of writing, this refusal takes the form of a (more or less complete) repression of the virile side in his own person - and this refusal will surely follow him throughout his life (except for a profound renewal, which is certainly rare). My mother's case makes me realise that it is not always the same in a girl - unless there was also in my mother a certain refusal of the virile side of her being, expressed in a more subtle way and which has escaped me until now(\*). What is striking in her case, in contrast, is the opposite extreme effect - that of an excessive development of virile traits in her (in addition to an aversion to everything feminine). I have also known of other cases in the same vein, in men (for example, in the father of my mother) - that of a revolt against the father, expressed in the development of a strongly virile personality, capable of confronting the father "on equal terms". As I have not had the opportunity to know of such a case closely, I tend to believe that it must be rarer. But it doesn't really matter.

If there is a common point to all the cases of which I have been aware from near or far, it would be this: a superyang disequilibrium of the father is reflected on the child by a disequilibrium, which can be in the yin direction (perhaps the most common case), or in the yang direction(†). In all the cases that come to my mind (without however thinking here of making a systematic survey of all those of which I am aware), this disequilibrium is accompanied by a relationship of antagonism to the father. I have the impression that it is also accompanied by a visceral antagonistic attitude towards male third persons, in whom the yang traits are strongly marked, at least when these are not balanced by the complementary yin traits - that is to say, towards men in whom prevails a superyang disequilibrium, reminiscent of that of the father.

Such a superyang disequilibrium (just like the opposite disequilibrium) is certainly likely to arouse an uneasiness/malaise in anyone, as I have already had occasion to note(‡). But this uneasiness does not

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\* A similar situation is that of a mother with a dominant, invasive temperament, a sign of superyang disequilibrium. In both cases, which I know closely, this translated into the girl by a very strong repression of the "virile" traits in her.

† When I speak here of "disequilibrium in the yin direction", this does not mean a development (perhaps excessive, one-sided) of one's yin traits, but rather a repression of yang traits, which is not at all the same thing. In the opposite case, called "disequilibrium in yang direction", it is indeed an "excessive development" of yang traits, which often goes hand in hand with a more or less thorough repression of certain yin traits.

‡ In the note "The Superfather (yang buries yin (2))", n° 108.



necessarily translate into an automatic antagonistic attitude - it is not uncommon, for example, for it to be resolved (or at least to disappear from the field of consciousness) by an attitude of submission, of more or less unconditional admiration, or of allegiance.

The association comes to me here that it was these tones that were surely the most common, in relations to my person (haloed by prestige), within the mathematical world - at least among those colleagues (or pupils) who (as I wrote elsewhere) "did not feel protected by a comparable renown", or (I will add here) those in whom a certain inner equilibrium, a certain spontaneous knowing of their own strength, did not preclude such misalignments[*porte-à-faux*]. But it is undoubtedly in the nature of such a relationship of "allegiance" that it conceals a hidden antagonism, which is manifested (overtly, or in a way that still remains covert) when a propitious occasion presents itself...

I have just followed some associations, which take up and complete the reflection of the day before yesterday (in the previous note "The reversal of yin and yang (2) - or the revolt"), and through this, also that of the note of 18 November, "The enemy father (3) - or yang buries yang". They make me realise that the relationship between a certain state of yin or yang disequilibrium in one of the parents (in this case, a yang disequilibrium in the father), and the repercussions it has on the child, is not univocal, as I hastily suggested. There is no doubt, that the form in which the parental disequilibrium, in this case of the father, is transmitted must depend on many other factors, both on the family environment (and more particularly, on the person and attitude of the mother), and on the birth temperament of the child(\*).

But to tell the truth, this was not the direction I was thinking of going in, when I started the reflection earlier. Rather, I was thinking of pursuing a completely different association of ideas, which has been present since the reflection of 12 November, when the dynamic of the reversal of yin and yang roles was introduced into the reflection for the first time (in the note of the same name, "- or the vehement wife", (126)). Perhaps the reader will have made the connection on his own - the fact remains that when I raised this question, on November 12, then the day before yesterday on 22, there was indeed somewhere in my head, as if in mute tones, the thought of two other occasions where there had already been a question of "reversal", in the course of this reflection on the Burial. The first time was in the note of the same name in Procession V, "My friend Pierre" (note (68') of 28 April). The second occurrence is found, as a footnote, in the reflection of 30 September, which is part of the note "The Funeral Eulogy (2) - or the aureole and the strength". There is even a third such occasion, but between the lines, at the beginning of the reflection due two days later, which opened the reflection "The key of yin and yang". (This is the note "The muscle and the gut (yang buries yin (!))" (106), of 2 October[30 octobre].) This is the content of the famous "association of ideas, aroused by the Funeral Eulogy in three parts", which is alluded to there - the very one that triggered me that very day, to set off on this digression on yin and yang that I have been pursuing for nearly two months. Now might be the best time or never to let the cat out of the bag[*vendre la mèche*], since I've been talking about it, not to mention that I've been thinking about it since the day after 12 May, after the note The Funeral Eulogy (1) - or the compliments ", more than six months ago.

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\* For this, I see that each of my mother's three brothers (all younger than her) developed in a very different way from my mother (who was a bit like a swan in a brood of ducks), and also different from the other brothers.

What these three situations have in common, is that they involve a "reversal" of roles between my friend and ex-pupil Pierre, and me. In the two cases that were formulated in clear terms, recalled a moment ago, I appear as the "collaborator" of my ex-pupil (if not outright as his pupil!). The first time it is as the one who contributed (in a messy way certainly, but sometimes interesting, one must admit) to the development of the "powerful tool" of l-adic cohomology by my brilliant predecessor and friend. The second time, when we are quoted in one breath (for having "linked topology, algebraic geometry and number theory by "interdisciplinary" means..."), it is by the astute means of a typographical "oversight" that the same reversal of a reality is suggested, as if by the greatest of coincidences(\*). The meaning of this reversal actually becomes more tendentious than a simple question of precedence (within, here, an institution that I was alone, with Dieudonné, in "starting up" on the scientific level, but which I had left a long time ago), when one pays attention to the choice of eulogistic epithets ("theories of legendary depth" for the one, "brilliant discoveries" for the other which is entitled additionally to the underscore, along with everyone else except me). This meaning was illuminated "in a striking way" in the reflection "The funeral of yin (yang buries yin (4))" ((124), of 10 November), by which the reflection on yin and yang suddenly "landed" in the middle of a Funeral ceremony: to one the accumulation of epithets (dithyrambic at times) that are yin and superyin, to the other yang and superyang...

This is what had already struck me the day after the note "The compliments" of 12 May, even before I had the chance to explain it in as detailed a way as two weeks ago. According to the way I felt about things at the time (which I'll have to revisit here), there was a real reversal of reality, or more precisely, a "reversal", taken to a caricatural extreme, of a basic reality that I felt as something nuanced, balanced. I saw myself as a person with a strong "yang" or even superyang dominance, at least in my most apparent, most obvious traits, and particularly, those which are manifest to others(†). On the other hand, I felt in my friend Pierre a basic temperament with a yin tone, clearly more balanced than mine had been, at the time when we saw each other often and when he was a student.

I believe that this apprehension of reality was essentially correct. If I have sometimes, during these last few years, and even more so recently(‡), come to presense an original "yin" background note in me, it seems to me that I was the first and only one to feel it - that it is above all through my yang or "virile" traits, often quite invasive, that I have been constantly apprehended by others(§), both on the conscious and on the unconscious level - at least as far as personal relations are concerned. These (apart from the love relationships), moreover, bring into play above all, if not exclusively, "the boss" in us, that which is conditioned. The new fact that emerged during the reflection on yin and yang, to know that in my work, my approach to things is strongly yin, "feminine", does not really contradict what I knew elsewhere. It nuances it, correcting it on a point where I had tacitly put everything "in the same bag". And all things considered, it seems to me that the sudden and strong impression I had had in me, of a caricatural "reversal" of a reality, or more precisely, of an intention of such a

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\* As I had previously realised in the note "The massacre" (n° 87), coincidence often works well, as long as the typographers and removers get involved!

† And this, even more so in the years "before my departure", than now.

‡ In the note "The arrow and the wave" (n° 130, of 19 November).

§ And by myself as well.

deliberate reversal - that this "intuition" was also essentially correct, albeit sketchy. It is the reality imperfectly seized by this intuition that I would now like to delve into more closely.

### **(134) Brothers and husbands - or the double signature**

(25 November) I would first have to try to get a closer grasp of this impression, which is obvious to me, that the "background note" in my friend Pierre is a yin note. As I perceive it, this is so both at the level of the "self", as I have seen it expressed in particular in his relationship to me and to others, and in his work, that is to say at the level of the impulse for knowing, of the creative faculties in him.

As far as the first aspect is concerned, he and I were obviously complementary in temperament, with the added nuance that what was excessive, what was "superyang" in mine, seemed to disconcert him somewhat, at times. It was above all, I believe, this constant projection forward towards the accomplishment of my tasks, this isolation from everything that was not related to them, that aroused in him a kind of incredulous astonishment, in which I felt a shade of affectionate regret - the same regret that I had well felt many times in my mother, when she saw me so much cut off from the beauty of things around me(\*). It was, strictly speaking, not an uneasiness in him, which is a sign of refusal of a certain reality. At least, I don't remember once having felt an uneasiness in him towards me, nor having had the impression of an attitude or a movement of rejection, of taking distance, or maybe a clash between us. And I have no doubt that this was not a deliberate "diplomatic" act on his part, of one who had decided not to let anything show. On the contrary, he sometimes expressed the "astonishment" to which I alluded, without any trace of embarrassment, or irritation. Clearly, the base tone of our relationship, which has never wavered to this day(†), was one of affectionate sympathy, which was not crossed by any shadow.

It remains for me a strange fact, and one that I believe nothing could have made anyone suspect, before the episode of my departure from the IHES (and even then, on the level of what "passes" directly in a tête à tête, say), the fact that from the first years after our meeting there was a deep, essential ambiguity, in his relationship to my person, through the presence of a hidden antagonism, of a desire at least to dissociate[*démarquer*] himself from my person, and that of eviction. The latter manifested itself in a particularly brutal way (which left me flabbergasted on the spot), although infinitely muffled in the manner, during the episode of my departure from the IHES (mentioned in the section "The eviction" (63)). My friend had recently been co-opted as the fifth "permanent" member of the IHES, thanks mainly to my warm efforts in this direction. In the "explanation" that

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\* My mother, just like my father, retained until the end of her life a capacity for communion with nature, as well as a keen sense of observation of everything around her, both of which I lack even to this day. This was perhaps the only "yin" aspect of her being that she did not repress within herself, that was able to flourish freely. On the other hand, as far as "projection towards a goal" is concerned, which is one of the dominant traits of my "self", it is also, perhaps, the only aspect of my person through which I have managed to be even more yang than my mother!

† (26 November) If the base tone has remained that of a sympathy, of an attraction, this does not prevent that since my departure, over the years and more and more, this relationship has become frozen, sclerotic, emptied of what gave it quality of life. I have the impression of being in front of a "carapace" so perfectly watertight, that nothing can pass through it, neither in one direction nor the other. See on this subject the note "Two turning points" and "The tomb", n°s 66, 71.

took place between us (perhaps there were several, I can no longer say), he at no time lost that perfect and smiling naturalness[naturel], with all the aspects of a benevolent kindness, which made him so endearing. He then explained to me, without my detecting the slightest shade of hesitation or embarrassment, and even less of antagonism or enmity, or secret satisfaction, that he had from those early years made the decision to devote his life and all his energy to mathematical work; that this dedication to mathematics which was his, for better or for worse, had to take precedence over anything else; that the reason why I was waiting for the joint support of my colleagues and in particular, of himself (to ask for the suppression of funds coming from the Ministry of the Armed Forces) seemed to him to be entirely foreign[étrangère] to mathematics; that he certainly regretted that this was a prohibitive circumstance for me, and that, in view of "axioms" of life different from his own, I was going to leave the IHES for a cause which, from his point of view, appeared to be of no consequence; but that to his great regret, he could not associate himself, any more than my other colleagues, with a request which was foreign to him, and the outcome of which was entirely indifferent for him (134.1).

I have given here in substance the "manifest", explicit content, of my friend's speech, as my memory restores it to me, without any effort to try at the same time to find and restore a style of expression, or the atmosphere of a conversation, of which I have not retained any particularity beyond what I have said here. The episode took place at a time when I did not yet have the slightest suspicion that, behind the manifestly quite harmless (and sometimes strangely absurd) content of a speech, a totally different message was often being expressed, in a muffled way, and quite clearly. This one was surely perceived at the unconscious level, but wildly rejected, repressed from the conscious field. As I suggested in the quoted note "The eviction", it must have taken considerable energy to succeed in discharging a message that was nevertheless quite dazzling[éclatant]! It is in this note however, written more than fourteen years later, that I take the trouble for the first time to submit this episode to a conscious attention, and to formulate clearly the meaning that had been denied for so long.

I followed one of the threads, the strongest no doubt, of the associations that presented themselves to me. I did so against a certain reluctance, as if by this "digression" I was distancing myself from my main purpose. However, I realise afterwards that this is not the case. No doubt, the image of a person and a temperament that emerges spontaneously from the description of concrete situations in which he is involved, is more vivid and more convincing than an enumeration of "traits" that are supposed to capture them. Rather than launch into this, I prefer to note yet another association, and to engage in another digression, by comparing the relationship examined here with that between Serre and myself. At the level of the relationship between our persons, the impression that prevails for me is by no means that of a "complementarity" as with Pierre, but rather that of an affinity between two temperaments, each one strongly "yang". More than once, in the course of eighteen years of close mathematical communication, this affinity has manifested itself in occasional frictions, expressing itself in passing coldnesses, none of which has lasted long. As I remember it, these episodes were caused by movements of casual impatience in Serre, which "went[passaient]" badly with my own susceptibility. Sometimes Serre was annoyed by the obstinacy with which I pursued an idea against all odds, when it seemed important to me. I would bring it up at every opportunity, without worrying whether it would "pass over[passer]" or not, in the belief (which rarely misled me) that I had "the right" point of view. I don't know for what reason, Serre had developed an aversion to my cohomological "big burnish[fourbis]" - perhaps he was simply allergic, like André Weil, to all "big burnish". On the other hand, when I began to develop "my" cohomological yoga, in the second half of the fifties, Serre was practically my only occasional interlocutor - so it was no good[mal barré]! I believe that he only consented to take a cautious interest in this work, and only

began to realise that it was leading somewhere, with the development of étale cohomology from 1963 onwards, followed the same year by my sketch of a demonstration ("in four spoonfuls") of the rationality of  $L$  functions(\*).

It seems to me that the relationship between Serre and me was typical of a yang-yang affinity, in contrast to the relationship with Deligne, which was a yin-yang complementarity. At the level of mathematical work and the style of approach to mathematics, the situations were reversed however. As I have already had occasion to say in a previous note ("The nine months and five minutes", (123)), I feel that Serre's approach and mine are complementary, in the sense of a yang-yin complementarity. It is this very complementarity that was the occasion of occasional frictions, due to the strongly yang temperaments of both him and me.

The relationship between Deligne's and my approaches to mathematics was quite different, no doubt about it. I can say, without any reservation, that it was with Deligne more than with anyone else, that I had this experience of a perfect affinity, in our ways of seeing and approaching the mathematical questions that interested us both. This experience was renewed each time there was a mathematical dialogue between us. It is quite clear to me that this is not a fortuitous circumstance, due for example to the influence I had indeed exerted on him during decisive years of apprenticeship. This affinity did not develop over a long period of familiarity - it was, on the contrary, present from our first contacts, which was the force at work to create, almost overnight, a bond of such strength, rooted in our common passion. It is a deep affinity between two approaches to mathematics, pre-

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\* Another point of friction that I remember, no doubt even more episodic, was my insistence on linking the theory of passage to the quotient in algebraic groups and formal schemes (still poorly understood in the fifties) to questions of "effectiveness" of flat equivalence relations, or even (later) to passage to the quotient in the context of fpqc sheaves. These points of view, first taken up by Gabriel and Manin, are now commonplace almost everywhere in algebraic geometry and even elsewhere. It seems to me that Serre's reluctance dissipated, from the moment I finally took the trouble (as no one else seemed willing to burden himself with it [*s'y coltiner*]) to prove in black and white the first effectiveness theorem, for flat and finite equivalence relations.

existing at the time of our encounter, and which express (I am convinced) an important aspect of the original temperament in both of us - a yin "base tone" in the apprehension and discovery of things(\*)).

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### (134.1)

(26 November)(†) A typical detail: these military funds, on which nobody wanted to lay a finger, as long as it was about them being the cause of my departure, were suppressed the very year of my departure in general indifference! You never know, if it might upset a distinguished guest who is a bit pernickety on this matter... The funds in question represented only a small part of the IHES's resources (5%, if I remember correctly). Without having to consult each other, there was among my four colleagues at the IHES (not to mention the director) a great unanimity, to seize an opportunity to get rid of me (also, almost at the same time, the director himself). And I had thought myself indispensable, and loved!

(6 December) The two physicists of the IHES, Michel and Ruelle, were dissatisfied that the "Physics" section at the IHES was a bit like a poor relative, compared to the mathematics section, represented by Thom, Deligne and myself (two of whom were "Fields medallists"! ). This imbalance had just been increased by the co-option of Deligne (which had actually been done with the unreserved agreement of Michel and Ruelle, and in fact unanimously by the Scientific Council of the IHES, with the exception of Thom). There had been consultation between physicists and mathematicians of the IHES, to put pressure on the director, Léon Motchane, in order to re-establish a fair balance between the two sections, as far as possible. I presume that nevertheless my physics colleagues must not have been dissatisfied to see this imbalance effectively compensated, and much sooner than they would have hoped, with the sudden prospect of my departure.

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\* (26 November) The reflections in the present note, in continuity with those in the notes "The rising sea" and "The nine months and five minutes" (n°s 122, 123), seem to suggest for every person the presence of a "double signature", or a double "base tone": one (the most apparent, no doubt) concerns the "boss", that is to say the structure of the "self" and the mechanisms that govern it; the other concerns the "Worker", alias the "child", that is to say also the impulse of knowing, of discovery of the world, of creation (including, of course, the love impulse). (It is, it is true, the most common thing in the world to take the boss for the worker and vice versa, that is to say, to take bladders for lanterns - but that is yet another story...)

So for me this double base tone is yang(boss)-yin(child), for Serre it's yang-yang, for Deligne it's yin-yin (without there being in me any feeling of doubt, of hesitation about this). Against the background of sympathetic relationships with one another, it is this "distribution" of "signs" (or of "tones") that makes, on the level of relationships between persons, my relationship with Serre be one of affinity and my relationship with Deligne be one of complementarity, and that it be the reverse for the relationships between our approaches to mathematics.

Of the four possible "distributions", only the yin-yang double tone remains. Given the disfavour of yin in our macho society, a disfavour that will tend to play especially on the first tone (the "boss tone"), I presume that the yin-yang double tone must be less frequent than yang-yang. Yet I know at least one well-known[*notoire*] mathematician, who seems to fit this signature. Of course, the second tone, or "original tone", is more difficult to identify, as it will often be "blurred" by external influences, by the desire to be and do "like everyone else".

† This sub-note to the previous note ("Brothers and husbands - or the double signature" n° 134) is taken from a footnote to that note. (See reference at the end of the third paragraph of that note).

As for Thom, he was infuriated [*ulcéré*] that Deligne had been co-opted against his formal opposition. He had described Deligne's contributions, all unpublished, which I mentioned in my glowing "investiture" report, and which obviously went over his head, as mere "exercises"! What shocked him about Deligne's accession to the status of "permanent" at the IHES, on an equal footing with himself, was that the young Deligne - he was then 25 - was not already covered with honours. According to Thom, the accession to such a position should only come as "the coronation of a career". It was a far cry, just less than ten years later, from the heroic years when I welcomed a still unknown Hironaka in makeshift premises... Still, Thom's bitterness was such that he was thinking at the time (according to what he told me himself) of leaving the IHES, in order to return to his professorship in Strasbourg, which he had taken care (more cautiously than I once did, when leaving the CNRS for the IHES) to keep. Through my warm sponsorship of Deligne I had been the first and foremost cause of his frustration, and I presume that Thom must have felt, in his heart of hearts, that I had only got what I deserved through my impertinence, seeing myself forced to leave the IHES just a few months after having introduced my brilliant "protégé"!

As for the director, at a time when he was being cornered by the unanimous desire of the permanents, pressing him to leave, he then (according to a tried and tested tactic which he used to perfection) played the game of "divide and rule", using the matter of the military funds as a convenient means of causing distraction, and at the same time getting rid of the most annoying of his permanents. (It was a masterly reversal of the situation, when the secrecy he had maintained around the presence of these funds seemed to me to be an additional and imperious reason to force him to leave!) This did not prevent the fact that after my departure, things did not drag on much longer, and his departure from the IHES closely followed mine - from the one who, like him, had been part of the IHES from its first precarious and heroic years, and who, with him and through his own means, had ensured its credibility and durability.

### **(135) Yin the Servant, and the new masters**

(26 November) Among the many affinities between Deligne and me, in the years before my departure, there was the pleasure he took, just as I did, in developing (when the need is felt) what I call "big burnish". The major part of my energy as a mathematician, if not all of it, was dedicated to such tasks. If it were a question of building a house, doing "the big burnish" would mean: not limiting oneself to making a tantalising sketch of the house, or even two or three from different angles, or even making detailed plans, with ribs [*côtes*] and all; but bringing in and cutting one by one the stones which are to be used to build it; assemble them into walls, lay the beams, rafters and tiles or slates; put in doors and windows, washbasins, sinks, pipes and gutters; and to install (if you are actually going to live in it yourself) even the curtains on the windows and the drawings on the walls. It may be a house of great dimensions, as well as perhaps a shed of just one room - the spirit of the work is nevertheless the same. And as long as you live in it, you may have done everything thoroughly and to the end, but you will quickly realise that the work is never finished, that there is always something new to come - at least when the "big burnish", sorry, the house, is large.

The brightest [*clair*] of my energy as a mathematician, between 1955 and 1970, was devoted to starting up and developing with a touch of zinc four big "big burnishes" - without of course having reached the end of any of them, see above. These are, in chronological order, the cohomological tool, the schemes, the topoi, the

motives(\*). These four master themes are moreover intimately related to each other, as would be distinct buildings forming part of the same farm or hamlet, and which all contribute to the same design. And each of these "big burnishes" led me, imperatively, without my having sought to do so at all, to develop other "big burnishes" that were clearly less big - a bit like when building a large house or even a whole hamlet, one is led to install a lime kiln, a carpentry and joinery workshop, etc. For example, every year the need was felt anew to increase the arsenal of categorical notions and constructions, by two or three additional (small) "big burnishes". People who have come ten or twenty years later, who have found everything ready-baked and are comfortably settled in the place (and even others who know at heart what they are dealing with), shrug their shoulders with an air of condescension about so much unreadable "nonsense" (Deligne dixit) and fine-grained hair-splitting [*découpages de cheveux en quatre*] ("Spitzfindigkeiten", as is called by an illustrious German correspondent, who is nevertheless well-disposed towards me(†)). These are people who have no idea what it is like to build a house on the bare earth, and who will probably never build one, contenting themselves with playing at being the owners of the houses that others have built for them, with their two hands and with all their heart.

I was a bit rash [*vif*] just now, seeming to put my friend Pierre in the bag of those who "have no idea what it is to build a house...". Not only did he see me at work, but it was with pleasure that he was building them for his part, as if he had never done anything else in the twenty years he had been in the world. Besides, this story of "big burnishes" and house building and all that (in case the reader hasn't already noticed...), is yet another aspect, or another image, to capture something I had previously tried to grasp as best I could with the image of "the rising sea", then with that of a series of waves following each other(‡). This is the "yin mode", or "feminine" mode, of apprehending reality, and the approach that corresponds to it in order to impregnate oneself with it and to draw out an image, which restores this reality with flexibility and fidelity. Here I am therefore returning, by a detour through my own person, to my initial purpose - that of "passing over" this strong

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\* The "cohomological tool" did not wait for me to exist. It is a certain personal approach, which led in particular to the "mastery of the étale cohomology" (which seems to me the main technical and conceptual ingredient in the demonstration of Weil conjectures, completed by Deligne). It is the one I am pursuing anew, twenty years later, with "Pursuing Stacks", in the direction of "noncommutative cohomology" (or "homotopical cohomology"). For the "commutative cohomology" direction, I give some details about this approach in the beginning of the note "My orphans" (n° 46). The four "big burnishes" discussed here correspond essentially to the five "key notions" in the cited note, except that the "cohomological tool" corresponds to two such notions or ideas (namely, derived categories, and the "six operations" formalism).

It is interesting to note that the only one of the four "big burnishes" (or main research themes) that is named in my Funeral Eulogy (see notes n° 104 and 105) are the topos. As if by chance, it is also the one, among the three buried by the care of my cohomological students, that had not yet been exhumed under altered paternities, at the time of the Funeral Eulogy. (This one is set in 1983, the derived categories are exhumed in 1981 at the Perverse Colloquium, and the motives in 1982 in the "memorable volume" LN 900.)

† My correspondent kindly assured me, just to please me, that he knew well that my work was "to a large extent free of such defects" ("weitgehend frei von diesen Übeln"). For him, it was a question of the "defects" into which one could not fail to fall (such as the "Spitzfindigkeiten" of the categorists of all hairs), if one were to develop a theory (as I suggested with regard to motives) on foundations that still remains conjectural. Here we find the visceral refusal of the "mathematical dream" discussed in the section "The forbidden dream" and in the three following sections (sections 5 to 8). This is yet another among the aspects of an automatic repression of any "yin", "feminine" approach or process in mathematics.

‡ See the two notes "The rising sea" and "The arrow and the wave", n°s 122, 130.



perception that is within me, of a kinship, of an essential affinity between the approach to mathematics of Deligne, and of myself. But in this aspect of Deligne, which I have just tried to capture with the help of an image, there was a complete "blurring", it seems to me, after my departure-death in 1970 - I believe that the "big burnishes" are totally absent from his publications "after". Certainly he could not reasonably have made use of this trait in his disowned master, to disparage the latter, while tolerating that same trait to flourish in himself, in accordance with his own nature.

It is true that, if it is not a question of following an inner need, the expression of an elementary impulse, but simply of increasing one's prestige through the accumulation of results that "make a mark", my friend really had no interest in continuing to bother with (more or less) "big burnishes". Already in my time and outside the Bourbaki group (itself engaged in a "big burnish" of good size), it was already a rather frowned upon thing. This is actually not surprising, considering that the "superyang" blinders, in our society and in the consensus of the scientific world, are not new. This was perhaps the main reason why the houses I took pleasure in building remained uninhabited for the long years, except by the bricklayer himself (who was at the same time also the architect, the carpenter etc.). And today still, even the part of my work that has long since become common heritage (and even the part where there is still no other reference available than my writings), remains surrounded (at least for those who are not part of the beautiful world and who do not undertake to look down on it) by an almost fearful halo, as if to enter it would require almost superhuman faculties. It's true that it's often long and it couldn't be otherwise, since everything is well and truly done, by hand and in detail, from beginning to the end, with even explanations at each chapter's turn saying where we want to go(\*). It did not seem to me that my students, at the time they worked with me, struggled too much to get into the swing of things. But this was at a time when the "tangible results" had already won the acceptance of the mathematical establishment, and my students worked with the assurance of playing a "safe" card. I have the impression that since then, more and more people take pleasure in accrediting the "unreadable"(†) version, in accordance with a fashion that is still much more tyrannical today than it was in my time.

But even leaving aside the desiderata of fashion, when making calculations of profitability and "returns", one must surely take care to avoid the "big burnish" like the plague. Developing a "big burnish" and making it available to everyone, this is a service done for a scientific community, which often accepts it unwillingly. I was actually never too bothered by this very understandable reluctance; I knew well that I had "the right stuff", and that sooner or later, people couldn't help coming to it. But even as they come, the "yields" in terms of "credit" can only be modest. If I were to make a numerical assessment, not of the notions, questions and ideas that I introduced and developed in the fifteen years 1955-70 and which have either become part of the common and anonymous heritage, or are buried without music (waiting to be exhumed with great fanfare), but of what could be called "the great theorems", I doubt that I would find even ten. Perhaps the total time directly devoted to their demonstration is of the order of a few weeks, or a few months at most. There wasn't a single one until 1957

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\* It is only over the years, I believe, that I have realised the necessity of including such explanations, often purely heuristic, to try as far as possible to communicate to the reader a sense of "direction" and purpose, strongly present in me at the time of writing. Today, this seems to me much more essential than a meticulous writing of key demonstrations, which the reader will be happy to reconstruct or even construct from scratch, as soon as he feels where we are going, and that this "where" attracts him...

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(Riemann-Roch-Grothendieck theorem) - and yet I know I hadn't wasted my time in the previous three years. I'll bet that [*Si ça se trouve même*], none of the "great theorems" would be proved at the present time (although this was by no means my main concern), if during these fifteen years I had not stubbornly followed a passion for understanding within me, by trusting the mode of approach it dictated to me, whether or not it was "profitable" (in terms of such desiderata or others), or whether or not it would be well seen in the wider world. This approach consisted each time in beginning with a strong initial intuition, or a handful of such intuitions, and in taking them as a solid and foolproof thread that pulled me in the unknown; and in doing so and to change the image, I could not help but progressively, with the unknown in the course of making itself known, like rough stones that one "knows" by cutting them, to build houses, some very large and some not so large, and all of them good to be lived in, - houses where every nook and cranny is destined to become a welcoming and familiar place for many. The doors and windows are aplomb and open and close without cracking or creaking, the roof does not leak and the chimney draws. It doesn't have to be Notre Dame de Paris, and there's no "great theorem" hidden in each one's breadbasket - it's just the houses that needed to be built, and which I have built to be lived in. I found my joy in making them, beautiful and spacious, knowing full well that the work I was doing, alone or in company, had to be done and that at each moment it was as well as I could do.

It was also this spirit that I found in the Bourbaki group in the fifties, and which made me feel at ease, "at home", notwithstanding the differences in background and culture, and the occasional difficulties that I have mentioned in its place. At that time at least, it was a spirit of service, again, that I found there. Service to a task, and beyond the task, service to other men, eager like us to understand things small and great, and to understand them thoroughly and to the end. This "service" did not take the form of austere duty or asceticism. It arose spontaneously and joyfully from an inner need, it expressed a shared [*commune*] thing that linked these very different men.

And it is this same spirit that I recognise in the Cartan seminar, where so many French mathematicians made their first forays [*fait leurs premières armes*], and later (in the sixties) in my own seminar (which goes by the acronym SGA, "Séminaire de Géométrie Algébrique du Bois Marie"). One of the differences between the two seminars, is that mine were strongly centred on the development of the "big burnish" mentioned earlier (that is, "my" burnish), for which there were never too many arms [*bras*], whereas the themes followed by Cartan from one year to the next were more eclectic. What seems to me to be more important is what was common to the two seminars, and above all, what seems to me to have been their essential function, their raison d'être. To tell the truth, I see two of them. One of the functions of these seminars, close to Bourbaki's purpose, was to prepare and make available to everyone easily accessible texts (I mean, essentially complete), developing in a detailed way themes important and difficult to access(\*). The other function of these seminars, was to provide a place where motivated young researchers, even if they were not geniuses, would surely be able to learn the trade of mathematicians on questions of great topicality, in contact with eminent and benevolent men. Learning the trade - that is to say, getting their hands onto the work, and thereby finding the opportunity to make themselves known.

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\* "Difficult to access", either because these themes were imperfectly understood, or because they were known only to a few initiates, and the scattered publications that treated them only gave an inadequate picture.

It would seem that my departure in 1970 marks the end, in France at least, of the "great seminars" - long-lasting places where, year by year, some of the great themes of contemporary mathematics are being constructed - and places that are also benevolent and inspiring, for all those who come to put their hands on them. I don't know if there are any elsewhere in the world (in Moscow perhaps, under the impetus of I.M. Gelfand?). What is certain is that, such places are decidedly contrary to the spirit of the age, as are the "big burnishes", written in black and white, meticulously, to be available to all.

It is no coincidence that hardly anyone writes careful and (provisionally) exhaustive exposés, on topics that have been mature for ten years if not twenty, and which are obviously crucial, and which in the meantime are not accessible except to just a handful of people "in the know". Anyone who is part of the mathematical "big world", if he is not also part of the "handful" in question, will have no difficulty if need be to be brought up to date by one of these people, and that's all he'll ask for. As for the others, whatever[*bernique*]! In the sixties, I saw a good many books that were crying out to be written. I would have written them myself, but I couldn't do everything at once. None of these books, to my knowledge, is yet written to this day(\*). However, I know more than one person (even if only among the ex-students) who was in the know and who had the feeling and the helping hand to be able to write without difficulty the book that was (and still is) needed. And from the little that came back to me of the later works of some of them, I don't have the impression that it is the abundance and difficulty of their more personal works that would have prevented them ("sorry but really I don't have the time!") from rendering this service to the famous "mathematical community". For more than one, also, there is even a good bet that it would have made him more well-known, as the author of a read and quoted book (even if not everything he exposes necessarily comes from him - but the "commentary[*comment*]" is by no means of a negligible quantity...), than by the more or less thick bundle of his separate prints.

Obviously, it is not a simple "lack of time" that prevents some and others, with impressive unanimity, from making accessible to all what remains the privilege of a few - or even, from having (if only now and then, during the time of writing a book, let us say) an attitude of "service". Here the association with the SGA 5 seminar of 1965/66 comes irresistibly to my mind, which was concealed[*escamoté*] for eleven years, for their own personal benefit, by those who had been the first and sole beneficiaries, my friend Pierre and my other cohomologist students in the lead! It is true that there was a corpse to be divided[*partager*], and therefore a somewhat special motivation in this particular case. But I can also think of other cases, where the service accomplished filled obvious gaps, and where it was swept away with the back of the hand by the people in

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\* (28 November) I should make an exception here for the theses that were written under my guidance. The spirit which animated me and which, I believe, communicated itself to my students, at least during the time they worked with me, was that which animated me for my own work; that is to say, in colourful terms, "to build the houses" which were visibly needed, even if often I was the only one to feel the need for this or that particular "house". I have the impression that as a rule (with one exception) this feeling was eventually communicated to the student, and caused him or her to "hook[*accrochait*]" on this subject, and subsequently to identify strongly with the chosen subject. Setting aside Verdier, who did not deign to make available to everyone the foundation work agreed upon between us and which is still waiting to be written, the thesis work of all the students who did their state doctorate thesis with me has become what one might call "standard references". They are houses good to live in, and none of them duplicates any other...

place(\*). One may say that these are still rather special cases, that it was my person who was targeted, while it was obvious that it was I who had inspired the work in question. However, I can feel in all of this a "spirit of the age" that goes beyond any specific case.

The aspect of the "spirit of the age" that I am trying to identify here as best I can, is the discredit that strikes an attitude of service - a discredit that I perceive through a host of converging signs, and which for me is an obvious fact. Everyone is free to deny it, just as they are free to examine it for themselves, and to witness it. My purpose here is not to "prove" it to a reluctant reader, but to try to grasp its meaning.

From the point of view of this reflection, there is a first meaning that jumps to the eyes. The attitude of service is typically a "yin", "feminine" attitude, and it is not surprising that it is part of the lot of those that are found to be devalued. The shade/*nuance* that I thought I perceived many times, was that such an attitude was just good for those who did not have the means of a "master" attitude - that work done in this spirit was the drudgery of the subordinate, good for the underlings among those who ride on the coach of great ideas and "brilliant discoveries".

However, I also know, that there is more to it than that - for otherwise, why should we prevent at all costs an "underling" of good will (when by chance there are some) from quietly doing in his corner the dirty work which is his by right, providing in the end the solid references where previously we had to be content with saying (when we deigned to say something...) "we know that..." or "we can demonstrate that...", or more rarely and more honestly "we will admit that..."?!

I found myself confronted for the first time with this troubling question eight years ago, during Yves Ladegaillerie's misadventures in trying to "fit" his thesis(†). It was, I confess, at a time when my interest in mathematics, as well as in the world of mathematicians, was very marginal. I was a bit dumbfounded, without trying to elucidate the meaning of this mystery. With variations, my attitude did not change much in the years that followed, until last February, with the reflection pursued in Harvest and Sowing. However, by dint of picking up signs, and even if I didn't mean to, I couldn't help but gradually pick up the meaning, or rather, the meanings, of them. I can actually see two of them. One concerns my person - it's the burial syndrome towards me, which I haven't quite got round to yet. The other has nothing to do with this particular person or that particular person. It has to do with an attitude of exclusivity in the possession and control of scientific "information", an attitude that prevails within the scientific "establishment", and which makes a kind of reigning caste by divine right, within the so-called scientific "community"(\*).

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\* I am thinking here, of course, of the work of Yves Ladegaillerie, and that of Olivier Leroy, discussed in four previous notes and sections ("You can't stop Progress", "Coffin 2 - or the truncated cuts", "The note - or the new ethic", "Coffin 4 - or the topos without flowers or coronets", notes n°s 50, 94, section 33, note n° 96).

† See on this subject the two notes n°s 50 and 94, cited in the previous footnote.

‡ (6 December) It should be noted that the thirst for domination is a superyang disequilibrium, and by far the most common form of such a disequilibrium. It corresponds to an obliteration of the yin term, "feminine" in the yin-yang couple "Master-servant", or "that which dominates (or masters) - that which serves", neighbouring the couple "mastery - service".

This is a theme that I have already touched upon (barely, barely) in the note "Ethical consensus - and control of information", and a little also in "The "snobbery of the young", or the defenders of purity" (25), (27)). I suspect that this is a new development in the scientific world, which has been stealthily creeping in over the past two or three decades. I do not believe that I was among those who propagated and welcomed this unwritten "new ethic", the ethic of "double standards"(\*). If I have any co-responsibility in its advent, it is rather for not having seen it coming(†). Before these last few years, I did not suspect that the all-direction[*tous azimuths*] information I had enjoyed freely, practically since my first contacts with the scientific world, in 1948, had become over the years, I cannot say exactly when or how, a tremendous privilege that I shared with a handful of friends[*copains*] - a class privilege, to use a term that is a bit too much overused, and which nevertheless seems to me here to be expressing well a reality which is very tangible.

But my purpose is not to make a "class analysis" of the mathematical world, and of the "relations of force" and "means of power" in that world - any more than it is to make a "picture of morals". But my purpose is not to make a "class analysis" of the mathematical world, and of the "relations of force" and "means of power" in that world - any more than it is to make a "picture of morals". It is time to return to a more limited purpose - that of understanding, in its essential mechanisms in the main protagonists, the "news story[*fait divers*]" of my early burial!

### **(136) Yin the Servant (2), or the generosity**

(28 November) The two previous notes were essentially digressions around the theme of the yin-yin affinity between Deligne and me, on the level of mathematical work and the approach to mathematics. I don't know if they helped to "get across" the perception I have of this affinity and its nature, which for me is something completely beyond doubt.

I have written elsewhere that "in my work, I am as 'yin', as 'sea and motion', as one can be". On reflection, I would say that this is not literally true - that one "can be" even more so, because (as I perceive it) Deligne is even more so than I am. Or at least, the "yang in the yin" seems to me more marked in me, than in him. What is ardour in me, takes on a more balanced appearance in him. Where I launch myself boldly forward, more than once he will remain on a cautious and often well-founded waiting[*expectative*]. As long as I have the primer[*amorce*] of an idea, a "tip[*bout*]" by which I can enter, I do not hesitate to launch myself into a

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\* (6 December) This is not entirely accurate, as it appears in the sections "The power to discourage" and "The sporting mathematics" (n° 31, 40). But it seems to me correct to say that if in me fatuity has often taken the form of elitist attitudes, these have not taken the form of a desire for domination, or even of a desire to crush, and have not obliterated in me a spontaneous attitude of service: service to a task, and through it and along with it, service to all those who have embarked with me on a communal adventure... During the sixties, it became almost a fixed idea, and in any case one of my pressing and constantly present motivations, to write and get written the basic texts that were missing, in order to give the widest possible diffusion for the ideas, techniques and visions that were known only to a very few. Looking back over twenty years, I can see today that this constant concern of mine has not been transmitted to any of my students. They preferred to be masters, without being at the same time (as their deceased master had been) servants.

† I don't know if there are many among the elders or colleagues of my generation, or even among younger colleagues and friends, who have seen it. I doubt if there is a single one among "those who welcomed me fraternally, in this world that became mine", to whom Harvest and Sowing is dedicated - except perhaps Chevalley. This is certainly one of the things I would have liked to talk about with him - but he is no longer here with me to talk to...

mathematical quagmire that I feel to be substantial, without bothering to take a closer look at the initial idea ("ihr auf den Zahn fühlen", as we say in German...), or to foresee the outcome of the melee. Sometimes the idea doesn't hold up, for some a priori obvious reason, and which escapes me so much that I am on fire and flame to "jump into the juice". I end up realising - sometimes I feel like a complete idiot, and yet it is rare that I regret having launched into it. That is the way and no other that I make contact with an unknown substance - by rubbing up against it, be it "wisely/*à bon escient*" or not.

My friend, however, first probes and examines - and he launches out, when he feels sure, if not of the finishing point, which would be too much to ask, but in any case that there is a place to land, and that he will not return empty-handed. I never had the impression in his work of any kind of dispersion of energy, as was often the case with me - but rather that in his work all the strokes count. From this point of view, his style of work carried the mark of maturity, whereas mine carried rather the mark of a youth, sometimes messy/*brouillonne* by dint of being fiery/*fougueuse*. At the time of our first meeting, however, it was I who was approaching forty, while he was twenty. And more than once, I sensed in him a kind of smiling indulgence towards me, the kind of indulgence that a benevolent adult would have towards a child he has in affection, when he saw me still embarking on some (small) "big burnish", without ever doubting anything...

The aspects that I am mentioning here are no doubt difficult to detect in "definitive/*au net*", published works, which present a final, or at least advanced, stage of reflection. My demands on my work are no less stringent than his, and I hardly ever entrusted notes to a typist or a printer, until they had reached a stage where they satisfied my need for complete clarity. On the other hand, in the style of writing that I follow in the "Mathematical Reflections" (and especially in "Pursuing Stacks"), the original steps in the work is apparent on every page. The reader will notice many "failures". They are all of small magnitude - most often spotted the next day or two if not on the very same day, and rectified in the pages that follow. (That this should be so surprised myself - it is one of the signs of this extraordinary "ease" in my mathematical work, which I have spoken of elsewhere(\*). One of the reasons for the presence of the "little failures" is of course my lack of familiarity with a subject I had not touched for seven or eight years - and these lapses became rarer as the work progressed, as the lost contact gradually re-established itself. Nevertheless, this way, at all times, of taking for "hard cash" without hesitation what was restored to me by a rather nebulous memory, of things I knew more or less well at the time, illustrates well this "go-getter", and sometimes messy, aspect, which constitutes (among others) the "yang in the yin" aspect in my mathematical (or non-mathematical) work. I am convinced that an equally spontaneous text, written from the pen of Deligne, would be much closer to what is commonly considered as "publishable" - and indeed, publishable by the stringent standards of his.

If I insist here on the character of "maturity", of "yin very yin" in the style of work and the approach to mathematics in my friend, it is in no way to suggest by this the idea of any disequilibrium in his work, that this work would be marked by a lack or absence of "yang", "virile" qualities. If this were so, his works would not bear on every page, like those of Serre's or mine, the delicate mark, which cannot deceive, of beauty. But this is not the place here, any more than I did in the case of Serre's or in mine, to follow line by line the delicate

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\* See the note "The trap - or ease and exhaustion", n° 99. It seems to me that this "ease" is even greater now than it was, before my "departure". This seems to me to be linked to a maturation that has taken place in me over the past fifteen years, and which is felt in my mathematical work as well as elsewhere.

harmony of yin and yang, of the "feminine" and the "masculine", in his published work which is known to me, and in what is known to me of his work through the personal contact I had with him for nearly two decades. Nor should we believe that this observation that I am making of an equilibrium of yin and yang, is a sort of truism, that it would apply immediately to any man who in one way or another stands as a "great mathematician". This perception of beauty that I mentioned just now, is not equally present, nor to the same degree, in the work of all the mathematicians who leave a lasting imprint on the mathematics of their time. Among these, I know two who, like Deligne, appear to me to be predominantly yin in their work as well as in their personality, and whose work has never given me the impression of an inner equilibrium, of a beauty that never leaves one wanting.

The yin disequilibrium takes on such an extreme character, in one of these colleagues, that he seems entirely incapable, of even clearly and correctly formulating the slightest definition, or the slightest statement (not to mention an idea...) - even though on many things he has a deep intuition, and has introduced a number of important and fecund ideas. They were brought into shape at each time by the work of others. Obviously, there is a very effective repression of the "yang" traits and forces in him, both in his work and in his ways of being. This repression takes on the proportions of a real impotence, including in his work, where he is incapable of bringing to a successful conclusion the slightest thing by his own means. He compensates for this impotence of being with an attitude of megalomania, internalising at the same time the defects that he likes to cultivate in himself, as if it were thanks to them that he could have conceived the ideas that (in his eyes) make him the great scholar/*savant*/ of the millennium...(\*)

I sense a repression in the opposite direction in my friend Pierre, evacuating certain "yin" traits and leading him (with more or less success) to model himself on a superyang image. This repression is very far, certainly, from the extreme opposite case that I have just mentioned. It does not go so far as to erase from the reader or the interlocutor the feeling of beauty, of satisfaction without any aftertaste of uneasiness, which are the signs of a true understanding, making at every moment their fair share, to the clarity, to the shadow, to the mystery. This means that the "superyang" brand image chosen by my friend should hardly encroach on his work itself, at times of work I mean, during which the presence of the "boss" should be more often than not as effaced as it is (I think) with Serre, or with me(†).

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### (136.1)

(4 December) (‡) My own approach has constantly led me to "rethink" from top to bottom what has come in my way as a mathematician, whether it is the apparently most insignificant thing, or whether it has the scope of "a whole science". It is true that, having only two arms like everyone else, I was not able to always go so far in the

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\* I am talking here about attitudes and ways of being that I could see in the times before my departure, when I had the opportunity to meet this prestigious colleague on a familiar basis. It is not impossible that something has changed since then (although this would be something quite rare...).

† I return to this hasty impression at the end of the sub-note n° 136.1 (of 4 December) to the present note.

‡ The present sub-note to the preceding note ("Yin the servant (2) - or the generosity", n° 136), comes from a footnote to it. (See cross-reference in third paragraph before the end of the latter.)

realisation of a work programme to remake "from top to bottom a whole science", as I did in the case of algebraic geometry, starting from a few very simple key ideas around the notion of scheme. Even in this case, where I invested a large part of my mathematical energy for twelve years in a row, I was far from "buckling" the planned programme - for that, I would have needed twelve more years! (And no one after I left cared to continue the task, which must have seemed (wrongly) unrewarding[*ingrate*]...)

As other cases where I rethought a science, but without going so far, I would point out homological algebra (both commutative and non-commutative - and the latter did not yet exist when I first thought about it in 1955), and topology, with the introduction of the notion of topos, which is still waiting for its time to become the daily bread of the topological geometer, in the same way as the various notions of "spaces" and "varieties" that are commonly used today(\*). No doubt some important parts of current topology will hardly be touched by the systematic development of the topological viewpoint in topology. Still this point of view seems to me rather the crucial element in the "creation from scratch of a new science" - of that science which achieves a synthesis (which was entirely unexpected at the time when I came along[*débarquais*], in the fifties) of algebraic geometry, topology and arithmetic(†). Beyond the construction of the new algebraic geometry, and through the "mastery of étale cohomology" (and that of l-adic cohomology which results from it), it is the elaboration of a master-plan[*maître d'oeuvre*] of this new science still in the making, and the development of solid technical bases, which was in my eyes my main contribution to the mathematics of my time. The "yoga of motives", which still remains conjectural, seems to me to be the soul, or at least a neuralgic part among all, of this new science, so vast that until today I had not yet thought of giving it a name. It could be called, perhaps, arithmetic geometry, suggesting by this name the image of a "geometry" that would be developed "over the absolute base"  $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$ , and which admits "specialisations" both in the traditional "algebraic geometries" of the various characteristics, and in "transcendental" geometric notions (over the base fields  $\mathbb{R}$ ,  $\mathbb{C}$  or  $\mathbb{Q}_l$ ...), via the notions of analytic or rigid-analytic "varieties" (or better, multiplicities), and their variants.

I see yet another "new science" that I had glimpsed[*entrevue*] as early as the sixties, taking its source in my reflections on homological algebra begun in 1955. It is a vast synthesis of ideas coming from homological algebra (as it developed in contact with the needs of algebraic geometry, or better said, of "arithmetic geometry"), from homotopical algebra, from the "general topology" version of topos, and finally from the theory (in limbo since the sixties) of (non-strict)  $\infty$ -categories, or, as I prefer to say now, of  $\infty$ -stacks. I had expected, as a matter of course, that this synthesis would be taken in hand by some of my cohomology students, starting with Verdier whose famous thesis(‡) was supposed to go precisely in this direction. It seemed to me that the development of a satisfactory common language, with all the generality and all the flexibility desirable, should be a matter of a few years' work, undoubtedly exciting, by a small core of motivated researchers. After a few very fragmentary beginnings in this direction by some of my cohomology students, my departure in 1970 rang the signal for an immediate abandonment of this work programme, among many others that were close to

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\* Compare with some of the comments in the second part of the note from the end of March "My orphans" (n° 46), and in its sub-notes n°s 46.5 to 46.7.

† See previous footnote. (11 March 1985) The term "entirely unexpected" is no doubt excessive, for the prescience of such a synthesis is already to be found in Weil conjectures, which acted as a powerful source of inspiration.

‡ See on this subject the note "Thesis on credit and all risk insurance", n° 81.



my heart. This is why I revisited some of my ideas, in a 1975 correspondence with Larry Breen, in the hope of reviving a vision of things that I clearly felt were "in the way", and that "everyone" was taking care to carefully circumvent, whenever they were confronted with them. In my letters to Larry Breen (reproduced in chap. I of "Pursuing Stacks"), I proposed to call by the name of topological algebra this science still in gestation, which for a decade or two I alone had been glimpsing(\*). Finally, war-weary and despairing of seeing anyone else than me to get down to a work which for twenty years had been burning to be undertaken, I set to work in February 1973, with "Pursuing Stacks", to trace at least in the broad outlines the master-plan for what I see to do.

It is clear that there is no common measure between the "arithmetic geometry" that was mentioned earlier, and topological algebra, one of whose main roles in my eyes is that of "logistical support" in the development of this new geometry. For this geometry to reach the stage of full maturity attested (let us say) by a mastery of the notion of motif, comparable to the mastery we have of étale cohomology, we must undoubtedly expect that several generations of geometers will have to work on it, more dynamic and bolder than those I have seen at work; not to mention a comparable mastery of anabelian algebraic geometry, which appears to me (along with motives) as one of the two "neuralgic" parts of arithmetic geometry, discernible as of now(†).

There is finally a fourth direction of reflection, pursued in my past as a mathematician, going in the direction of a "top to bottom" renewal of an existing discipline. This is the "tame topology" approach to topology, on which I elaborate a little in the "Sketch of a Programme" (par. 5 and 6). Here, as so many times since the distant years of lycée, it seems that I am still alone in feeling the richness and the urgency of a work of foundations to be done, the need for which seems to me here more obvious than ever. I have the very clear feeling that the development of the point of view of tame topology, in the spirit evoked in the Sketch of a program, would represent for topology a renewal of comparable scope to that which the point of view of schemes has brought to algebraic geometry, and this, without requiring investments of energy of comparable dimensions. Moreover, I believe that such a tame topology will eventually prove to be a valuable tool in the development of arithmetic geometry, in particular to formulate and prove "comparison theorems" between the "profinite" homotopical structure associated to a stratified scheme of finite type over the field of complex numbers (or more generally, to a stratified schematic multiplicity of finite type over this field), and the corresponding "discrete" homotopical structure, defined in a transcendental way, modulating suitable hypotheses (of equisingularity in particular). This question only makes sense in terms of a precise "theory of dévissage" for stratified structures, which in the framework of "transcendental" topology seems to me to require the introduction of the "tame" context.

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† (For some key ideas of anabelian algebraic geometry, see Sketch of a Programme, par. 2 and 3.)

By "neuralgic", I mean here a part of this "arithmetic" geometry which brings intuitions, conductive threads, and problems, entirely new compared to the *acquis* of the sixties. (This "*acquis*" consisting essentially of a framework and a language, and a homological and homotopical formalism common to the three disciplines encompassed in arithmetic geometry). Perhaps we should join to the two previous ones a third such "neuralgic part", intimately linked to the motives, namely the theory "à la Langlands" of automorphic forms. If I have refrained from talking about it, it is because of my regrettable ignorance of the subject of the theory of automorphic functions. (I don't know if the opportunity will arise, pushing me to finally fill this ignorance to some extent...)

## 2.9 The claw in the velvet

### (137) Velvet paw - or the smiles

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### (138) The reversal (4) - or the conjugal circus

(8 December) As I finished the reflection last night, I had the somewhat painful impression of one who understands less and less. Before going to bed, I stayed for a while more following the associations aroused by the past reflection. I thought I saw some points of light appear, which I think will serve as lights in today's reflection.

The most important of these associations is surely related to this "velvet paw" aspect in my friend, who likes to scratch (and sometimes deeply and without pity) with the most innocent airs in the world, and "with all the appearance of the most exquisite delicacy". This image, which came up in the course of a comparison (with a situation of "revolt" mentioned previously) that had been shipwrecked, immediately appeared to me as rich in meaning, as an essential aspect of this "antagonism" that I was proposing to probe. And retrospectively, this evocation of the image of "innocent smile and velvet paw", restoring the quintessence of an experience of nearly twenty years, seems to me the "sensitive point" in the reflection of yesterday, the unexpected "point of light" as I groped in the dark. If this impression of groping and darkness prevailed beyond that, it is because, too caught up in the ideas I had in my head the moment before and which I had to pursue or place, I had not been able to be attentive to this delicate "tilt" which had taken place in me, at the moment the image appeared. And in the half hour that followed, pursuing some associations related to this image and to one or two other moments of the past reflection, the attention was again dispersed. It is only now, regaining, with the hindsight of a day, the thread of the interrupted reflection, that I can see a perspective of it fitting in that had escaped me earlier, while rereading the notes from yesterday.

If I take care to follow the strongest association of all and the one most intimately linked to my experience, discarding for the moment others that are more "structured", more "intellectual", there comes the following. I see myself returning suddenly, as if in a unique impression that would sum them all up, to this multitude of particular cases (experienced either as a co-actor, or as a close witness) of the conjugal circus - the circus of the woman-man couple. The circus of the couple, married or not, with or without children, young or old or young-old or the opposite, in the doldrums pulling the devil by the tail or in the ease riding in a carriage, it's all the same, the circus of the couple doesn't change for all that. I suddenly see myself returning, by an aspect of this circus that struck me among all others (it took me a long time, it must be said, before I saw anything else but fire in it...): it's the very particular tactic, very "innocent faces", "I said nothing and did nothing", the "velvet paw" tactic played by the woman, in a certain game where it's always her who leads with perfect tact [*doigté*] and without a care, and where it's always him who follows (and often, cashes in) without realising anything. I've seen very few couples that don't work on this tune, with infinite variations of course, left to the care of the improvisational gifts of each of them, not to mention particular temperaments and other circumstances. I had the

opportunity as recently as today to see a particularly dazzling demonstration of this, which I nevertheless don't want to digress into here.

This is a somewhat colourful and nuanced description of these circus games, at least in the broad outlines, or even just an evocation of the tones (velvet paw, precisely, on the "she" side) in which it is played out, which was the great absentee in the reflection of 12 November that I have just gone through again, in the note "The reversal (1) - or the vehement wife" (n°126). Obviously, I was pursuing this reflection against the grain of a reluctance, so much so that it ended up looking like an austere "forces and motivations" analysis - certainly I was not in good shape that day! It was also the first time, in "The key of yin and yang", that the "reversal of yin and yang" was discussed. The extreme case which had obsessed me somewhat then, and which continued to do so as recently as yesterday, was that of my mother (taken up in the note of 22 November "The reversal (2) - or the ambiguous revolt", n° 132). I was careful, however, in my "attempt at a four-point analysis", to identify the first of these three "points" in such a way as to apply to the great majority (if not to all) of the couples I have been able to know at least a bit closely, without the vehement tone of the (ambiguous) "revolt" necessarily predominating (even if in an obscured form). This does not prevent the fact that there is still something else common to them which escaped me that day. It only began to emerge last night, during that well-spent half-hour when I let my thoughts wander, in the wake of the "shaped" reflection. This important common thing, which I had previously perceived only in the extreme case of "vehement wife", is the subtle play of the reversal of yin yang roles.

I hesitate if I should write that this game is "the spring" of the game of power to which I made allusion earlier, or that it is identical to the latter, surely, what for her (and often also for him) constitutes the quintessence of the masculine role, of the role devolved to the man, is the possession of power - a possession which is often fictitious, of course, but which in any case draws an element of reality from the social consensus. Perhaps I have had a tendency to underestimate the strength of this element of reality, the strength of the symbol of the man, as representing an authority in front of the woman - and in particular, its strength as a driving force in the woman's motivations. I suspect that for her, "being a man", or "being the man", is, above all other things, about exercising power. The "reversal of roles", at the level of egotistical motivations(\*), is no doubt no more and no less than the exercise of power by the woman over the man.

Given the existing consensus, this exercise of women's power can hardly be done except in a covert way. It does not consist of commanding, nor of pretending to decide (with the expectation that the decision will be followed), but of making walk/*faire marcher*] - and above all, of making things go round/*tourner en bourrique*], and doing this without ever seeming to do so. This is the famous conjugal merry-go-round, which turns without ever being idle! The tactic to keep it moving, passed on wordlessly from mother to daughter, from

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\* It was mentioned elsewhere, in passing, of the reversal of yin-yang roles at the level of the erotic impulse and in the love game. (See in particular the note "The acceptance (the awakening of the yin (2))".) The erotic impulse is by nature foreign to the games of the self, and in particular to the games of power, even though the self is eager to make of it an instrument to serve its own ends, and skilful to achieve this (within at least certain narrow limits and by denaturing and mutilating the original impulse). If there is a relationship between the two types of yin-yang "reversal", that is to say, between on the one hand the free play of the two impulses of yin and yang both in the female lover, and in the male lover, and on the other hand the obsessive play of an incessant and insidious demonstration of power by one of the spouses over the other, it seems to me that this relationship can hardly be anything other than this: that each of the two types, at every moment, excludes the other.

woman or young girl to little girl, from generation to generation, is the tactic mentioned yesterday along the way [*au détour du chemin*], the "velvet paw" tactic. If one pays attention, one recognises it in an infinite number of different faces, from the extreme-yang case of the vehement wife, embodied for me by my mother, to the extreme-yin case of the dolorous (even overwhelmed) wife, which I saw embodied by another close relative.

It seems to me that there are very few women who do not practice this immemorial tactic, and who have not mastered it thoroughly(\*). It is practised daily, especially in the conjugal circus, but it is not limited to it. It seems to me that it is rarely practised from woman to woman (perhaps simply because it is more difficult to "make walk" a woman than a man). On the other hand, for some women, this tactic becomes second nature, in her relationship with all men or almost all - at least those who are perceived by her as having a markedly virile character.

If I speak here of "tactics", this expresses only an accessory aspect, just the "tactical" aspect, of a more important reality: that of an inveterate inner attitude, towards "men" in general, or at least towards those, father, lover or husband in particular, who in her life play a privileged role as man, invested (by social consensus, or by her own choice) with an authority. This attitude is by no means always in the nature of a thirst for domination (as in the case of "vehement wife") - at least not in the sense in which we usually understand the word "domination". It is rather a craving, which sometimes becomes all-consuming, to constantly exert an action on the other, to "keep him moving" (meaning: moving around her own person...). For this, often, all means are good. One of these means of exercising an action, and thereby, a power, is to hurt, and sometimes to hurt as deeply as one can, to knock outright KO, and at the limit, to destroy, physically or psychically, if only the occasion is favourable; and this, always, without seeming to touch it, with "all the appearances of the most exquisite delicacy". More than once I myself have been "thrown out of the way [*envoyé sur le carreau*]"! Often too, caught unprepared as a co-actor or as a witness, I have had my breath taken away by the apparent gratuitousness of the act that hurts or destroys, with an innocent smile or with an absent air but always as if nothing had happened, seizing with an infallible instinct the moment and the place to touch the other person where he can be most profoundly affected [*atteint*] - whether this "other" is the father or the lover, the husband or the child, or a simple acquaintance or even a stranger (provided only that the opportunity is there to strike and to affect...).

### **(139) The ingenuous violence - or the handover**

(9 December) Here I am touching on the extreme case, and yet by no means rare, of violence for violence's sake, of gratuitousness in violence and in malice. This kind of violence, whether it strikes a stranger or the person closest to us and supposedly loved, is characteristic neither of women, nor of men; it is neither "yin", nor "yang". But the disconcerting and insidious form in which I encounter it here, under the mask of an air of distracted absence or even of ingenuous gentleness - this form, which has come to be quite familiar to me, appears to me to be characteristic above all of women. This is a circumstance that is surely linked to the

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\* It is also true that there are very few men who don't "walk" straight away, when "one" applies this tactic to them. I myself have walked without a hitch for the most of my life. That only really started to change with the appearance of meditation in my life, at the age of forty-eight (it's never too late to do it). Even today I sometimes get caught up in it. (Not often, admittedly, and never for very long...)

"patriarchal" social consensus, which invests the man with authority and with power, vis-à-vis the woman(\*). This form is her own means of satisfying a will to power which, because it is compelled (by force of circumstance) to follow paths other than those open to men, is not for all that less imperious, less devouring in her - quite the contrary! It would seem that not being able to unfold in the light of day, being condemned in advance to an occult existence, only exacerbates and makes this craving proliferate further within her, to the point, in many cases, of truly "devouring" her life and the lives of those close to her.

This craving does not always, and far from it (fortunately!), reach the dimension of gratuitous violence in all directions[*tous azimuts*]; and the styles in which it is deployed are not all in the tones of violence. While tones of discreet derision are most often the rule, giving vent to a veiled antagonism or a secret enmity, simply malicious tones, in a colouring of indulgent affection that is a little mischievous around the edges, are nevertheless not excluded. And if it is true that the tried and tested tactic of the "velvet paw" is the privilege and the weapon of choice of women, this privilege is by no means exclusive. Many times I have, very closely, see this weapon used by men(†), with an equally perfect mastery(‡). Remarkably, in all these cases, the man who had appropriated this weapon which is specific to women, was someone who tended to repress certain virile sides of his being, and (by doing so, no doubt) to mould himself according to the maternal model.

This same tactic is frequently observed, and is almost the rule, in the games of power that are played by children, girls or boys alike, towards their parents, or towards other adults in their place. This immediately brings up the association with the situation of writers or journalists in countries (past or present) where direct or indirect censorship is rife, rendering the direct and unvarnished public expression of one's true ideas and feelings impossible or risky. The main difference between this last case and the previous ones, is that in this case the recourse to indirect, veiled, sometimes symbolic expression of one's true feelings, is no longer the work of the unconscious, but very much of a conscious thought. The reason for this is, surely, that there is then a sufficiently widespread consensus in favour of unorthodox ideas and feelings (which it is a question of "passing them on" without appearing to do so), so that the person concerned no longer feels to be under the obligation of hiding them from himself, for fear of appearing as an awful denatured person in his own eyes. Only in extreme cases of fierce political or religious terror (such as in the Middle Ages, or in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries in Stalin's time) are unorthodox tendencies[*velléités*] forced (at least for some people) to sink still one notch deeper, by evading the gaze of the inner Censor, as well as that of the censure established in the mores and in the police apparatus.

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\* Moreover, this consensus, and the authority of the man in his relationship to the woman, have been greatly eroded over the last few generations, and more and more so nowadays. I would be the last to complain about this! It does not seem, however, that this superficial change in laws and customs has changed much in the deep springs and the "style" of relations between the sexes, and in particular in the visceral and carefully concealed antagonism of the woman towards the man. This is no doubt due to the fact, highlighted at the end of the reflection in the present note, that this attitude of antagonism, and its means of expression through a certain game of power (or reversal of power), is much more the result of a transmission of an "inheritance" from generation to generation, than that of "objective" conditions within the family.

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‡ It would seem, moreover, that this tactic, implemented by the unconscious, always inherits from it that "tact" and that almost infallible sureness, so rarely present in a fully conscious action. I don't think I have ever seen this tactic used without being with mastery.

All these examples seem to suggest that the "velvet paw" (or "I said nothing, thought nothing, wanted nothing") style appears, in a more or less automatic way, in any situation that is even slightly lasting, where a power correlation [*rapport de forces*] to our disadvantage renders it impossible, or at least dangerous for us, to express candidly, directly, our feelings, desires, ideas, intentions - and, more particularly, feelings of animosity or enmity towards those who are perceived to exert a constraint on us (and in particular, the very constraint that was intended to prevent us from expressing our true feelings)(\*). This is not the only case where the style in question, and the inner dispositions it encompasses, appear. Very often, this "power correlation" is more or less fictitious, it corresponds much less to an "objective" reality, taking into account the real dispositions (or means of power) of the one or the ones perceived as "oppressor", rather than to the idea (conscious or unconscious) that we have. This idea is rarely the fruit of an attentive and intelligent examination of a given reality, but it is almost always part of the "package" of conditioning of all kinds [*tout poil*] that we receive at a young age, given moreover certain fundamental choices that have been made in us from that early period. Thus, whether in a girl or a boy, the choice (unconscious, of course) of an identification with the mother, implies the adoption of a whole set of attitudes and behaviours (such as those expressed by the "velvet paw" style), and at the same time of the ideas (unconscious most often, but it doesn't matter) which underlie them (such as the ideas about a certain power correlation, and the reflexes of antagonism which accompany these ideas). In the opposite case of identification with the father, but when the father himself has integrated into his person certain typically "feminine" traits (or which are such in our society, at least), it is conceivable that the effect could be quite analogous to that in the first case.

The point I want to make here is that in our present society, and in the milieus of which I have been a part at least, it seems to me that this style ("velvet paw"), and this "feminine" inner attitude that I am examining here, are only to a very limited extent the individual's spontaneous reaction to objective relations of force, instituted by society or by the particular situation that surrounds our childhood (or even our adulthood at certain times); that it is rather an "inheritance" taken over from one or other of our parents (if not both at the same time?), who themselves had taken it over from their parents. Obviously, this kind of inheritance preferentially follows the maternal line, being transmitted primarily from mother to daughter. But on more than one occasion I have seen a transmission from mother to son. Nothing leads me to believe that transmission cannot also take place, exceptionally, from father to son, or even, from father to daughter.

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\* In writing these lines, the thought occurred to me that the situation I have just described is precisely the one we were confronted with in the first years of our childhood, all of us without exception, one might say. A large part of our unconscious (the part that could be called "the dungeon", generally perceived at the unconscious level as a sort of "garbage pit"), is nothing other than the response of our child psyche to this pressure from our entourage, which forces us (it is practically a question of survival) to bury far from our own eyes, as a sign of disavowal, all that in us that falls under the social censure. This censure is soon internalised in an inner Censor, whose sullen presence is the guarantee of the permanence of this premature burial. Yet, despite the Censor, the unorthodox impulses, knowing and feelings, duly buried, manage to express themselves, sometimes with an exacerbated and formidable efficiency, in an indirect, often symbolic, and nevertheless perfectly concrete way. The "velvet paw" section offers an example that is particularly "striking" - and often, disconcerting...

#### **(140) The slave and the puppet - or the floodgates**

(10 December) I would like to return to some associations around the theme of gratuitous violence. This was the theme with which yesterday's reflection began, and then I moved away from it, to return to an examination of the "feminine" (or "velvet paw") style in the games of power, and as a means of expressing a disposition of antagonism towards others (and above all, towards men who are felt to be strongly virile, or to be, in any capacity whatsoever, in a position of authority, of prestige or of power).

As I said yesterday, the (seemingly) gratuitous violence, violence "for the sake of it", is no more specific to women than to men. Everyone has had the occasion to be confronted with it suddenly, at the turn of the road, whether in the form of the "most exquisite delicacy", or in the form of a kick or a burst of machine-gun fire in the stomach. The latter style, the "yang" style surely, is nevertheless rarer in these days, the so-called times "of peace", and in civilised countries like ours. For most of us, who are well brought up and more or less well situated in a country of affluence, this saying-its-own-name violence is not part of everyday life, as is the case with the other, the muffled violence, with its ingenuous airs. However, you only have to look through the "news items" column of the first big daily newspaper you come across, or listen to the news(\*), to realise that the "hard" gratuitous violence, even in our country, is still roaming the streets. It does not always go as far as slitting the throat of the anonymous little old lady who has already been taken in by a burglary [*pris fantaisie de cambrioler*]. But when young people seeking adventure [*en mal d'aventure*] "borrow" the car left carelessly open in front of one's house, it is rare that by leaving it in a ditch ten or twenty kilometres away, they have not first carefully ransacked it. Even in the peaceful countryside where I have the good fortune to live without worrying too much about anything, the smallest farmhouse or cottage does not remain unoccupied for long, before it has been pillaged from top to bottom (this, for utility) and moreover, copiously vandalised (this, for pleasure). In all the cases I have just mentioned, the gratuitousness of the violence is particularly striking, because he (or she) who is struck is a stranger, often someone we have never seen and will never see.

This is therefore a violence that could be called "anonymous". Since time immemorial, no doubt, wars have been a kind of collective orgy of such violence - the times when the opportunity to kill for free is king, and when the life of a particular vague individual is worth zero before the pleasure of pulling a trigger and feeling its power to make a floating [*falotte*], nameless silhouette slump in front of one's face...

If there is one thing in the world, as far back as I can remember, that has always left me distraught and speechless, it has been to see myself confronted once again with that violence that is beyond comprehension, that which strikes and destroys for the sole pleasure of striking and destroying. If there is one thing in the world that imprints in us this indelible feeling of "evil", it is neither death nor the suffering that the body may endure, but it is this very thing. And when such violence (whether it has a hard or soft face, whether it seems "big" or "small") comes to you unexpectedly through one of those dear to you, it is sure to touch you hard and deep, to make a nameless anguish surge (or resurge...) and break over you. The root of this anguish plunges the deepest, when it finds to implant itself in the soft and fresh [*meuble et frais*] soil of childhood, even of early childhood. This anguish, "the best kept secret in the world" in my life as a child as well as in my life as an adult, appeared in me at the hands of my mother, in my sixth year.

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\* These are things, to be sure, that I have long since ceased to do, contenting myself with occasional news through intermediaries.

It was at the age of 51, during the month of March 1980, that I uncovered the episode of the implantation of the anguish in my life. The hold of the anguish on me had already been defused earlier, to a large extent at least, with the appearance of meditation in my life (in 1976), gradually taking on an increasingly important role. A third decisive turning point in my relationship to the anguish took place in July and August 1982, during an attentive examination of the mechanism of the anguish in my everyday life. The situations that created the anguish, from my childhood to my middle age, were those that, in the unknown depths of my being, made me relive again "that which is beyond comprehension". These were also, very precisely, the times when I saw myself confronted once again with the familiar signs of seemingly inexplicable, elusive, irreducible violence... The sudden irruption of this violence suddenly causes a wave of distraught anguish to resurge and unfurl, which is immediately brought under control and repressed. This visceral reaction has remained identical to itself to this day, more or less(\*). Yet if anything has changed over the last few years, it is the appearance of a reflection in the wake of the anguish, which makes comprehensible, and often obvious, what had appeared under the menacing mask of "what goes beyond comprehension", of the delirious; and above all, for the past two years, by the appearance of a look at myself, a look of interest and concern for this anguish itself, which a reflex movement of peremptory force would have me hide from myself. Or to put it another way, my relationship to the anguish has become, and especially in the last two years, no longer one of visceral refusal, or of taming of beasts or of gravedigger, but rather and more and more, a relationship of attentive and affectionate welcome to the message it brings me about myself - as much about my present, as about my past and its action in my present. This, it seems to me, is the last step I have gone through so far, towards an increasingly complete inner autonomy vis-à-vis others, that is to say, before anything else: vis-à-vis my relatives and my friends(†).

It is, it seems to me, the does-not-say-its-own-name violence, the violence in the "feminine" mode, which is the most powerful generator of anguish, much more than the more spectacular violence of the punch right in the face. The person who plays with muffled violence, and who thereby also plays on those secret floodgates that

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\* (14 December) It would be more accurate to say that this reaction remained "much the same as itself, more or less" until the time of my meditation in July and August 1982. While the "provocations" catching me off guard have been numerous since then, the "visceral reaction" in question has made its appearance only once, a year ago. It was by the occasion of a short "circumstantial" meditation, lasting a few hours, that completely clarified the situation. As soon as a confused inner situation is confronted with simplicity and assumption, the anguish that accompanies it and brings us the message of our confusion, disappears without leaving any trace, except that of a knowing, and a renewed calm.

† This "last step" was already discussed at the end of "The acceptance" (n° 110), under the somewhat different light of a liberation from the need for approbation or confirmation, which "really constitutes the "hook", discreet and of ironclad solidity, by which the conflict can "hang" in us, and by which we are... under the dependence of the others..., by which, in short, it "holds" us, and (casually) manoeuvres us to its will...". (This passage, decidedly, could have been written on this very day - yet I swear I didn't copy it!)

I can't say whether there are still other such "steps" to be gone through before me, which will give me the distance to see my current autonomy as still relative, and not complete (as I would have tended to believe, though, perhaps a little naively, that it is...).

The hatching and blooming of a relaxed and attentive relationship to the anguish does represent a liberation in the relationship to others. Indeed (as stated in the following paragraph), it is the possibility for others to "manoeuvre to its will the floodgates of the anguish" in us (by the alternation in particular, dosed and tactfully administered, of the gratification and rejection), which represents their main means of power over us.



release nameless and faceless waves of anguish in others - he holds in his or her hands a weapon that is more formidable than an authority or a simple power of coercion. And to manoeuvre at will and at his whim, with an air of innocence, these floodgates of the anguish, represents a power that is undoubtedly more incisive and more formidable, even though it remains more hidden, than any power of fact or of principle, instituted by a social consensus. This is the "just revenge" of woman on man, in a society where he claims (or has claimed) to dominate her; and this is also the price "he" pays for his illusory supremacy (present, or past). If she is a slave (and in our countries, she is less and less so), he is a puppet in her hands or very nearly so (and he is still as much a puppet today as he ever was).

For some years now, whenever I see myself confronted with a situation of gratuitous violence (whether it is exercised against myself or against others, whether it manifests itself in a brutal, or insidious, manner), I have been reminded with an unstoppable force of the association with the contempt for oneself - or rather, I see this contempt for himself in the person who, openly or inwardly, affects to despise others. I have no doubt that this is not a simple push-button mechanism in me, a "philosophical" or "psychological" hobby[*dada*] that I would be quite happy to pull out on occasion, as a means perhaps of exorcising by a convincing formula the anguish I was talking about, by nimbly sticking a catch-all label on a menacing stranger. It is simply a knowing, of an essential, profound and (once seen) obvious relationship.

This knowing does not "evacuate" anything, it simply allows me to locate an unknown. It is in no way a sentry, placed there to block the way to the anguish, or to expel it from the place. This is not the nature of a knowing, as I understand it. A knowing is part of an inner calm, it helps to give it its foundation. It is an agitation within us, on the contrary, that constantly pushes us to want to block the way to "intruders", lest they jostle a "calm" of composition. The calm of which I speak does not fear the intruder, it makes us welcome it. And the agitation on the surface created by the new encounter with the anguish does not disturb this calm, but contributes[*concourt*] to it.

## **2.10 The violence - or the games and the spur**

### **(141) The violence of the just**

(13 December) With my "floodgate" in the previous note, about the "slave" and the "puppet", I have surely again found a way to displease everyone, and (if I am read...) to be called all sorts of names! Unless the hypothetical reader (man or woman) applauds contentedly, who knows, convinced that the image is well sent and applies to the whole world, except for himself (or herself); and except perhaps also, at most, for the sarcastic author. By this supposition, moreover, he would give my modest person a credit which he has no right to give at all. At most, I would venture to admit that for some years now (and above all, since a certain meditation on the anguish, in July and August 1982), I have begun to get out of, and even to be out of, the famous "circus" - the conjugal circus, of course, but also the others which resemble it like brothers. There is even, in the first part of Harvest and Sowing, a section in this sense that announces this colour, called "No more merry-go-rounds" (n° 41, from last March). This, was not the conjugal circus, but a certain mathematical circus, in which I have spent a good part of my life, like everyone else. But it is also true that a few weeks after this

section with a promising name, on 29 April, appeared a note "One foot in the merry-go-round" (n° 72), whose name would seem to herald a different bell! The difference from before, perhaps, is that if I still happen here and there to turn in some merry-go-round (and I hardly see any more than the mathematical merry-go-round that continues to attract me...), it is myself (or someone in me at least) and no one else who pulls these threads that make me go round and round, and these have ceased to be invisible to me.

With these reservations, I can say that for most of my adult life (and more precisely, until the moment of discovering the meditation), I "walked" on the quarter turn (like everyone else, again), both in the conjugal carousel (it has been spinning merrily for no less than twenty years!), and in the others. I don't regret it, because the knowing that I have of carousels of all kinds, I owe it first of all to those in which I turned myself. If I turned in them for so long, it was because the student was slow to learn - and also, surely, because in more ways than one I found baits. They ended up, in the end of ends, losing their strength and their charm, one must believe...

It seems to me that in all these carousels, I was always the one who "walked", and never the one who "made walk". Or to put it another way, I don't think I've ever had the slightest propensity for the famous "velvet paw" style - I've sometimes played hard with my claws, but never, I think, with claws drowned in velvety duvet. This is one trait, among many others, which attest that at the level of the structure of the self, of the "boss", of that in me which is conditioned, the base tone is strongly "masculine", without any ambiguity at all. The yin, "feminine" tonalities, on the other hand, dominate at the level of the "child", of the original in me, that is to say, also in the impulse of knowing and in the creative faculties.

I would still like to add a few words on the subject of the "gratuitous violence" in my life. In the previous note (from three days ago), I mentioned it in the light of the one who finds himself the target of this violence, or at least the one who is confronted with it in others (even if only as a witness), when I wrote:

“If there is one thing in the world, as far back as I can remember, that has always left me distraught and speechless, it has been to see myself confronted once again with that violence that is beyond comprehension, that which strikes and destroys for the sole pleasure of striking and destroying...”

These lines, and those that follow them, correspond well to reality, to the reality of my own experience in any case, and surely also, to that of countless men and women who, like me, have been confronted with this violence. They could give the impression that the person who wrote them is himself a complete stranger to this violence, that all his life he has been free of such delirium. But this is not true at all. I remember some relationships in my life, four in number, three of which took place in my childhood or in the adolescence (between the ages of eight and sixteen), relationships imbued with an enmity not based on any specific personal grievance, and expressed in the form of systematic and merciless mockery, or by ruffles/*roufflées* and other brutalities. On the first occasion the victim, a classmate (in Germany then), was the whipping boy/*souffre-douleur* of the whole class. The situation dragged on for years, I think I remember. The next two cases took place during the war, during my stay (after leaving a French concentration camp) in a children's home of Swiss Relief in Le Chambon sur Lignon, "la Guespy", between 1942 and 1944. This time the "awful" ones were one of my comrades (whose parents, like mine, had to be interned, as German Jews), and one of our two supervisors, both of them German speakers like me. Both of them were a bit of scapegoats/*têtes de turc* for a

group of young boys and girls, sometimes merciless, of which I was a part - but I think I gave them a harder time than any other of the gang. Living under the same roof, and being refugees with a precarious status, under the constant threat of being rounded up as Jews by the Gestapo, could have aroused in me feelings of solidarity and respect, but it did not.

In all three cases, the person I took as a target of malice was of a gentle, rather shy, non-combative nature, which I therefore classified as "limp" or as "cowardly", and which was therefore part of the traits that were supposed to make him an unglamorous character. In an age devastated by the breath of violence and contempt for the individual, and myself filled with aversion to warlike or concentration camp violence, and for all that goes with it, I nevertheless felt entirely justified in the contempt and violence I inflicted on others, for the simple "reason" that I had taken pleasure in classifying them as "unpleasant[*antipathique*]" (and other qualifiers to match...), after which everything (or almost everything) became permissible, not to say, highly commendable. I, who prided myself on having a "logical" and just mind, did not see that my behaviour, and its justification by an antipathy (the true nature of which I would certainly not have thought of probing), were exactly the same as those of the good German of the thirties towards the "dirty Jews" (things I was able to see closely in my childhood); and that it was indeed also these that made possible the unprecedented outburst of violence that was then sweeping through the world. I pretended of course (following in my parents' footsteps) to distance myself from this violence as a strange aberration (even, at times, "beyond comprehension"). I was full of haughty condescension towards all those, soldiers or civilians, who in one way or another consented to be active or passive cogs in the heroic mass graves and in the abominations that accompanied them. And at the same time, on my own modest level and within my own limited sphere of action, I was doing what everyone else was doing...

If I try to discern the cause of such a strange blindness in the service of a deliberate purpose of contempt and violence, it is this. The violence that I myself had had to endure in the course of my childhood since the age of five, without ever having been designated as such to my attention as a child, had ended up creating a state of chronic tension, which remained unconscious and carefully controlled by a toughened will. This tension, or accumulation of aggression without a particular target, created the need for an aggressive discharge. This "need" was not of a bodily nature, however - there was no lack of opportunities for it to be vented through a suitable bodily activity in any of these cases - but rather psychic. Surely there must have been an accumulated grudge, mostly unconscious of course and not materialised in palpable grievances towards a particular person (one of my parents, say, or one of the people who took their place), on whom I could then have transferred my feelings of grudge, and given them a concrete, perhaps violent expression. There must have been a "vacant" violence in me, a diffuse, wandering violence, in search of a target on which to unload. It seems that it is often animals (insects, toads, dogs or cats, even oxen or horses...) that bear the brunt of such wandering violence, in search of a victim. This was not the case for me, I don't remember having tormented any animal in my life, neither small nor large. Apparently, I needed a scapegoat closer to me, a person! When you're looking for one, surely it's never hard to find one.

I have no doubt that what I have just written describes well a certain aspect of reality. I feel, however, that this description still remains on the surface of things, it only identifies a certain "mechanistic" aspect, without really going further into the unconscious experience. For the moment, in place of this experience, there is a kind of great "blank", a void. This is not the time and place to pass over it [*passer outre*], to probe further into what this

"blank" is covering, what is dissolving in this "void". Is it this famous "contempt for oneself", which was asserted in such a peremptory way in the note of three days ago, and which suddenly, now that it is about me, seems to have vanished without leaving a trace? It would be the moment now or never, at last, to get to the bottom of it, to elucidate this tenacious and ambiguous "vagueness" that continues to mark my knowing of myself, like the "vagueness" that once surrounded the role and the very existence of the anguish in my life. This, the anguish, was the "best kept secret" in my whole life, it seemed to me. Could there be another secret, still better kept, barely touched upon here and there, on two or three occasions, since I started to meditate? I have the feeling that I have everything in hand to know the final word - including this sudden surge of familiar interest, which tells me that the moment is ripe to launch myself! However, I have a feeling that I am not going to do so here, in this meditation that is in some way "public", or at least, intended to be published. This one will at least have had, among many others, the virtue of unexpectedly ripening a question that has suddenly become very close, finally recognised as crucial for an understanding of myself, whereas previously it appeared to be one question among a hundred, on a long waiting list whose end I may never see...

It is certainly not impossible that I will have the opportunity to meet again one or other of the three men (two of whom are about my age) who were once the innocent targets of a violence and an aggression in me; or if not, at the very least, that I will have the opportunity to write to some of them. It will be a good thing for me to be able to make amends, and, to do so with full knowledge of the facts. Perhaps it will be a good thing for him too. Strangely enough, I don't get the impression that any of the three of them ever really resented me [*m'en ait jamais vraiment voulu*], and that my violence triggered in him a personal animosity towards me in particular, rather, it seems to me that the whole context in which he was caught must have been experienced by him as a kind of calamity, which there could be no question of even escaping, and that my own person was perceived more as one of the bit players in this calamity, than as a merciless tormentor (which I was) and hated. Of course, I may be wrong, and I may never know - as I may also be lucky enough to be confronted one day with that karma, which I sowed in blindness.

There must have been, I think, a maturing in me in the years following the "Guespy" episode, yet without there having been any reflection on this subject, as far as I can remember. Still, there were effective reflexes in me afterwards, which should have prevented me from associating myself again with acts of collective violence by a whole group against one of its members. I don't believe that this happened again in my adult life, nor that I was ever tempted to play such a role again, which I must have felt was so wrong, and lacking courage under a cheerful and "sporting" exterior. This did not prevent life, even after the war, from heavily [*s'est chargée abondamment*] accumulating situations full of veiled violence and anguish, and from perpetuating in me the deep tensions that had already marked my childhood and my adolescence. It is in this context that a fourth relationship takes place, marked by occasional movements of animosity and violence that I may call "gratuitous" - not founded or provoked by concrete grievances, nor even (I believe) by acts that could pass as "provocative". It is about my relationship with one of my sons. I know, however, that I was no less attached to him, and that I did not "love" him less than my other children. But at some unconscious level, there must have been within me a refusal of certain aspects of his person, precisely those which made him softer and more vulnerable, and also more difficult to apprehend, than his brothers and sister. He definitely didn't "fit in" at all, even less than my other children, with the beautiful superyang images I would have liked to find realised in my children - and all the more so, as certain very hard circumstances that had surrounded his first two years and had left a strong impression on him, made it more difficult for him to establish a trusting relationship with his

parents. Still, during the time when he was still living with me under the same roof, until about his tenth year, I sometimes subjected him to punishments of a humiliating nature, imposed in a thunderous voice. These were things that had entirely sunk into oblivion, just like a certain atmosphere that had come to permeate the family air - it was a few dialogues with his sister and two brothers, two or three years ago, that opportunely brought these things somewhat back into my memory. Perhaps the day will come when he too will be willing to talk about it with me - he who, perhaps, among my children, has borne the brunt of a family atmosphere fraught with hushed anguish and unassumed [*non assumées*] tensions; or at least, the one who has "coped [*écopé*]" the most at the hands of his father, while each of them has had his ample share of the parental "package". I know at least - and I'm happy about it - that what prevents either of my children from maintaining a simple and trusting relationship with me, their father, and from talking together about a heavy past and probing it, is not a fear that they have kept towards me, and which they would endeavour to hide.

But here again, it is not the place in these notes to probe further into a complex situation, which involves six or seven other people as much as myself. What is important to me first and foremost, is to make an unvarnished observation of the occasional appearance, here and there in my life and in my own actions, of this same apparently gratuitous violence, which so often "left me distraught and speechless", when I encountered it in others. This observation is not made with any particular "intention", it does not claim to "explain" or "excuse" the gratuitous violence in anyone, any more than it is supposed to explain or excuse that of mine. It is not impossible, and indeed likely, that with further reflection, the two violences, that in others and that in me, will eventually become mutually illuminating. This is the kind of thing that eventually comes by itself, in addition, without being sought. If I have made this observation, it is simply because it was on the way and that (for fear of it ceasing to be true) I could not not make it here.

#### **(142) The mechanics and the liberty**

(14 December) The reflection of last night reminds me in a very timely manner of something we are so inclined to forget, and especially (in this case) of something I, myself, am so inclined to forget: that I am not "better" than anyone else, that I am cut from the same fabric as everyone else; just like the friend I am about to put in the spotlight, in the centre of an uncompromising attention...

Yesterday I gave a sort of description of the appearance of (apparently) "gratuitous" violence, as the discharge of accumulated tension and aggression on some scapegoat who, for one reason or another, happens to have the head for work. This "mechanistic" and superficial description, which is certainly "well known", can give credence to an equally "mechanistic" attitude towards this violence, in oneself or in others. It is then seen as a kind of inevitable fate, a fate rooted in the very structure of the psyche alas - what can we do about it! Such an attitude, under a "rational" or "scientific" appearance, seems to me to be nothing other than the rationalisation of an abdication: the abdication in front of the presence of a creative freedom in oneself and in others, which opens up the option, for each of us, to shoulder [*assumer*] the situations in which we find ourselves, instead of passively following the slope lines of ready-made mechanisms, ready to take charge of us at any moment. While it is true that we rarely make use of this "freedom" option, the mere presence of this option and the creative possibilities within us, whether we choose to make use of it or not, changes completely the nature of things. It is in this way, and in no other way, that situations involving relationships between people, or of a person to himself or to the world around him, have a dimension that is absent when, instead of people, we are dealing

with (let's say) computers, however sophisticated they may be. This is also where the privilege of responsibility for our actions and for the motivations of our actions appears for each of us. This responsibility is in no way relieved by the fact that we often resort to the convenience, which is available to us, of hiding our own motives.

To return to the case in point as an illustration, if I was able to play the great soul while making use of my power to torment a friend/*camarade* who had done me no harm, it was because behind a surface "good faith", I had chosen an attitude of gross, phenomenal bad faith, which was, in hindsight, as obvious at the time as it is now, forty years later. It was indeed a choice, which nothing forced me to make, and which amounted to closing my eyes to the tensions and aggressiveness accumulated in me (while claiming, of course, beautiful "non-violent" ideas), and to evacuate them "on the sly" (sic) on the scapegoats at hand. Such violence - which is also to say, almost all the violence and abominations that are rampant in the human world - can only take place, and their secret function can only be carried out, precisely on the condition that it remains rigorously secret (even though it is obvious); thus, on the condition that we make ourselves believe in "bladders for lanterns", that we play a crude double game with conviction, by concealing for the sake of the cause our most elementary faculties of knowing. We are encouraged to do so, it is true, by the air that has always surrounded us, while we have always seen our surroundings eager to sanction by their consensus the subterfuges, however crude, in the service of fictions that had their assent. And my own subterfuge, in the cases I have mentioned, did have the assent or the tacit encouragement of those around me, without which I could not have maintained it and continued my game.

Shouldering a situation, on the other hand, is neither more nor less than approaching it in good faith, in the full sense of the word, that is to say: without making use of the facility available to us to hide the obvious ins and outs of the situation from ourselves, by means of crude subterfuge. It is therefore also, quite simply, to make use of our wholesome faculties of perception and judgement, without taking care to conceal them for the sake of this or that cause. It may seem strange, but it is also simple and obvious - when we approach a situation with such a disposition, a disposition of "innocence", it is immediately and profoundly transformed, however confused and knotted it may have seemed. Or to put it better, if it was indeed "knotted" and had not moved a hair for a long time, it is because we ourselves prevented it from evolving, from "flowing" according to one's own nature; that we obstructed its spontaneous movement, following the concordant example of all those who have surrounded us since our earliest childhood. It is enough to stop stiffening, to stop obstructing, for things that seemed to be frozen to start moving again, for what was stuck to be unstuck, and for the hard accumulated tensions to finally free themselves and resolve themselves in a new and ample movement, which has finally reappeared.

This "facility" or "convenience" that we have, with the encouragement of all, to "take bladders for lanterns", and thereby, to block what is made to flow, is in fact not at all "comfortable"! For the cushy/*pépère* internal immobility that it allows us to enjoy, we pay an exorbitant price - that of an internal tension/*crispation*, and of the enormous investment of energy to maintain both this tension, and the bladders = lanterns fiction. That said, everyone does as they please, at all times - that is our privilege. And at any moment, by what we do, we sow, for ourselves and for others. And the harvest of what we sow begins at this same moment.

### (143) The greed - or the bad deal

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### (144) The two knowings or the fear to know

(15 December) Towards the end of last night's reflection, there was in me the slight uneasiness of one who, with a peremptory air, serves up a reasoning of impeccable logic, while dismissing the diffuse feeling that there is nevertheless something not quite right [*qui cloche*]. This "something" appeared, in fact, as soon as I stopped writing. A vague way of formulating it is this: the "logic" of the unconscious, the one that presides in our most crucial choices, is by no means that of ordinary conscious reasoning, and even less that of "orthodox" reasoning.

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I have the impression, however, that at the conscious level at least, and with all the style clauses that modesty demanded, my friend had integrated and made his own the flattering echoes that had been coming back to him for a long time, surely, about his unusual gifts. But there is no doubt in my mind that at a deeper level, where the great choices that dominate a life are made without words, this "objective" version of things became (and still remains today) a dead letter. In its place, there is an insidious doubt, which no "proof" of value (or of superiority over others...) will ever uproot - a doubt that is all the more tenacious because it remains forever informal. I perceived it in my friend, as I have perceived it in others less brilliantly gifted, and it is the same. This doubt is the obstinate messenger of an intimate conviction, which also remains unspoken, even more deeply buried than this same doubt: an intimate conviction of powerlessness, fundamental and irremediable. It is also this "contempt for oneself" of which I spoke at the very beginning of Harvest and Sowing, in the context of a reflection which remained "general"(\*). It reappeared, again in an impersonal context and under a different face, a month or two ago, as a "feeling of crack"(†) - this diffuse feeling which I had first noticed in myself, the day after I discovered meditation. And several times also in the course of the reflection on the Burial, there was a sudden and acute perception of this "intimate conviction of powerlessness" in my friend, throwing a new light on some situation which seemed to defy good sense...‡).

I know that this intimate conviction, in my friend or in any other, is itself like the shadow of a knowing - of the knowing of exactly a "crack" that does exist, of a suffered "mutilation", and sanctioned and maintained to this very day by his own acquiescence. The shadow does not, however, restore the knowing from which it comes, beneficial in itself like all knowing - it is rather like a deformed and gigantic caricature of it, a scarecrow version. What deforms a knowing and renders it unrecognisable in this way is a fear - exactly the fear of making contact with this knowing itself, of letting it rise from the depths where it has always been suppressed, and of assuming the humble reality of which it is the faithful reflection.

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\* See the section "Infallibility (of others) and contempt (of self)", n° 4.

† See the note "The half and the whole - or the crack" (n° 112), of 17 October.

‡ See on this subject the note "The reversal (3) - or yin buries yang", where (among others) some such "sensitive moments" of reflection are mentioned.

To make contact with this feared knowing, to get to know with a fully conscious look at this reality known in the deepest layers, and shunned - this is what it means, really: to re-make full contact with that in us (whether we call it "the force", or "the child") "believed lost and dead for a whole lifetime". For it is surely this force and nothing else, the force of childhood, that enables us to assume the knowing of that in us which is cracked, mutilated, paralysed. And to assume it also means to re-make contact with that other knowing, prior to that of our mutilation and even more essential than it: the original knowing of the presence of that "force" which lies within us, a force which is neither that of the muscle nor of the brain, and yet which contains both.

It may seem strange that this lost knowing of the presence within us of this "force", this creative power, as an obvious, indestructible part of our true nature - this knowing is recovered through the discovery and humble acceptance of a state of powerlessness, resolved by this very acceptance. The knowing of a state of powerlessness covers and hides the even more deeply buried knowing, of our creative power. The former is like the key that opens us to the later, they are really indissociable to each other, like the face and back of the same knowing(\*), objects of the same fear.

When I speak of "the force" buried in each of us, it is by no means an abstract and vague thing, a purely verbal subtlety of a "philosopher", or of a psychologist who is a bit of a philosopher on the edges. It is this force that allows you to "do[faire] maths" (or to "make love"... ) like a child breathes - that is to say, without prudently obliging yourself to not leave the wake left by your predecessors, and to repeatedly applying the gestures and recipes (or clichés...) that were theirs; and it is also this that gives you courage and humility, in your own house

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\* In this image, of course, the "face" is the knowing of the state of powerlessness, of inauthenticity, of "crack", while the back, even more hidden, is the knowing of our undivided nature and our creative power. I have found over and over again through the years that it is indeed the "back", the more deeply buried knowing of the two, that is the object of the greatest fear, and the most vehement denials. It is not so much the familiar and anodyne state of being a trained and (more or less) "learned" monkey that worries anyone, but the innocence of the child who feels things as they are and calls them by their name, and who does and says as he feels, without shame at being different from what "people" expect of him.



as well as in that of others, to call a spade a spade and not to take bladders for lanterns, even if in doing so you go against the best established consensus, or the most inveterate and best honed mechanisms within yourself. (\*)

The first example that came under my pen throws its juice well [*jette bien son jus*] - it is surely enough to make the heart beat of any young (or even not so young) researcher in love with glory. Who wouldn't want to be the intrepid pioneer of sciences still in their infancy [*gésine*], and as such figure prominently in all the textbooks, like a Kepler, father of modern astronomy! But when it is a matter (as Kepler and others did) of tenaciously spinning one's own yarn in solitude and indifference of all (if not disdain or hostility), for thirty years or even just a single year - then suddenly there is no one left! One is willing to be in the textbooks, in good company in

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\* (16 December) The action of the creative force in each person, the force of renewal (or the "force of the child"), can be recognised by its fruits, both in the works of the hand or of the mind, and in the facts of everyday life, in the relationship with others and with the beings and things around him. I have noted again and again that the creativity in everyday life is much less common than creativity through the "works" (in the conventional sense - that is to say, the tangible "products", shaped by the hand or the mind, of creativity).

The presence, in the life of such a person, of a continuous creativity, is the sign of a continuous "contact", however fragmentary and imperfect it is, with the creative force within him. This is something different from the mere presence of "gifts", and of a continuous investment of energy to take advantage of them, expressed in a more or less important production, also more or less "rated [*côtée*]", but which does not have, in itself, a creative virtue, a virtue of renewal.

In my intellectual quests and in particular, in my mathematical work, with modest "gifts" (but a considerable investment), it seems to me that this "contact" with the force in me, that is also to say, the tacit and deep knowing that I had of it, was almost intact. That is to say, that more or less, I was "functioning" on the totality of my (creative) means in this (admittedly very fragmentary) domain of my life, almost without any loss, diversion or blockage of energy by the usual "friction effects". One of the most common of these is a certain pusillanimity, which so often makes us deaf to the inner voice whispering [*soufflant*] to us what we have to do, when what it teaches us is precisely "new", that is, leads us along paths that only we set foot on. This kind of inhibition, almost absent from my relationship with mathematics (and increasingly so, it seems to me, as the years go by), has, on the other hand, existed in other areas of my life just as much as in anyone else's, and in particular, precisely, in the area of "everyday life".

Returning to the mathematical activity, I see a sort of reversed relationship in my brilliant ex-student. He has "gifts" that have always amazed and enchanted me, and which are incomparably beyond my own. (It is true that the longer I live, the better I see that this is by no means the essential thing, to do innovative work in science or elsewhere; see on this subject the reflection in the note "Yin the Servant (2) - or the generosity" (n° 136). His investment in mathematics is considerable, as was mine once, and from an early age he has enjoyed exceptionally favourable conditions for the blossoming of his gifts, and for the conception and elaboration of a work that is commensurate with them. Twenty years later, I am still waiting for this work and remain hungry! There is surely some a certain "contact" with the creative force in him, attested by the beauty of such things he has done - but this contact is disturbed, tormented. My friend's relationship to his work, and even in his work itself, is a relationship of conflict - the work becoming, more and more over the years, an instrument in the hands of the "boss" to satisfy his cravings, alien to the thirst for knowing and discovering of the child.

I doubt that such a conflictual relationship can be resolved, without first having been assumed - that is, first and foremost: acknowledged [*reconnue*]. At least, not once in my life have I seen such a thing happen, without the other. This is what made me write that the knowing of our powerlessness was "the key" to regaining full knowing of our creative power, and thereby also, fully, the creative power itself. In my mathematical work, the question did not arise, because there was in this work no deep blockage, equivalent to a partial powerlessness, which would have made me "function" on only a small part of my possibilities. On the other hand, the question arose for me as for anyone else, at the level of my daily experience, in my relationship to others and to myself, to my body and to the impulses of my body. It is at this level that I experienced, again and again, that the knowing of a blockage, of a "powerlessness", was indeed the key to freeing an imprisoned creativity.

short, but one is also afraid of being alone, if only for a year or even just for a day. But he who "knows" the presence of the force within him (and to know it he has never had to speak of it, either to others, or to himself...) - he also knows well that he is alone, and that being alone does not cause him any anxiety. And whether he will be in the textbooks is the least of his worries - especially in the moments when he is working.

It so happens that this same Kepler, in his own work, "went against the best established consensus" in his science, and, in fact, the consensus had been established for thousands of years. In his time (when the Inquisition still existed) this was even less convenient than today, when one has a good chance of losing one's job, or not finding one, but without the risk of ending up on a pyre. Coming back to Kepler, I don't know what he was like in his everyday life, with regard to the "best-established consensus"; perhaps he kept to himself/*se tenait à carreau*], like everyone else. What is certain, is that today, as before and since the very beginning, there are not many people who would deviate even a hair's breadth from these consensuses. It's probably always the same tobacco - the fear of being alone, the flip side of a deep and almost universal need in the man: the need for approval, for confirmation by others (and would there be only one person who approves and confirms)...(\*)

#### **(145) The secret nerve**

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#### **(146) Passion and craving - or the escalation**

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#### **(147) Sugar-daddy**

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#### **(148) The nerve within the nerve - or the dwarf and the giant**

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### **2.11 The other Self**

#### **(149) Grudge in suspension - or the return of things (2)**

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\* Here I am echoing/*rejoins*], by another means, observations that had already appeared in the sections "The forbidden fruit" and "The solitary adventure" (n°s 46,47), and also, in passing, in the note "The acceptance" (n° 110).

### (150) Innocence and conflict - or the stumbling block

(22 December) Yesterday again, I found no time to work on my notes, except for the careful rereading and correction of the previous day's notes. In the last few days, my energy has been diverted by correspondence and other tasks, and I've been gnawing at the bit (not a new thing!) to get face to face with myself again, to push forward the reflection I've undertaken. The writing is decidedly slower in this third part of Harvest and Sowing, centred on the present reflection, "The key of yin and yang", where the dynamics of yin and yang are the constant guiding thread to penetrate further into the meaning of the Burial. If I did not take the precaution of setting the alarm clock, to allow for an interruption in the work after about three hours (to stretch the body, or to warn me that the hour is approaching and that it is time to stop), the whole night would pass like an instant! The three hours have passed each time, while I feel as if I've barely started (or resumed), with two or three unfortunate pages I've just typed, if not just one or two, just long enough to get round to some seemingly innocuous association I thought I'd jump over in stride...

There is an impression of extreme slowness in the progress, counted in pages per hour or per day - and the natural reaction to this impression, with an all hot substance right in front of my nose pulling me forward, would be to double and triple my efforts/*bouchées*], as I used to do until just recent years. But I know that this is the trap to be avoided - the trap of this extraordinary "ease" in the work of discovery(\*), when it is enough to just "push" forward, to be sure of indeed moving forward, slowly perhaps but surely; like one who would hold firmly in his hands the handle of a plough of good tempered steel, drawn by a pair of powerful and unperturbed/*impavides*] oxen, and who would slowly and surely work his way, furrow after furrow, through a dense, sometimes rough earth, and at the same time supple, yet, docile to the brilliant ploughshare which delicately and without haste opens it, penetrates it and turns it over in wide brown and fuming strips, bringing back to the open light an intense and teeming underground life. The pace is slow perhaps, and the field is vast, and each furrow dug seems to barely make a dent in the expanse that remains fallow. Yet, at the end of the day, furrow after furrow, the field is ploughed, and the ploughman returns with content: for him, the day has not passed in vain. His pain and love were his seed, and his joy at work, and his contentment at the end of each furrow and at the end of a long day, are his harvest and his reward.

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With the reflection of the day before yesterday, and perhaps for the first time in the writing of Harvest and Sowing, I have the impression that I have advanced on the uncertain terrain of what is not yet directly perceived or felt, and which remains (and perhaps will remain) hypothetical. Lacking eyes that know how to see in what seems to me darkness and night, I groped my way along a hesitant path, without any assurance that it was "the right one". When the path branched off, I didn't flip a coin, indeed, as to which way I would go; I relied on my nose and common sense to point me in the most plausible direction to continue, though I had no idea where it would lead me. Thus, the path I followed, or traced for myself, seemed to "stick" to the facts I knew, which was a good sign. But it was not excluded, especially where these facts were tenuous, that another totally different path would not have "stuck" just as much, provided perhaps that I delved a little further into this or that fact that remained raw... Then, at the bend in the road and to my own surprise, I suddenly found myself again on "very

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\* See the note "The trap - or ease and exhaustion", n° 99.

familiar terrain", which I had long and painfully travelled, which I had come to know and to leave. A situation which, only a few moments before, had seemed to me as obscure, wrapped in the uncertain mists of "without doubt" and "perhaps", was suddenly illuminated by the light of another situation which, in turn, was understood. Questioning myself about the distant origins in me and in the other of the conflict in the relationship between this friend and me, these seemed to be revealed by a deep similarity suddenly seen, between this relationship and another, which had weighed on my life with a completely different weight, for twenty long years.

The appearance of this similarity was of such a force, I confess, that this feeling of hesitation, of uncertainty, of groping, vanished at once, to be replaced by a feeling of assurance, of conviction. When, at the end of the reflection, I speak of the feeling ("of incredulous astonishment") that it "fell too exactly to be true", this feeling was the response to another, in the background, which said that "it fell too exactly to be not true"! And this feeling, surely hasty and unjustified in the present state of the facts at my disposal, has not been adjusted in the meantime, it is still present as a background note, whether I like it or not. Surely, without the help of certain experiences that I have come to understand and assume, and above all that of the long experience of my married life, the thought could hardly have come to me of this "grudge in a state of vacancy" (of a grudge "in suspension/*en sursis*", in short); and this very thought was also, precisely, the "diversions in the path" which, in the space of a few instants, brought me once again to the "very familiar terrain" of my married experience.

Certainly, one can say that a deliberate unconscious intention will have brought me to a place already designated in advance, which perhaps teaches something about me and about this deliberate intention, and nothing about motivations in others. It is also possible that an assumed experience will have allowed me to apprehend a reality in others, which would otherwise have remained entirely enigmatic, for lack of my own sensitive "antennae" (and also, for lack of tangible facts concerning the childhood of my friend, and the personality of each of his parents).

It seems to me that I am very close to completing my sketch (in a desultory way [*à bâtons rompus*]!) of the "first plane of the picture" (of the Burial.) To assemble the last pieces of the puzzle that remain in my hand, I will use, if need be, the elements of apprehension (however hypothetical they may be) that appeared in the reflection of the previous note. This will be a way of testing their coherence with all the other facts that are known to me.

In the reflection of the day before yesterday, it was the "Superfather" piece of the puzzle that clarified its shape and its contours. I had first identified it, somewhat hastily, with the piece "The dwarf and the giant", where the giant, however, appears more as a kind of "Superman" in an overwhelming size, and not as the "father", or a "Superfather". But this last piece ended up appearing again in the same reflection, this time as the target of a "resentment in suspension", of a resentment precisely in search of a target, as if the said "Superfather" had been called upon by this very resentment and had appeared in response to this call, in fulfilment of a diffuse expectation. If this is indeed the case, one might say that if the Superfather (borrowing my build and my features, which were apparently tailor-made for the occasion) had not appeared in my friend's life, he would have had to be invented! Anyway, this is exactly what happened, without anything more hypothetical for me, in the case of the woman whose husband I was - and of whom I was, moreover, "the target, expected during a young life...".

Thus, the Superfather appears as the "face side" of the "faceless giant with oversized hands" of the piece "The dwarf and the giant". "The dwarf" must see him mostly from behind, the giant, no doubt doing his famous "displays of force" (discussed in the 5 October note "The Superfather" (n° 108)). So here it is, the "Superfather" piece finally fitted in, adjusting to the "giant" side of the "The dwarf and the giant" piece. As for the "dwarf" side of this one, its outline also appeared more clearly by the reflection of the day before yesterday, which joins here that of the note of 17 October "The half and the whole - or the crack" (n° 112). It is again, as is so often, the endless rejection of "yin", "feminine" traits in favour of "yang", "masculine" traits, which makes my friend find himself "fundamentally different from what he should be", when he has modelled himself in accordance with a dominantly "yin" model.

It is important to emphasise here that at no time during the past reflection did I think, nor did I want to suggest, that my friend's person was marked by a dominantly yin disequilibrium, therefore by a deficiency, a "void" on the side of the yang, virile traits in his acquired personality. I recall in this respect that the main impression that emerged from his person, at least during the first years I knew him, was on the contrary that of a equilibrium, of a harmony, which made him so endearing to me as to all those, it seemed to me, who knew him then. This impression is very closely associated with another one, which I have spoken about elsewhere(\*) - that he seemed to have kept something of the freshness, the innocence of a child, in his approach to things (to mathematics in particular) and also, it seemed to me, to people. This equilibrium, and this "freshness" or "innocence", are for me not subject to the slightest doubt - they are facts, which there is no question of wanting to cover up[*escamoter*]. They were expressed in my friend by a delicate sensitivity, and, when the occasion presented itself, by the nuanced and unambiguous expression of what was perceived and seen. There was a firmness, as there was a softness[*douceur*]. The softness has faded over the years, leaving only the muffled and empty carapace of a vanished softness - and the firmness[*fermeté*] has become closed[*fermeture*] and hard, behind a façade of precious and borrowed half-tones. A delicate yin-yang equilibrium was transformed over the years (without anyone noticing, no doubt) into the eternal yang disequilibrium - the same one, but in a different style, that had dominated my own life since childhood. That was his choice, and those choices can change - the game is never over[*jamaïs les jeux ne sont faits*]! The fact still remains that I never knew, in the life of my friend, of a passage marked by a yin disequilibrium, thus by a limpness, a sloppiness, or an inconsistency; and I don't think there was any.

All this makes it at least likely that the person who served as his childhood "model", and who surely had strongly marked yin traits, did not lack the yang traits to balance them. If (as I tend to believe) this person was his mother, then I presume that she had yang traits strong enough (in particular vis-à-vis such traits probably[*sans doute*] less marked in the father) to appear as "the best choice", as a "male" role model for a boy; and at the same time, to foster by such a choice the hatching of a harmonious temperament.

At this point, everything would seem to be for the best in the best of all worlds, in a united family that (perhaps) isn't troubled by any disagreements. Everything would be for the best, if there were not, however, a tiny stumbling block, in the form of a mute and seemingly insignificant consensus: a boy is supposed to look like his father, not his mother...

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\* See on this subject the note "The child" (n°60), in Procession V "My friend Peter".

### (151) The providential circumstance - or the Apotheosis

(23 December) It seems to me that in order to finish assembling the "puzzle" of the first plan of the picture of the Burial, I only have to place one last piece. This is the one I had called "the Supermother", in the note "Supermum or Superdad?" of 11 November (n° 125). This "Super" appellation had been inspired, in the first place, by the "portrait" made of my person, with large bursts of superlative epithets, in my Funeral Eulogy(\*). Surely, a symmetry reflex must equally have been at work, since there was already some "Superfather" in the air, in more than one respect ! On reflection, however, the name I gave to the image that had just appeared did not quite hit the mark. What was evoked by this superyin image had no "maternal" connotation. If it was in symmetrical relation with another image, it was that of "Superman", with muscles of steel and brain of IBM software, rather than that of "Superfather". In this case, it would therefore be more like "Superwoman" or "Supernana", with heavy tits reaching down to the navel and beyond (if not to say, down to the knees...), and with buttocks to match, to make Hercules dream - as for the brain, let's not talk about it... a bit in those tones. The lack of language must have forced my hand a little, as there is no ready-made "female" counterpart to the famous "Superman" (itself a recent invention, by the way, a modern version of a decidedly outdated Hercules). I'll go for "Supernana" anyway, for lack of anything better...

I must say that I've been dragging this misnamed piece around for almost a month and a half, without really doing anything with it, except for recalling it here and there for memory's sake, in the form of a promise that it would be dealt with, but later on. In the end, it wasn't really inspiring me, and it might well be because of that name that didn't really stick well. After all, I would be hard-pressed, among all the friends, (ex-)students and other colleagues I have had in the mathematical world up to this very day, to find a single one vis-à-vis whom I had any kind of "maternal" role, or whose role I might have had the impression that they attributed to me. Even those towards whom I played a rather "yin", receptive role, instead of the mainly "yang" role of the one who teaches, communicates, transmits, must be very rare - at first sight I can hardly see any (after the years 1952, 53, when I did my thesis) except Serre, and even there... If I try to remember what my current, not to say permanent, dispositions were in relation to other mathematicians, it was above all that I always had brand new "carpets" to "place" (to use the image that was current in my time), not counting the "carpets" (also of my own making) that were less new but which (in my opinion) had not really been used, so to speak, and which seemed to me to be indispensable for the proper running of a mathematical house, in such an area of mathematics with which I was familiar, to put it another way, in my relationship with my mathematician "congeners" and even though we hardly spoke together about anything other than mathematics (I must have been even worse at this than any of my colleagues and friends! ), the yang predominance (or rather, the superyang disequilibrium) in my acquired temperament took over, as in all other relationships. Perhaps even more strongly, given my excessive investment in mathematics, an investment of an egotistical nature (needless to say) and moreover, motivated precisely by my long-standing superyang choices[options]!

It is these obvious aspects, manifested at every step in my relations with other mathematicians, that must have obliterated, to my colleagues as well as to myself, this other fact, in the opposite direction: that my style in mathematical work, and my approach to mathematics, is strongly yin, "feminine" dominant. It is this particularity, it seems to me, apparently rather exceptional in the scientific world, which also makes this style so

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\* See the notes "The Funeral Eulogy (1) (2)" (n°s 104,105), and "The funeral of yin (yang buries yin (4))" (n° 124).

recognisable, so different from that of any other mathematician. That this style is indeed "unlike any other" has come back to me through innumerable echoes, since I have been publishing mathematics, and at least since my thesis work (in 1953). This style has not failed to arouse resistance, which I would like to call "visceral" - I mean, which did not seem to me (nor do they seem to me today) to be justified by "reasons" that could be called "objective" or "rational". This reminds me that my work of thesis (in which I introduced, among other things, the nuclear spaces), which I had submitted to the Memoirs of the American Mathematical Society, had been refused by the first referee, an honourable well-known mathematician who had worked in the same subject, and who had considered my work as more or less muddy. It was thanks to an energetic intervention by Dieudonné that my thesis was published despite the referee's unfavourable opinion. I learned a few years ago that it is among the hundred most cited articles in the mathematical literature(\*) over the past two or three decades. I presume that if there are still twenty or thirty years of mathematics ahead of us, the same will be true for SGA 4, as (among others) a basic reference for the topos point of view in geometric topology; which SGA 4 has been classified as "unreadable" (among other qualifiers of the same water(†)) by my brilliant friend and former student Pierre Deligne. I know (as he knows himself) that it is one of the mathematical texts to which I devoted the most time and the most extreme care, rewriting and having rewritten from top to bottom, in particular, all that concerns the sites and topos and the categorical "prerequisites". The reason for this exceptional care is that I felt to what extent this is a real cornerstone for the development of the "arithmetic geometry" of which I had been laying the foundations for decades(‡). I also know that when I did this work, I had long had (not to flatter myself) the master's touch for writing mathematics in a way that was both clear, where the main ideas were constantly brought to the fore as an omnipresent thread, and convenient for reference purposes(§). If I was perhaps wrong to write (and to have written) a detailed reference work forty or fifty years ahead of my time, the fact that times that were ripe (in the sixties) suddenly ceased to be so, it seems to me, is not my fault!

These last associations with Deligne take me back to the period after my departure, when echoes in the same vein came back to me more than once "like puffs of insidious disdain and discreet derision". This nuance of derision was absent in the signs of "visceral resistance" to my style of work, to which I alluded earlier, taking place before my departure. I do not detect in them any hostile or even slightly malicious intent towards my person. I had occasion to evoke such signs even within Bourbaki(\*\*), at least (if my memory is correct) until about 1957, when my work on the Riemann-Roch-Hirzebruch-Grothendieck formula dispelled any doubts that might have remained about my "solidity" as a mathematician. I do not remember perceiving any resistance to my style of work between 1957 and 1970 (the year of my "departure"), except occasionally with Serre(††), but

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\* Perhaps my memory is failing me here, and these are the hundred (or twenty?) most cited articles in functional analysis.

† See the note "The clean slate", n° 67.

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§ Moreover, it was by familiarising himself (in 1965, when he had just landed in my SGA 5 seminar) with the part of SGA 4 that had already been cleanly written, and by writing some of the exposés himself (based on my handwritten notes), that this same Deligne learned from me the art of writing a mathematics text, and in particular the art of presenting clearly a dense and complex substance.

\*\* See especially the (unnamed) note n° 5, in the first part of Harvest and Sowing.

†† See on this subject the note "Brothers and spouses - or the double signature", n° 134.

never with a shade of enmity - it was rather an epidermal reaction of annoyance. On the other hand, I had the impression that my friends sometimes felt overwhelmed, because I was moving too fast and they longed to spend their time not just keeping up to date with my complete works as I sent them my paving stones, or told them (by letter or in person) what I was concocting.

I think I have understood the nature of the "visceral resistance" to my style, to which I have alluded earlier. Its cause seems to me to be independent of the Burial that took place later (where this resistance ended up playing an important role). This resistance is none other than the ("visceral") reaction to a "feminine" style of approach towards a science (mathematics in this case). Such a reaction is common and "in the nature of things", in a scientific world which, as much as and more than any other partial microcosm in our current society, is steeped in virile values, and the feelings, attitudes, reactions (of apprehension and rejection in particular) that go with these values. The reaction of resistance to my particular style of work, embodying a creative approach with a "feminine" background, simply stems from the common conditioning of the scientist in the world of today and the last decades - the scientific world, at least, as I have always known it.

Like any other reaction resulting from a conditioning, there is indeed nothing "rational" about it, and where it manifests itself, there is considerable resistance to even thinking about examining its meaning. It is strongly felt to be its own justification - a bit like the aversion to "faggot" in most of the dyed-in-the-wool/*bon teint* circles, or the aversion to "dago/*mètèque*", which is also very much the case in our case. However, in our case, I did not feel in this reaction by itself a shade of enmity (conscious or unconscious) towards me, but rather an attitude of reservation, of unfavourable prejudice, towards my work alone. Only from the moment when it became obvious that through my style (or despite my style, never mind!) I was doing things that people had not been able to do before (and that they could not really do otherwise either, in retrospect) - only then were these reservations re-holstered, as if with regret perhaps... In any case, if for some people these reservations remained in tacit and unconscious form, I was too locked up in my work and my tasks to perceive them.

To tell the truth, it seems to me unlikely, to say the least, that such a "visceral reaction" could disappear as if by magic, simply because Mr. so-and-so has proved theorems that had not been proved before. At the level at which deliberate statements of acceptance and rejection are made and unmade, the one thing and the other ("such and such a way of working should not be allowed", and "Mr. so-and-so has proved such and such theorems") are really unrelated!

One might say that it is normal, then, that things changed after I withdrew from the mathematical scene - once I was no longer there, in short, to "render speechless/*en boucher un coin*" those who would pretend to be picky/*fine bouche* about my style, without getting to do the same with their own style. This "explanation" is lame, however, because it does not take into account the nuance of derision, of muffled malice, which did not exist before. Nor is there anything in what is known to me that would lead me to suppose that between 1957 and 1970 I had time to make myself so unpleasant to the whole Congregation of my congeners, that a motivation of resentment or revenge in this respect could have come into play after my departure. With many friends in the world I was leaving, I had maintained warm, sometimes affectionate relations, and (as I have said elsewhere) I do not recall a single relationship of enmity with a colleague mathematician from before 1970.



There was, however, a subsequent grievance against me by the Congregation, the cause of a kind of collective "resentment", and in any case, of a collective act of "retaliation", which, although it remained tacit, was nonetheless of "unfailing effectiveness". I probed this "reprisals for a dissidence" aspect, in the note of 24 May, "The Gravedigger - or the entire Congregation" (n° 97). In that note, I left aside a certain tone in these reprisals, towards me and those who had the imprudence to claim to be my own - the tone precisely of derision, which goes beyond the simple "end of non reception". And every time I felt this very "puff", it was a certain style that was the designated target. To put it another way, it is the particularity that distinguishes this style from any other, its "yin" or "feminine" nature, that has been the providential circumstance, eagerly seized upon by the collective unconscious to wash away the affront of a dissidence, adding to the reprisal of exclusion the additional dimension of a derision - of the derision that is supposed to designate, through a certain style, the indisputable signs of powerlessness.

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### **(152) The disavowal (1) - or the recall**

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(25 December) I took the pretext that it was Christmas Eve yesterday to give myself a real "high[*défonce*]", staying on my notes until after three in the morning (just for once!). It's true that the whole day had been scattered with other tasks, and (after rereading the previous day's notes) there were only a few hours of the night left, if I still wanted to continue on the same day. As is often the case, in the end I didn't even come close to addressing anything I had in mind when I sat down in front of the blank paper! Instead, I took a quick stock of where I was in the "picture" of the Burial, and brought to light an aspect, in the "first plan" as well as in the "background plan", which was still blurred: that of the "burial of the disowned woman" who lives in each of the participants in my funeral.

It is quite clear that in this quotation, the expression "burial" is used as an image to designate an act of disavowal and suppression (or "repression", according to a received terminology). In order to disavow and repress something (in this case, something that "lives" in oneself), one must first make sure that this "something" is indeed present, "alive" (even if miserably). It is a question here of "the woman" in each being, be it a woman or a man, therefore of the "side" of its person formed by the traits, qualities, impulses, or forces of a "feminine", "yin" nature, in it. What is extraordinary, is this simple and essential fact: that in each being, woman or man, lives at the same time "the woman" and "the man" - this fact remains generally ignored even today. I myself only learned it eight years ago, when I was in my forty-seventh year(\*).

Of course, it has surely been a long time since "psychoanalysts" "know" about it and talk about it. There are certainly plenty of books about it, and everyone has heard a little about it, just as I had heard about it. And even, "everyone" is quite willing to admit that there must be some truth in it, as long as it's the people who are known to know about it say it, and that there are books written about it and all. Yet, having heard about it and being "all willing to admit...", and even to have read a book or even ten on the subject, or even (I would venture to assert)

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\* See on this subject the note "The acceptance (the awakening of yin (2))", n° 110.

to have written one oneself, or even several, does not imply by itself that one "knows" the thing; at least, not in a stronger and, above all, less useless sense, than that of a simple memorisation of ready-made formulas, such as "Freud (or Jung, or Lao-tzu...) said that...". Such formulas constitute a certain cultural baggage, a sort of visiting card of a "cultured" person, "in the know" about this or that, or even sometimes (with diplomas) of an expert in this or that, and as such one can even admit that they have a certain "usefulness"; what is certain, is that each one holds on to it tightly, to the baggage that he has accumulated in this way, on the right and on the left, in school and in books, in "interesting conversations" etc., and that he drags with him against all odds, like a bulky, flashy trophy, until the end of their days. If I irreverently suggested earlier that this precious baggage was "useless", I meant to say this: it was useless for a thing that, in any case, nobody cares about, and which is even shunned like the plague by each and everyone, namely, learning about oneself. Or to put it another way: that this baggage is useless for taking on one's life, that is also to say, for digesting and assimilating the substance of one's own experience, and thereby, maturing, renewing oneself...

If I were to sum up in a few words the essential content of my long reflection on yin and yang, it would be by "recalling" this "simple and essential fact", which I have just recalled. If there is a reader who has followed me so far, and if he has not yet felt, in terms of his own experience, this fact : that there is in him "the woman" even though he is a man, and that there is in her "the man", even though she might be a woman - by making this vain effort to "follow" me, he would have wasted his time overloading a baggage, no doubt already heavy, with yet another weight, wearing the label "Harvest and Sowing". And if he is a man, and even though he might not be one of the participants in this Funeral, of which he would not have had any knowing or suspicion before reading me, it would be a safe bet that he too, day after day and without realising it, "buries a disowned woman who lives inside himself" (just as I myself had done in the past and for the most part of my life).

There are a thousand and one ways for a man to "bury" the woman who lives in him, as well as for a woman to "bury" the man who lives in her(\*), that is to say: to disown and repress it. One of the most common ways of "burying" something that lives in oneself, is through attitudes or acts of rejection of that same thing, when it is apparent in others. This rejection is none other than the "visceral reaction" that I mentioned yesterday in a case in point. What gives the reaction of rejection its ("visceral") force, is not really (as I seemed to imply yesterday) because the thing rejected in another person simply goes against a set of "values" that have our full and undivided adherence. He who knows he is "strong" is not offended by the sight of "weakness". The living force of the reaction comes, on the contrary, from the fact that this thing, observed in others and "which has no place to be", calls us into question ourselves. It is like an insidious reminder, immediately rejected, of something concerning us, which deep down we know, even though we would like to hide it from ourselves as well as from others; a reminder which from then on takes on the tones of a silent and fearsome questioning [*mise en cause*]. In such a context, an attitude of benevolent tolerance towards the apparent "foible" in others would appear to us as a perilous confession of connivance, which we must avoid at all costs. In contrast, by an attitude of rejection, we unequivocally disassociate ourselves from the other person, in short, we give convincing guarantees (first and foremost, to the inner Censor within ourselves) that we ourselves are free of any reproach, that we are and remain conforming and "dyed-in-the-wool". At the same time as an act of unconditional obedience to certain norms of value, distinguishing between what is honourable and what is inadmissible, the reaction of rejection is

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\* The same also applies to a man who "buries the man who lives inside him", or to a woman who "buries the woman who lives inside her", attitudes which are far from being as rare as one might think.

at the same time a symbolic act of burial, whereby the thing in ourselves that "has no place to be" is eagerly "classified" as something that "does not exist". Not in us, in any case!

In this picture, the form that rejection takes, a form that varies infinitely, seems to me to be of no consequence. It can be outraged rejection, with all the signs of indignation or disgust, or it can be rejection by irony or by "delicately measured" disdain. It may be expressed in clear and unequivocal words, or it may be merely suggested, by allusive or double-entendred words, or even without words, by the suitable smile (or lack of it...), placed where it is appropriate. The rejection can be fully conscious, as it can be confined to the penumbra of what is barely visible, or take refuge in the complete shadow where the eye never penetrates.

The intensity of the rejection reaction is also infinitely variable, depending on whether the "questioning" in question is felt to be relatively harmless, or indeed fearsome. The ones that provoke perhaps the strongest reactions, are those "questionings" directly related to sex. This extreme susceptibility has diminished somewhat in recent generations. I note, however, that things of such a universal nature as the so-called "homosexual" and "onanistic" (or, more nicely put, "narcissistic") aspects of the love impulse, provoke today as they did in the past rejection reactions of great force. This is the case, at least, if one is confronted with it, not in an "interesting conversation" about mores in Roman times or about depth psychology, but in one's everyday life. Even between four eyes, it is rare that one talks about the manifestations, in one's own person, of these very aspects of the sex impulse (generally felt as somewhat embarrassing "burrs", to say the least).

In the case I am concerned with here, the reactions of rejection I had been confronted with before I left the mathematical scene were certainly not of a strength comparable to those I have just mentioned. It is true that the object of this rejection, namely, "feminine" ways of being and doing when we are supposed to be "between men", has a "sexual" connotation, in a wider sense of the term than that linked to the mere evocation of facts and gestures revolving around "the buttocks" and the rest. I have no doubt that this connotation was generally felt, at an unconscious level(\*). It was, however, of such a discreet and indirect nature as to exclude even slightly brutal reactions, going beyond a simple "reserve" with regard to my "seriousness", my "solidity" as a mathematician. It should be added that the field in which my "foible" is located, namely that of a purely intellectual activity, contributed to giving it a relatively harmless appearance, far removed (what would you seek there...) from any disturbing and scabrous association of a man-woman doing her belly-dance while rolling up her skirts! Nevertheless, after my first contacts with the mathematical world (in 1948), it took almost ten years before the reservations that my style aroused, even within a benevolent microcosm, finally disappeared - from my view, at least. However, the situation changed again after my departure, because an atmosphere of benevolence, friendship and respect for me was suddenly modified (yet without my realising it for the next six years) by what was felt by that same microcosm to be "dissidence", and a disavowal.

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I am not sure, to tell the truth, if this change of atmosphere was really as "sudden" as I have just said. Or to put it better, I note that I have hardly any facts in my hands which would allow me to have any idea how the change

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\* See in particular on this subject the note "The funeral of yin (yang buries yin (4))", n° 124.

I was confronted with happened, after my departure in 1970, suddenly (this time I can say so), in 1976(\*). It is true that I had hardly had any contact during that time with the world I had left, which could have made me feel a certain "temperature" and its evolution. 略 The Burial could only have taken place, and the atmosphere that gave rise to it couldn't have been established, except by a "unanimous agreement"(<sup>†</sup>) without rifts, encompassing at the same time the "three plans" of this Burial: "The heir" (alias Grand Officiant at the Funeral), the group of "co-heirs" or "relatives", formed by the eleven other "former pupils", and finally "the Congregation" (perhaps not "the entire" - we will have to come back to this...). How this perfect harmony[*accord*] came about and was established remains unknown to me, and perhaps will remain so. At present, I do not feel prompted to probe it, and I doubt that anyone else will do it for me (quite the contrary!).

This reminds me that when writing the previous note "The providential circumstance - or the apotheosis", the question had occurred to me which of the two, "The Congregation" or "the priest in the chasuble", eventually represented the master force at work in the Burial, of which the other would have been in some way the "instrument"(<sup>‡</sup>). I didn't dwell on it then, not being sure even if the question made sense - it did seem to me to resemble the famous chicken and egg question! What is certain is that, neither of two (the "priest", nor the "Congregation") could do without the other's help in carrying out the Burial.

Another question, on the other hand, which seems to me to have a clearer meaning, is to know which of the two was more strongly invested in this work. It is true that "the Congregation" is not a person, and it is improper to speak of "his" investment in a task. But it is also true that for me, this personified entity takes on a concrete form, through ten or twenty people whom I have known well, with each of whom, for a decade or two, or even more, I have been in regular and friendly relations. When I speak of the "investment" of the Congregation, it is the "sum" of the investments of all those, among these former friends, who were participants in my burial, that I have concretely in mind. Thus clarified, it seems to me that the question is no longer rhetorical.

The answer that comes to me to this question, without any shade of hesitation or doubt, is that there is no common measure between the investment of the "heir" and that of the Congregation - indeed, no more than there is in an ordinary burial, and this is all the more true because the inheritance is important in the eyes of the heir (whereas no one in the Congregation has anything to gain for himself), and because the ties (of attraction or of conflict) which attach him to the deceased are strong and play a vital[*névralgique*] role in his life. If there is any doubt in such a situation, it can hardly come from the presence of "co-heirs" among the relatives of the deceased. (Here we are talking about the "second plan", rather than the "background plan" formed by the bulk of the Congregation). 略

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\* It was, I recall, on the occasion of my unsuccessful efforts to get Yves Ladegaillerie's thesis published. This episode is mentioned in the two notes "You can't stop Progress" and "Coffin 2 - or the truncated cuts", n°s 50, 94.

<sup>†</sup> For the first appearance in the reflection of this observation of a "unanimous agreement", see the note of the same name (with capitals!), n° 74.

<sup>‡</sup> I recall that in my reflection in May, in the note "The Gravedigger - or the entire Congregation", I had realised that my friend had been an "instrument of a collective will of unfailing coherence". The following lines do not really contradict this intuition, but rather complete it, leaving open the possibility of a certain symmetry in the relationship between the "Congregation" and "the priest in chasuble".

## **(153) The disavowal (2) - or the metamorphosis**

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## **(154) Staging - or "the second nature"**

(1 January 1985) Five days have passed, taken up by various occupations. The end of the year was the perfect opportunity to write letters that had been outstanding for weeks or months, not to mention a few cards of good wishes, in response to those received around Christmas. It was also necessary, for manure that had already been brought in for two or three months, and plant waste from the garden and land clearing, or brought in from the municipal dump, to build compost heaps, in order to have good soil all ready for the garden in early spring. As the terrain is on a slope, it was necessary to build an additional terrace, next to the one already provided for the "day-to-day" composting of household waste.

With all this, I have hardly found time to work on my notes, except for stewardship work. I re-read with great care, making a few more touch-ups here and there, the whole of the reflection since the "Masters and Servant" part (so since the note of 24 November "The reversal (3) - or yin buries yang" (n° 133)), adding the footnotes already planned for the notes of the last fortnight. This was mainly to have a manuscript ready for typing, but regardless of any practical matters, this re-reading was useful to regain an overview of the reflection of the past four or five weeks. As is also the case in a long-term mathematical reflection, while the particular "moment" of the reflection in which I find myself from day to day is placed under the strongly focused beam of intense attention, the "thread" of reflection and the sinuous line it has followed in the past weeks, or even the past months, tends to get lost along the way, to drown and dissolve in the vagueness of a penumbra. I cannot say whether this is a general fact in any long-term research work, or whether it is linked to that systematic mechanism of "burying the past" in my life, to which I have already alluded(\*). In any case, as the days and weeks, or even months, of a long reflection go by, I lose contact with the previous stages of my reflection, resulting in a growing unease in my work. This discomfort is eventually resolved by a more or less thorough retrospective of the work that has just been done, whereby the contact that had gradually loosened is re-established. I have observed that these retrospective "halts" play an important role in my work. Each time, I come out with a new wind in my sails, relieved of this "unease" which had signalled a progressive loss of a global perception of continuity in the time of the work I am pursuing. In my mathematical work, it is not rare, not to say the rule, for such a return to the past to lead me to rethink from top to bottom the work already done, and to see in a new perspective both the work done and the work to be done(†).

But whether it is a question of mathematical work or a meditation on my life, the "unease" which I speak of is always the sign of an understanding which remains imperfect, not only (and for good reason) the understanding

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\* This mechanism was set in motion at the time of the "swing/*basculement*" that took place in my childhood, which I place in the summer of 1936 (when I was in my ninth year). This crucial episode in the structuring of myself is alluded to in the note "The Superfather (yang buries yin (2))" (n° 108), and in the sub-note n° 108.1.

† For other, similar reflections on the subject of the role of occasional "retrospectives" in long-term work, see also the second part of the note "Retrospective (1) - or the three parts of a picture" (n° 127), and more particularly the footnote to it.

of the work to be done, but also the understanding of what has been done in the course of the past work. In fact, this imperfection is by no means reduced to a faulty memorisation of each of the various stages of the reflection, and of their chronological order (aspects which are actually relatively accessory when it comes to a mathematical reflection, where the object of attention is a mathematical situation, which is in itself foreign to the psychic particularities of the person examining it, and to the ups and downs [*péripéties*] of this examination). It seems to me to be rather the sign of a lack of unity, of an insufficient integration of all the partial understandings that have appeared as the fruit of the successive stages of reflection. These partial understandings themselves also remain imperfect, even hypothetical, as long as they are not integrated into an overall vision, where they shed light on each other. To use the image of a puzzle again, the investigation of an unknown substance is akin to the work of assembling a puzzle whose pieces are not given in advance, but must be discovered in the course of the work. What is more, each piece uncovered appears at first only in a vague and approximate form, even grossly distorted in relation to the "correct", as yet unknown, form. The "local" work of reflection consists in detecting the pieces one by one, and trying as best as possible to guess the contours of each one, by being guided mainly by speculations [*supputations*] of internal coherence of the examined piece, or of this one and other, presumed neighbouring ones. But each of these pieces only reveals its true nature and its precise and final form once they are assembled in the still unknown overall picture from which they stem. The "unease" I was talking about is the one that signals to me, in the presence of a multiplicity of perfectly well spotted pieces, presented in a more or less shapeless heap, that it is time to assemble them at last - or also, if there has already been a (more or less partial) assembly, that it is still too fragmentary, or that it is lopsided and needs to be completely redone. To find the right assembly, the chronological order in which I came across the pieces of the puzzle is no doubt often accessory. But to take the pieces in hand one by one (and in that order, while we're at it), in the disposition of someone who knows that they must fit together and who waits for each one to be placed in its proper place, is undoubtedly an indispensable stage in the work, in order to see them indeed finally assembled together.

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#### **(155) Another self - or identification and conflict**

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#### **(156) The enemy brother - or the handover (2)**

(3 January) Yesterday afternoon, taking advantage of a little spare time while waiting for friends to come over, I leafed through C G. Jung's autobiography, which a friend had just brought to me by chance. I was strongly hooked by the little I had read of it. It was the first time I had held a text by Jung in my hands, and until now I had only the vaguest idea of him - a dissident student of Freud, who had managed (according to scattered echoes that had come to me) to reintroduce the moving light-and-shade of mystery into the straight paths of the Master. That was about it, more or less. There I had the impression of a living person like you and me, who moreover does not waste his time showing off [*la ramener*], and above all: one who goes straight to the real questions, those that he feels essential from his own lights, and who is not satisfied (when the question of adventure is as old as the world) with the ready-cooked answers of the learned people.

The "biography" aspect (intended for publication) has of course been of particular interest to me, since the notes I am writing are indeed somewhat akin to a biography, and in a spirit very close to that of Jung: the external event remaining constantly subordinate to the inner adventure, of which it is both a revelator, and the occasional stimulator. I was struck that Jung did not write an autobiography (or more accurately, did not make his contribution to a biography) until the age of 83, and, more importantly: that at no earlier point in his life did he take the trouble to examine his own childhood in depth. It would seem to me that for Freud's students, it must have been self-evident that one of the first things, if not the very first thing, to familiarise themselves with the ways of the unconscious, would have been to explore those ways in their own person! There is no doubt in my mind that a so-called "knowing" of the unconscious that is limited to what is learned in a university curriculum (even if it is taught by a prestigious master such as Freud himself), and to the analysis of a certain number of "clinical cases", remains a non-integrated knowledge, a fragmented, "dead" knowledge - a knowledge that by itself does not provide, nor even encourage, an understanding of oneself, or of others, or of the world.

But it is also true that an exploration of one's own person is an enterprise which, by nature, cannot be the object of an institutionalised "programme" - any more than the restoration, at its very root, of a disturbed psychic equilibrium (in a "patient", let us say) can be the fruit of the intervention of an "ogue", whoever he or she may be, confined to implementing passe-partout techniques. The "disturbed equilibrium" is by no means limited to the socially unacceptable stage of the appearance of a nervous breakdown or a neurosis, but can be found in practically everyone (to a greater rather than less serious degree). The psychologists themselves (or ethnologists, sociologists and other "ogues"), and of all persuasions, are no more an exception than others! And a true restoration of the disturbed equilibrium is by no means in the nature of a simple "medical act" intervening in a third person. It is an act of the person himself and no other - an act of love, which he is free to take or not take. This, is not the result of the inexorable unfolding of psychic mechanisms (with or without the intervention of an expert in psychic mechanics), but an act in the full sense of the word, a creation, a rebirth*[re-naissance]*.

Before I had finished writing the above peremptory sentence about the "so-called 'knowledge' of the unconscious", I realised to what extent the context can make it seem overbearing. Without knowing anything about Jung's work (which had just been discussed), I seem to be dismissing him*[l'envoyer sur les roses]* and his "so-called" knowledge of the unconscious - as long as he had apparently not taken the trouble (before the age of 83) to explore the soil in which his own unconscious had grown*[rousse]*. I presume, however, that if one reads his biography, it will become apparent that, without having devoted himself to such an "exploration", Jung must have had other ways of making contact with his own unconscious (ways which themselves probably remained unconscious for a long time), surely the premises of the impugned statement do not apply to him.

Another thing of a completely different order struck me while leafing through the glossary. Under the term "quaternity" (NB this is the French edition), Jung insists on the "totalising" character of the number four. Until still about ten years ago, I was very resistant to the idea of a philosophical or "mystical" use of numbers - any speculation or discourse in this sense appeared to me to be nonsense, childish, "Hokuspokus" (as they say in German, for fourpenny magic tricks). The little I have learned on the subject of Yi-King (or "Book of transformations") has made me less peremptory. Yesterday I made the rapprochement between the "cosmic" character attributed to the number four, and the spontaneous grouping which had been made, while writing "The key of yin and yang", in "packages" generally of four or eight notes, joined together under a common title. The

first group is reduced to a single note; it is true, but (I had noted this with satisfaction when finishing the sixth group, "The yin and yang mathematics", which consists of seven notes instead of eight) by joining it to a later group, into which this isolated note seems to fit most naturally, one still finds a packet of eight notes ( $7+1 = 8$ ), thus still a multiple of four. This pattern has continued until now, the last group completed being group 10 "The violence - or the games and the spur" (156.1). It must be said that from group 7 onwards ("The reversal of yin and yang") I let myself be guided by this "pattern" which had just emerged without my looking for it, and without looking for or assuming a "meaning" other than that of a certain mathematical "regularity" in the form, felt to be harmonious.

This brings to memory the only other text I have written on a theme that can be described as "cosmic", again centred on the dynamics of yin and yang in human life and in the creative act(\*). This text has come together, apparently without initial deliberate intention and surely without effort at any point, following a rigorous numerical ordering. I had forgotten what it was, but looking at it now (one is either curious or not!), it turns out to be seven "stances" of four "strophes" each. It is therefore still a grouping by four that was carried out. It is true that the number of stances is seven, which is not a multiple of four - so according to the Jungian criterion, the character of totality would not be satisfied for the work as a whole(†), but only for each of the seven "stances" that compose it. But here I can still get away with it, since the famous "poetic work" was also provided with a providential "epilogue", (not to mention an interminable prologue, which I had the good sense to drop), so we still have  $7+1 = 8$ , we're saved!

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Another strange idea comes to me here. It seems that the heaviest burden I carried for forty years of my life, that repression of the "feminine" in me by the "virile", which was also similar to the repression of the child in me by the "the Big Boss" - that this burden was "taken over" by my friend, at precisely the time when it might seem that he himself was free of a similar burden. It was around the time when my value system swunged towards a yin direction, a development that foreshadowed the moment of the reunion with the child, some fifteen years later, when I suddenly felt relieved of an immense weight(‡). The association that immediately arises here is with the Hindu idea of karma. It is clear to me that over the past eight years, I have been relieved of a substantial part of the karma that I had carried with me since childhood. I would have thought (and still tend to think) that this relieving has not been "at the expense" of anyone, that it is beneficial not only for me, but "for the entire world". I can even say that I know very well that it is so, even though it would turn out that someone else chose (or even, that someone else had to choose) to take it over. It is also true that this karma from which I have been relieved, I do not consider it as an "evil". It was for me the nourishing substance of a maturation,

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\* This is the "Eulogy of Incest", discussed in note n° 43 (referring to the section "The Guru-not-Guru - or the three-legged horse", n° 45), and especially in the note "The Act" (n° 113), p. 507 - 509. See also the beginning of the note "The dynamics of things (the yin-yang harmony)", n° 111.

† The projected work (under the provocative name "Eulogy of Incest") was in fact to comprise three parts (The Innocence, the Conflict (or the Fall), The Deliverance (or Childhood regained)), of which only the first was carried to completion. This is the part we are talking about here.

‡ This "swing" of value system is discussed in the note "Yang plays the yin - or the role of Master" (n°118), and the "reunion", in the note of the same name (n° 109).



which was before me. I know that it is good for me and for all, that I have eaten and been nourished by it, that a knowing has been formed in the nourishing matrix of an ignorance(\*). It seemed to me that this substance or this karma, once transformed into knowing, left no residue, that it disappeared. To tell the truth, I do not know what the Hindu or Buddhist tradition teaches on this subject - if there is for them a law of "conversation of karma" (similar to that of conservation of matter), which law would not be affected in any way by the creative vital processes of ingestion, digestion, assimilation.

Out of a scruple for propriety, I have just left out, among these "vital processes", the excretion. This is, however, (in the same way as the death of the entire organism) a key process of recycling what has been absorbed, returning to the infinite cycle of transformation of "dead" organic matter into living organic matter, by which the is eternally reborn from death(†).

### (156.1)

(30 February) This "pattern" eventually broke down with the final group n° 12, which comprises, alas!, six notes, bringing the total of notes that make up "The key of yin and yang" to 62. I had expected that there would be eight notes in this "Conflicts and discovery" group, which would have been in accordance with the criterion of totality, and would have brought the total number of notes components to  $64 = 8*8 = 4*4*4$ , which is also the number of hexagrams in the I Ching! I was sorry that my expectation did not come true, but I did not want to "cheat" and include in "The key of yin and yang" the Games notes devoted to Pierre Deligne's visit to my home, whose natural place seems to me rather in the continuation of "The Funeral Ceremony", being placed after "The key...".

However, I am left with a feeling of dissatisfaction about this group n° 12, the only one of the twelve parts of "The key..." that does not leave me with an impression of unity of inspiration and purpose. This lack of unity seems to me to be due, not to the theme of "Conflict and discovery" itself, but to the irruption of external/*étrangers*] (and at times, disturbing) events in the course of reflection.

(7 March) Reading again last night the reflection of 14 January that I had grouped together in a note (n° 162) called "conviction and knowing - or the handover"(‡), I felt a dissatisfaction with this name. On the one hand the "main" title and the subtitle did not seem, "at a glance", to fit together - in fact, they correspond, one to a first and the other to a third "movement" in the reflection, which by themselves are apparently unrelated: description of the process of the blooming of a knowing (in the form of a sudden conviction), and evocation of the endless chain and "handover" of karma, from one generation to another, and from one person to another. Moreover, the most intimately personal content, the "neuralgic" content for my own person, which formed the substance of the "second movement" of the reflection (and moreover had been the "bridge" from the first movement to the third) - this crucial content did not appear in the chosen name. (And there is no doubt in my mind that this

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\* For reflections along these lines, see the end of the note "The circle" (n° 116'), and in particular the last paragraph thereof.

† On the subject of the cycle of life and death, see also the note "The Act", n° 113.

‡ It was also the last note of "The key of yin and yang".

surreptitious omission is not at all the result of a pure coincidence...) Since the three themes seem to me to be important in their own right, and I could not see any "welcome" name or double-name that would evoke all three, I finally realised that the best thing would be to split the note into three, with a suggestive name for each one separately : "Conviction and knowing", "The most burning iron - or the turning point", "the endless chain - or the handover (2)" (n°s 162, 162', 162").

It was only afterwards that I realised, suddenly, that by this operation, dictated (so to speak) by the very substance of the reflection, the "aesthetic" dissatisfaction that I had been dragging on for nearly two months had been resolved at the same time, while this twelfth and last part of "The key to yin and yang" (which I had called "Conflict and discovery") stubbornly refused to allow itself to be completed (in a natural way, I mean) in a sequence of eight notes, and only wanted to include the six that were already written. And I have received my reward for not giving in to the easy temptation to "cheat" and "stick" two notes "in the nose" at the end of "The key" which belongs elsewhere! This last part of "The key" (which will eventually be called "The enigma of Evil - or conflict and discovery"), takes at the same time, a beautiful symmetrical structure, with two packets (of three notes each) on the central theme, grouping around the two "digression-notes" on Fujii Gurugi and on my monk friends.

## **2.12 Conflict and discovery - or the enigma of Evil**

### **(157) Without hate and without mercy**

(4 January) In the reflection of yesterday and the day before, I tried above all to get in touch with the reality of the identification of my friend with my person, and in so doing, to discern its scope and implications. It is a task that I have been doing again as one groping in the penumbra, not to say, in the dark night. Or perhaps it should rather be said that my eyes remain closed, and that my eyelids are opaque to a light that I remain unable to perceive. In any case, I don't remember having at any time in my relationship with my friend "felt" or "seen" this identification, any more than I "felt" or "saw" his antagonistic disposition towards me. I know, however, without possibility of doubt, by a rich bundle of corroborating facts, that this identification with my person, and this antagonism which is like a shadow of it, are realities - just as a blind man by birth "would know" that the sun, the light of day, the colours, the bright and the dark, exist, even though he has never seen them. He knows, without having the knowing of these things. Or if he does have a very diffuse knowing of them, through a more refined tactile sense perhaps (or through a "memory" that is rooted not in his life alone, but in those of countless generations of sighted beings that have preceded him), this knowing remains indirect and plain[*falote*], like that of a warm and sonorous voice coming to us through a distant and uncertain echo.

The work done in these last two days has been again like a stopgap, like a substitute for an immediate perception that is missing. This is more or less the case in all "meditative" work, in the sense that I understand it. The work constantly pushes against the current of an inertia - the inertia of leaden eyelids! Certainly, in the moments when the eyes are fully open and awake, there is no need for meditation, for work: it is enough to look, and to see. As these moments are rare, rather than sit back and wait for them, I prefer to take the lead, without worrying that the work is clumsy and "slow". It may well be slow, and sometimes even slower than

normal - but that never means it's stagnant, or going in circles. When there is work, real work I mean, driven by a real desire, then there is progress: something is done, takes shape, is transformed, imperceptibly at this moment, clear in sight at another... And sometimes, at the end of a clumsy and obstinate progression in a penumbra without form or contours, continuing for hours or days, or even months or maybe years, the miracle happens: the blind man sees! And what is seen is not a fleeting glimpse that disappears as if it had never been, leaving only the plain trace of a memory. It is a knowing born of these obscure labours, a new knowing, as intimately ours as the taste of the things we love.

I have written in the reflection of the day before yesterday that if there was a case in point whose thought had "guided my pen" nine months ago, when writing the final lines of the note "The enemy Father" (1) (which I had just quoted), it was that of my friend Pierre in his relationship to me. However, other "cases in point" even closer to me must have been present in my mind at the time, in the background of the reflection. When I speak of a "father who is both admired and feared, loved and detested" and then of "another Self, feared, hated and shunned...", the terms "feared", "detested", "hated", and no doubt even the term "shunned", do not apply to the relationship of the friend Pierre to my person. Neither by direct perception, however fleeting and slight, nor by cross-checking from the obvious facts known to me, have I ever had the slightest indication in the direction of a fear that my friend might have had of me, or of a hatred or only of an animosity that he might have nourished against me. The opposite is true, as I have had more than one occasion to emphasise. And it is precisely this circumstance that has rendered so disconcerting this flawless antagonism, apparently gratuitous, which has manifested itself in crescendo throughout the past fifteen years, under the guise of the "thumbs up!" style, alias "velvet paw"(\*), to finally reach the diapason of a quiet impudence, sure (provided that certain forms are respected) of a total impunity...

This disconcerting and enigmatic progression is immediately associated with the equally "disconcerting" and "enigmatic" progression (and these are, to be sure, euphemisms!) in the degradation that followed, also over a period of fifteen years, in the couple's relationship with the woman who was my wife, and, as a result, also in the family that we had founded. In the absence of any sign that my wife had a disposition of hatred or chronic animosity towards me, it took me ten years of inexorable degradation in the relationship (while the best part of my energy was taken up by mathematics, playing the role of the famous sand pile for the ostrich...), before finally taking note of the presence, in the one I continued to love, of a tenacious, mysterious and implacable will to destroy, exercised against me through those who were dear to me. This was in 1967, five years before my departure from the family home, and ten years before the resolution in me of this conflict which I felt as the heaviest weight I had to carry in my life. With the hindsight that comes from a relationship that has been long assumed, I can only note what continues to remain a mystery for me: an insatiable will of destruction, and at the same time an absence of hatred, or only of animosity, towards those, adults or children, who are hit without mercy, as long as the occasion is appropriate.

It is the same mystery, all things considered, as the one I am now confronted with in my friend's relationship to me, with the difference that this "tenacious will to destroy... exercised against me through those who were dear to me" has been strictly confined to the world of mathematicians, and that its instruments and hostages have

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\* See the two notes "Thumbs up!" and "Velvet paw - or the smiles" (nos 77, 137), as well as the notes that follow the latter, forming the part "The claw in the velvet" of "The key of yin and yang".

been, not my children "in the flesh", but those who symbolically took their place: the students and assimilated persons who, to a certain extent, "bore my name". In both cases, not only do I not detect any hatred or animosity, but moreover, there are feelings towards me of sympathy, and often even of affection, which are beyond any doubt.

These are not the only situations in which I have been confronted with a will to hurt, or even a will to destroy (in the strongest sense of the word(\*)), without detecting any trace of hatred or animosity. The one that most strongly marked my life took place in 1933, in my sixth year, with my mother as the protagonist - the year in which the family we formed, my parents, my sister and I, was destroyed forever(†).

The various situations of this kind that I have experienced up close, of a will to destroy, or a will to hurt as deeply as one can, without my detecting any trace of animosity, seem very different from one another. I doubt that I can find a common "explanation" for them, or at least a common trait in the protagonists' distant antecedents, which would suggest a deep causal link(‡). One thing that is perhaps more important than an explanation, and more essential in any case, is already to make the observation[*faire le constat*] that such a thing exists: the will to destroy in the absence of hatred. Here I come back to the theme of "gratuitous violence", which was discussed earlier in a different way(§). Here, we are talking about gratuitous (and sometimes destructive) violence towards a close being or a person considered as a "friend". The mere existence, in everyday life, of such a violence (which rarely says its name), is an important fact in everyone's life - one of the important facts of human life. To take notice this fact, going against the inveterate mechanisms that ceaselessly push us to want to conceal it, is a first step to assume it. This is a step that, no theory, no reasoning, no "procedure" can save us from taking.

I don't know if one day I will ever understand this fact, but it seems to me that to understand it is also to "understand the conflict". What is clear to me, is that such an understanding cannot come from a "theory", any more than from an "experience" (by virtue of experience alone). It is not some "sum total" of an accumulation (of "knowing", or of "experience"), just as it is not of the order of the intellect alone, nor even of the order of the

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\* By "strongest sense", I mean here a will, not to make suffer for the pleasure of making suffer, or to destroy some specific thing that would be dear to the other, but the will of psychic (if not physical) destruction of the other; that (when possible) of implanting an indelible and devastating despair in front of "that which is beyond understanding". Behind the brilliant and affable exterior of the "Perverse Colloquium", I seemed to find this extreme dimension in two of its most brilliant actors...

† See on the subject of this episode "The Superfather", note n° 108.

‡ However, a virulent and deeply buried contempt for oneself is surely common to all these situations. Perhaps such virulence (when it is not resolved by an act of grace, by a profound inner transformation, thus as long as it is not "assumed") finds an outlet and is expressed by destructive acts, by a will to destroy, which turns against one's own person when it does not seek and find its target in others. In more than one person, and even among close beings, I have many times been able to observe the simultaneous action of a will to destroy, directed as much against oneself as against such an external target, chosen among those who are close (mother, father, spouse, or child...). (February 1985) See also the reflection in "The cause of causeless violence" (n° 159), three days after the present note, which, obviously, prepared for it.

§ See the note "The ingenuous violence", n° 139.

"intelligence" alone(\*). I am not sure I know anyone, even by name, in whom such an understanding lives. But it seems to me that he who, after a hundred and thousand evasions in front of an irrefutable reality with a thousand faces, has finally come to the sole observation of this very fact, humbly, without bitterness or revolt, without resignation or indignation - as the observation of a formidable mystery perhaps, the meaning of which escapes him, but the extent and depth of which he senses; a mystery which intrigues or challenges him, without frightening or worrying him any more - that person has not lived in vain.

### **(158) Understanding and renewal**

(5 January) without it being premeditated, the final accents of yesterday's reflection were very much in the tone, again, of a Funeral Eulogy - but this time delivered (or sung) by the deceased himself. One is never so well served but by oneself!

Yesterday I was confronted once again with one of the most puzzling aspects of the "mystery of conflict": that of the will to destroy, without hatred or apparent motive, exercised in the shadows, obstinately and relentlessly, against a person close, or close persons or friends. Sometimes such a will ends up getting out of control, leading to a destructive craving in all directions, where everything that presents itself as vulnerable becomes a welcome target. It is like an irrepressible bulimia of reverse[*rebours*] "action", whose repetitive nature (like that of clown games), and consummate mastery in the art of pulling strings, can be of the most comical effect, when the observer (or even the one who has just borne the brunt of it) is gifted with a sense of humour, and the Actor-Puppeteer has only modest powers over others. The situation is more serious, it is of consequence, when there are children among those who bear the brunt of the circus games, even if they are only "bloody" in the figurative sense; and also when the one possessed by a thirst for destruction finds himself invested with considerable, even discretionary powers over some of his fellows. History tells us the names of certain despots possessed by such a madness of indiscriminate destruction, transforming their fiefdom into a vast mass grave. One thinks of Ivan the Terrible, or Stalin, or such an emperor of China (whose name and millennium I have forgotten) who ended up himself being slaughtered by his own cornered subjects, armed with sticks and

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\* (5 March) I know in any case that such an understanding will only come to me through an understanding of this violence within myself.

stakes(\*). There is no doubt that there have been similar cases in our own countries, perhaps on a smaller scale, and on which the "History" has been more discreet...

When I wrote yesterday, without any false modesty, that I did not understand the "fact" that I had just noted, that of the thirst for destruction in the absence of hatred, this in no way meant that I had no ideas on this subject, quite the contrary. I even have much more than just "ideas", I have some strong intuitions. They were born and grew out of the soil of my life, rich in the conflicts that had sometimes seemed to devastate it, like endless storms raging in a motionless winter landscape, ruthlessly tearing away what must be torn away(†). But all is belly for the sleeping earth that waits in silence. When spring returns, in the hollows of the great dead trunks lying there inert, there swarms an intense life, and in the following spring (if not the same year) we can already see grasses and flowers blooming.

These "strong intuitions" are all, I believe, about the "ingredients" of conflict. I have spoken a little, and spoken again, about some of them, and in the first place, about "contempt for oneself", and its links with the repression of certain aspects and essential forces of our original being, such as the yin or yang "sides", one of which is often denied. I have also often had occasion to speak of vanity, which is like the visiting card, the most universal sign of all, and the most apparent, of the presence of conflict in us, and which appears to me as the "front" of the same medal, the "back" of which would be the contempt for oneself. There is contempt for others, an outward projection of contempt for oneself, for which it is at the same time a cover, or better said, a diversion and an exorcism. Contempt for others, in essence, is nothing other than the deliberate ignorance of

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\* This emperor, fearing a popular uprising, had forbidden the people to use any metal objects (such as knives, pitchforks etc.) that could be used as weapons, except for one knife per village, tied with a strong chain in a public place.

A common feature of the three characters mentioned is that, in addition to this thirst for destruction, they were equally possessed by fear: the fear of being murdered and, beyond that no doubt, the fear of their own inescapable death - as they sowed death all around them. This coincidence is surely not accidental. I also note that Stalin (the only one of the three about whom I have had any detailed information) began his political career as a great master precisely in the art of pulling strings, of manipulating people by playing on their vanity and their greed. His first acquired style was, it seems, that of the "velvet paw", until it became unnecessary for him to take the trouble to hide the claws.

If I have not included my (ex-) compatriot Hitler among the examples mentioned, it is not because of any particular sympathy I might have for him, but because I do not detect in him this mania for destruction "in all directions" that has been discussed. The targets of contempt, and then of destruction, were those designated as "the others", "the foreigners": first of all "the Jews" (and the Communists and other "Judeo-Bolshevists" dear to the Nazi jargon), then the "Asians" and other non-Arian wogs. The good non-Jewish German was all right under Hitler, at least until the first big Allied air raids, when the war really started to go wrong for them.

† As soon as I wrote this image down in the rush of the pen, it occurred to me that it is but only partially adequate - it almost had an aftertaste of "cliché"! As I rest for a moment on this aftertaste, I find the old deliberate intention in me to "see my life as yang": movement, arrow and storms...

Without even taking the time to pose, but sensing that the image was wrong (and yet, it was indeed the one that had come to me, nothing I could do!), I "corrected the shot" in the text by going on to the "sleeping earth that waits in silence" - and here is some yin! This was the chord that "resolved" a "false chord" (or "dissonance"). In many ways a more accurate image than that of the storm, "tearing away what must be torn away", and rightly in the more yin tones, would be that of the worm gnawing away "what must be gnawed away" - and finally collapsing - but all is belly up for the land that waits in silence, and when spring returns... (continued without change!).

their existence as sentient beings who have a share in this world, just as we do ourselves. Gratuitous violence can only germinate and proliferate on the ground of such contempt. There is the fear of knowing, the fear of reality, a fear whose nerve centre, this "Black Point", the epicentre of a whirlwind of anxiety[*angoisse*] ready to be unleashed at the slightest alarm, is the fear of knowing oneself: the fear of getting to know one's own poses and subterfuges, even the crudest ones; and the fear also of getting to know the creative force within us that day after day we reject and bury, through these same poses and subterfuges.

In my life, fear appeared at the age of six, when there was still (it seems to me) no vanity. It must have appeared only later, at the time of (I presume) the "swing" which took place around the age of eight(\*). And it was fear, too, that disappeared first and without leaving a trace, as soon as a curiosity appeared that was both benevolent and irreverent, intrigued certainly but in no way impressed by the abracadabra and macabre grand spectacle montages, such as "Black point" and so on[*et Cie*]. The mechanisms of vanity, on the other hand, have remained in place without apparent change, for eight years since the fear of knowing disappeared. It is only the hold of these mechanisms on my life that has changed, because they are defused at the moments of the presence of an awakening curiosity, which does not fall for such things!

I have in my hands a whole range of conflict ingredients - which I know at first hand, and without a shred of doubt, are indeed ingredients, and essential ones. And for years I have also had everything in hand, at a moment I like, to "assemble" these ingredients, by carefully explaining, in the light of what I have observed in myself and in others, their links of contiguity and dependence. It is a work of a few days or a few weeks, not even months, I presume, and which will surely be very instructive and useful. If I haven't taken the trouble to do it yet, giving priority to other, more directly personal directions, it's no doubt because I was well aware that it's not from such an "assembly" of ingredients, in general terms from which my person is absent (if not as an "example" among others), that could give me an "understanding of the conflict"; no more than the mere act of placing side by side, "assembling" or even mixing a number of simple bodies, "ingredients" in the composition of a compound body, can reconstitute the latter. For the "reconstitution" to take place, a "chemical reaction" must first take place - something bringing the ingredients into contact and into play in a much more intimate way, and by forces of an entirely different order, than mere "assembling" or mixing could do.

The same is true of an understanding of the things of life. Intelligence alone can, at best, spot the ingredients of something like "conflict", and it can in any case, in the presence of ingredients already known and with the help of the facts concerning them (known at first or second hand), assemble them in a plausible, and even "correct" way. Such work can be useful in order to recognise oneself on occasions, in this or that conflict situation, and to identify a more or less precise "aetiology" - but this is not yet an "understanding of the conflict". I would say, however, that I have moved one step closer to such an understanding, the day when my relationship to conflict has been transformed. When I speak here of "my relationship to conflict", I mean first of all, of course, the conflict in my own person, and (from there) the conflict that occasionally opposes me against this or that person; and then, the conflict that I see acting in close or less close beings in my everyday life, which often expresses itself in conflicts opposing one to another among them.

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\* On the subject of this "swing", see the note "The Superfather" (n° 108).

Over the past eight years, there has indeed been such a progression towards an understanding of conflict, which is also to say: a transformation or rather, successive transformations, in my relationship to conflict. I have had the opportunity to mention two or three episodes(\*). Perhaps a full understanding of conflict is equivalent to a full acceptance of the existence of conflict, wherever it is, and in whatever way it manifests itself(†). I am far from that, obviously! And perhaps also, a full understanding of the conflict also means the full resolution of the conflict in one's own person. I am even further away from that!

I think I know one more thing, however, about the nature of the force which, from an assemblage of ingredients, suddenly gives rise to an understanding which renews the person. It is precisely this force that is not "of the order of intelligence". I doubt that any intellectual work, say the reading of books, however learned, profound or sublime, stimulates none of its appearance. When it does gush out, it is only in silence and in contact with that which is most intimately personal in our person and in our experience; something, therefore, that no book and no person, be it Christ or Buddha, can ever reveal to us.

When I speak of "that which is most intimately personal", this does not mean that these are things we cannot speak of, either to ourselves or to others - and sometimes it is good to speak of them. But if we speak through the voice of angels and prophets, what is said is not the thing itself. That thing which is already known, but perhaps buried, and whose contact can suddenly bring forth a new knowing, that very thing is known neither to the angels nor to the prophets, nor to even the closest and best loved being, but only to you.

To come back to the conflict, and to the "destruction without hatred", which appears to me as the hardest "core" of the conflict, the most resistant to an understanding, which is also to say: to an acceptance. I also think I know, in the next step before me to enter further into it, what is that "most intimately personal" thing which I will first have to find contact with; that which would play the role, in this case, of that famous "Black Point" which is so tenaciously eluded! It is the experience of situations of "gratuitous violence", of contempt for others (and of "destruction without hatred" too, perhaps), in which I was the actor - the one who did violence, the one who found it worthwhile to despise. It is in contact with this reality, or never, that I will have the possibility of getting to the heart of this famous "contempt for oneself", and to see at last, beyond all "no doubt" and all "maybe", if it is indeed the deep root of evil, and not only in "all but me"!

### **(159) The cause of causeless violence**

(7 January) The reflection in the previous two notes revolved around the mystery of the existence of this strange thing: a will to destroy (or a will to hurt, or humiliate, or harm), in the absence of any hatred or animosity. The incentive for this reflection had come from the relationship of my friend Pierre to me, immediately arousing the association with the relationship of my ex-wife to me. More than once in the course of the reflection on the Burial, I was led to realise, or to remember, that in these two cases as in others, it was certain traits in my

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\* See in particular, on this subject, the two notes "The acceptance (the awakening of yin (2))" and "The slave and the puppet - or the floodgates", n°s 110, 140.

† The meaning of such "full acceptance" can give rise to countless misunderstandings. It is of an entirely different nature from a connivance. It does not exclude refusal, clearly and unequivocally - it contains it. See on this subject the reflection in the note "The spouses - or the enigma of 'Evil'" (n° 117).



person, the "super-virile" traits that I had cultivated in myself since the age of eight, that had served as stimulators and "attractors" for such antagonistic impulses. If I am not mistaken, this is first discussed in the 5 October note "The Superfather (yang buries yin (2))" (n° 108). This link is repeated in the following note of 9 October "The reunion (the awakening of yin (1))" (n° 109).

In this note, I return to the moment when, for the first time in my life, I perceived this link. It was 18 October, 1976, the very day of my reunion with the child in me, and in the final lines of the notes that bear witness to this most important day of my adult life. In these lines (reproduced in the note quoted), I speak of the "secret hatred and resentment" of three women I had loved, including the one who at that time was still my wife (although I had not lived with her for five years). With hindsight, it seems to me that in each of the three cases I had in mind, this impression of "secret hatred" did not, strictly speaking, correspond to reality - I mean, to a direct perception I would have had at any moment(\*) of such a hatred. What I had perceived, and of which I had had ample opportunity to suffer the effects, was a will to destroy, or a will to cause suffering, or to hurt, that was both lasting and apparently inexplicable, gratuitous - something that I had interpreted as a sign of a hatred, "secret", because never expressed. I think that for two of the women in question, it was in these lines quoted, for the first time since I had known them, that I noted what appeared to me to be a "secret hatred". At the point where I was at that moment, it was not possible for me not to make the confusion I have just pointed out. This

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\* (6 March) After having written these lines, I remembered that there were, however, in the course of my married life, two episodes, the first of a few days, the second of a few minutes, when I felt assailed as if by two beams of hatred, bursting from the eyes of the woman who was then my wife.

The first time, my wife had what is called (euphemistically) a "nervous breakdown", in the fifth year of our marriage (1962). This episode had a profound effect on the life of the couple and the family atmosphere. It is also the moment in my life, of all those I have kept a conscious memory of, that was experienced as the most atrocious, and that marked me most profoundly (as it was supposed to do).

Unless we have an exceptionally stable inner foundation (which, due to lack of maturity, I was far from having at the time), the hatred of which we are the target, and even more so when it comes from loved and close ones, has a devastating effect on our psyche, when it arouses in us a similar and destructive hatred towards ourselves. It would seem that something in us must at all costs find a "meaning" for "what is beyond comprehension", this "meaning" being even a condemnation and an unquestionable rejection of ourselves by ourselves: since we are hated (and even though the "reason" for this hatred escapes us completely...), it is because we are hateable...

If I was so affected by this episode, which remained like a sword of Damocles hanging over my life for the next six or seven years, it was surely because it resonated violently with a traumatic experience from my childhood. This had disappeared from conscious memory, but it was all the more active whenever I was suddenly confronted with inexplicable malice or hatred - all as sudden and inexplicable as the will to destroy that had assailed me at the age of five, coming then from the person of all people who, as far back as I could trace back in my memory, had been the peaceful and safe centre of the Universe.

This is one of the important things I have come to learn in my life, about the malice or hatred I am sometimes the target of, that I am in no way the real and immediate cause of it (even if certain aspects of my person, which I neither disavow nor deny, contribute to attracting it to me). However, this knowing remained too epidermal, for years to come, to defuse this mechanism deeply rooted in me, which comes into play when I am confronted with a malice or a violence apparently "without cause". To defuse it, it was first necessary for me to go back to its root and to set out on the traces of those forgotten days and nights, heavy with anguish, when my mother suddenly became, mysteriously and inexplicably, a hostile and fearsome stranger...

confusion does not in any way detract from the importance of having made this observation, involving myself in it in a way that was just as crucial as the women to whom I was closely linked.

As for "resentment", which is mentioned in one breath with "secret hatred", I felt from the start that if a "certain force" that was superyang in me had drawn the resentment of each of these three women to my person, it was nevertheless for grievances, for which I was in no way responsible - for wounds and damages suffered "long before they knew of my existence, in the distraught days of a childhood deprived of love". This perception, which had decanted over the years as the fruit of intense experience, surely had the effect of an invisible guide for my reflection of 20 December last year, in the note "Grudge in suspension - or the return of things (2)" (n° 149), where the intuition appears that this same process of displacement of an initial resentment, or a "grudge in a state of vacancy", could well have taken place in my friend Pierre, around the time of our encounter, or perhaps even earlier. The facts known to me make this intuition at least plausible.

There is, however, an important difference with the case of my ex-wife, and with the other two cases discussed in the meditation after the reunion. I have no impression, in fact, that my friend's childhood was in any way "distraught" or "deprived of love". This difference seems to me to be manifested in the tone of my friend's antagonism towards me, which at no time reached that diapason of vehemence, with which I was so familiar in the other three relationships. Also, in my friend's relationship to me, the appearance of signs of antagonism was at first extremely discreet and sporadic, and even after my departure in 1970, it took another eight years before this antagonism was expressed in a direct and unmistakable way against my person itself. This seems to correspond well to the existence of an initial "resentment" which remained diffuse, imponderable, without the presence of a hard "core" corresponding to the feeling (even if it was hidden from the conscious gaze) of an outrage or a wrong suffered, felt to be irreparable perhaps...

When I mentioned, in the penultimate note, the will to destroy, or the will to hurt or harm, in the absence of hatred and animosity, the thought came to me (with some insistence) of an apparent contradiction, which I thought I would come back to straightaway. It is this. In the two cases that were at the centre of my attention, involving the one who was my pupil (and my mathematical "apparent heir") and the one who was my wife, there had indeed been a question of an unconscious "grudge" that they had transferred onto my person. The very idea of a "grudge" or "resentment" seems to be linked to that of an "animosity" or "enmity": one would like to say that a grudge (or resentment) is one of the possible ways (and one of the most common) of nourishing an animosity. And this assertion is certainly justified, in the case of a grudge that could be called "direct", a "real" grudge, motivated by a grievance (real or imaginary) towards the person concerned, of a wrong or a damage that this person would have inflicted on us. But in the cases I am dealing with, it is not such a grudge that is involved, but an indirect grudge, "by proxy" so to speak, transferred from an initial potential target, inadequate

for one reason or another(\*) , to an “target of adoption” or replacement, which appears to “fit” the needs of the case. The remarkable thing is that, such a “displaced grudge” (this is indeed the case!), which acts as the stubborn force at work behind attitudes, behaviours and acts of such a nature that one would say they are driven by a hatred or by a “causeless” animosity - that such a “grudge” is yet devoid of any feeling of hatred or animosity! Moreover, it is the conjunction of these two aspects of “gratuitous violence” in the strongest sense of the term (the one I am examining here) that makes it so disconcerting, as something that truly “surpasses the understanding”(†): the complete absence of any rational and tangible “cause” of this violence, both in the one who bears the brunt of it (without having provoked it by attitudes, behaviours or acts that are hurtful or prejudicial to the other), and in the one who exercises it (without being moved by feelings of hatred or animosity that he would harbour, “rightly or wrongly”, against the target).

Perhaps the question of the presence or absence of hatred or animosity, in the cases that concern me (where one is confronted with violence that appears as “gratuitous”, as if unprovoked), is here relatively accessory, surely, as was the case for me, in the experience of the one who suffered this violence, and from the moment that the violence suffered becomes conscious, there must appear an impression of “secret hatred” or “animosity” on the part of the one who inflicts it. This impression is not, however, the result of a perception (which would have suddenly appeared, as if by a magic wand), but rather of a rash[à l'emporte-pièce] assimilation: violence = hatred (or animosity)(‡).

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\* There are many such “reasons”, which often make the one who (wilfully or not) caused harm or inflicted damage, however, “inadequate” as a target of a grudge or animosity, or even hatred or a will to destroy, well and truly raised by him. Perhaps the most common, especially when it is the mother or father, or a person considered beyond the reach of his rank or social position, is the barrier of the fear of infringing a taboo of authority, internalised for a long time. These are barriers of very great force. (In my case, they have tended, over the last fifteen years or so, more and more, to fade away...) In the opposite direction, it can happen that the person in question is “not up to the task” of assuaging a grudge that is commensurate with the wrongs suffered - that he appears too insignificant, too evasive[*fuyante*] or pusillanimous perhaps, to be up to the role that would otherwise be rightfully his.

Finally, I can also imagine that in some cases, the wrong suffered is too imponderable, too subtle (and even “non-existent”, to say the least, according to the prevailing consensus, long internalised by the person concerned), to give birth to anything other than a diffuse grudge, unfit to be “condensed” and to take shape and force in a relationship that is itself in soft tones, with no apparent angles. This is, moreover, no doubt a simple variant of the previous case, which appeared in the reflection with the note “Grudge in suspension - or the return of things (2)” (n° 149).

† On the subject of this violence “which surpasses understanding” (“unfassbar” in German), see the note “The slave and the puppet - or the floodgates” (n° 140). When I speak here of gratuitous violence “in the strongest sense of the word”, without immediately qualifying it otherwise than as that which “surpasses understanding”, the precise meaning that I then have in view is identified in the explanation that follows, by the explication of these “two aspects” that are combined in it.

‡ (6 March) In some cases, however, there may well be a perception of a hatred that is indeed present, even though it has not been provoked in any way. (See, on this subject, above in this same note, the other footnote dated today.) It is then a matter of a hatred which, unless in exceptional circumstances, remains confined in deep layers of the unconscious, and which moreover remains there in a state of “vacancy”, without a designated target, even though it is the secret force which animates acts of violence (in an insidious form, most often) which, themselves, are well and truly aimed with an unfailing constancy, at the same chosen target...

One thing that seems to me much more important, on the other hand, is to note, not only the existence of something as apparently aberrant, as insane, as contrary to the most inveterate "common sense" reflexes, as the "grudge by proxy", displaced from its "original target" (or from its original targets) to a "replacement target" (a target of pure convenience, almost!); but to note, moreover, that this is a very common mechanism, which one encounters at every corner of the street, whether in one's own person (the last one one would think of going to look for...), or in that of one's relatives and friends. I even have the impression that this mechanism is universal in nature, that it is part of the basic mechanisms of the human psyche, that it is one of those few all-purpose mechanisms that constitute the syndrome of flight from reality: the refusal to take cognisance of it, and the fear of assuming it.

More precisely, I have the impression that I have, today, put my finger on the common spring of all situations of "gratuitous violence", with no exception. This impression appeared, with the force of a sudden conviction, when I began to examine (three paragraphs above) an "apparent contradiction". I then had the feeling that a host of fragmented and heterogeneous impressions stored up throughout my life, revolving around the "sensitive point" of all this violence "which surpasses understanding", were all of a sudden ordered, suddenly acquiring a perspective which was still lacking - a perspective which appeared there unexpectedly, at the end of a reflection, when I was only about to place a very last point on a very last i...

#### **(160) Nichidatsu Fujii Guruji - or the sun and its planets**

(8 January) For the past week, there has been an unusual cold wave - temperatures of -15 and below, and when the wind blows from "Mont Ventoux" (the name says it all!), it must be even colder. It seems that this wave is raging all over the world (according to someone who listens to the news), and that in the south of France it hasn't happened since the famous winter and spring of 1956. During my childhood in Germany, I have known cold like this, but there was snow which protected the earth, and which put a tone of softness in the air and on the things. With this cold without snow, the earth above ground is frozen like a block of ice. In a few days, the garden has been razed to the ground - I don't know if there will be anything left in the spring, from what we have sown and planted. The remaining leaves of leeks, celery, chard, lamb's lettuce, beetroot and chard are like ice leaves, frozen vegetables. We hurry to harvest as much as we can from day to day, to eat as we go, before it thaws and all goes to the compost. And yesterday the water supply had frozen in the kitchen, fortunately there was still running water downstairs in the old garage, less exposed to the cold. Today a friend came with a portable gas torch, and he managed to get the water going again. I'll have to let a trickle of water run through, so that it doesn't freeze up as quickly. Fortunately I have a good wood-burning stove in the dining room, where I have moved my work. Sitting next to the stove is really nice. I warm myself with the vine stumps, which I break with the axe every day, a good grape crate full overboard, in this cold weather. When the wind doesn't stop blowing all afternoon, just to stay a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes breaking wood in the full wind is enough to make your fingers numb [*attraper l'onglée*]. Not to mention the car that's left outside and won't start - it seems that cars, on their part, don't stand such extreme cold very well, antifreeze or not. The same complaisant friend got it running again earlier, but will it still work tomorrow to proofread the typing of the secretary I gave the work to? In short, all it takes is a cold wave in winter, or a heat wave in summer, or a good little illness at any time, to remind us of some of the realities of existence that we tend to forget when everything is purring along as we will [*ronronne à souhait*]...

Imperceptibly over the last three months, the rhythm of my work has reshifted towards the night hours. I work until around two, or three in the morning, and sleep until around eleven, or twelve. In this weather, if I listened to myself once in bed, I'd stay in bed for my easy twelve hours - and conversely, once I'm at work, I don't go to bed anymore! Now I try to keep a reasonable balance. I don't worry too much about the time schedule, as long as I get good sleep, and don't stay in bed for hours on end, with the thinking machine continuing to run. Even now, when there's hardly any work to do in the garden, there's still quite a lot of different things to do each day, including firewood, and a bit of exercise here and there. I have the impression of a satisfying equilibrium of life, where: the work of discovery does not seem to devour all the rest, but without being so much to the meanest portions [*à la portion congrue*]. Since I returned to work, on 22 September, I must be spending an average of five to six hours a day. It's modest, but the "yield" seems to be only slightly less than before. The "slaughter [*abatage*]" (around a hundred pages per month) is about the same, more or less, as for the writing of the first two parts of Harvest and Sowing. But from a qualitative point of view, there is no doubt in my mind that this third part is the most profound, the one that has taught me the most about myself and about others.

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Na mu myo ho ren ge kyo [*Glory to the Dharma of the Lotus Sutra*]!

As I was coming to the end of this short retrospective, on the rigours of winter and the evolution of my life equilibrium, I received a phone call from one of my Buddhist monk friends of the Nihonzan Myohoji group, announcing the death of their revered "preceptor" (\*), Nichidatsu Fujii, better known under the name of Fujii Guruji, or "Osshosama" for his close ones. My friend in Paris just learned the news by a phone call from Tokyo, I presume that Fujii Guruji died on this very day (†). He had just turned, on 6 August last year, one hundred years old, physically weakened, but in excellent mental condition.

By a strange coincidence, this date of 6 August is the anniversary of two other important events, one of historical significance, the other of a personal nature for me. It is the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima (6 August, 1945) - which the Japanese commemorate as "Hiroshima day". (This is why Fujii Guruji's birthday festivities were held more towards the end of July, to keep the days around 6 August available for anti-atomic and pacifist demonstrations). On the other hand, my father was born on 6 August 1890, six years to the day after the birth of Fujii Guruji.

After the death of Claude Chevalley, the death of Nichidatsu Fujii is the second death of a person who played a non-negligible role in my life, occurring during the writing of Harvest and Sowing. In view of this passing (which does not really come as a surprise), I am particularly pleased that just last year there was an exchange of letters with him that was imbued with warmth. I had been invited to attend the ceremony for the hundredth birthday of the old Master, which was to take place with exceptional pomp in Tokyo. (A small book of

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\* "Preceptor", an English word more or less equivalent to "teacher", means the "master", the one who teaches. Nihonzan Myohoji is the phonetic transcription of the group's Japanese name, which translates as "Japanese Mission". It is a "missionary" Buddhist group, with a primarily pacifist vocation. See below for details.

† It turned out that he had just died a few hours ago. The news spread quickly!

testimonies about his person had even been published in great haste, to be given to him for the occasion.) This had been an occasion for me to write (as I do almost every year), a few words of early congratulations, apologising for not being able to attend the ceremony on 30 July, as I myself was still more or less bedridden at the time of writing. (It is also true that I am not much given to *[porté sur]* big public ceremonies, but it had seemed unnecessary to mention this in my letter. In any case, I must have disappointed and hurt more than one of my monk friends, by stubbornly abstaining from attending any of the "grand occasions"(\*), to which they never tired of inviting me.) I had to add a few words on the subject of about the beneficial side of an illness, which forces us, in spite of ourselves, to "unplug *[décrocher]*" from our occupations and give the body what it demands. Fujii Guruji himself had been bedridden a lot during the past year, which must have weighed on him, given his temperament for action and his unusual energy. While it had been more than seven years since I had received any personal communication from Fujii Guruji, I was surprised to receive a letter from him, dictated by him while he was still bedridden. The letter (which I have just reread) is dated 13 July 1984. It is a letter full of delicacy *[délicatesse]*, where he is concerned about my health, and grieves that he is not able to send someone to take care of me. He also speaks of his health, and of the dispositions in which he endures his enforced inactivity. He ends with these words, in very "Japanese" style, which should be taken with a (large!) grain of salt, and which showed me, perhaps even more than the rest of the letter, that the tone was as good as ever(†) :

"Indeed I am a very old decrepit man of no use even if I may get back to normal life. Yet still, I would like to live and see how the world turns." *[English original]*

Then he could still see the world turning for about six months...

My links with the Nihonzan Myohoji group go back to the year 1974. There is here no question of even sketching out here these multiple-episode relationships, a little in all registers - it would take a volume. They are

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\* Chief among such "grand occasions" was the inauguration of "Shanti stupas", or "pagodas of Peace". The construction of these Pagodas, or places of worship for world peace, goes back to a very old tradition in the Buddhist world (initiated by King Ashoka in India), and was one of the main concerns of Fujii Guruji. It has inspired the construction of a large number of Shanti Stupas somewhat all over the world, including three in Europe and one in the United States.

† The letter was dictated in Japanese (the only language Guruji spoke) and was translated directly into English. Translation in to French of the quoted lines: "Certes je suis un homme très vieux et décrépité et d'aucune utilité même si je puis retrouver une santé normale. Et pourtant, j'aimerais vivre et voir comment le monde tourne."

among the richest "spinoffs/[*retombées*]" of the "Survivre et Vivre"(\*) episode which followed my departure (between 1970 and the end of 1972). This group, and the (not very periodical!) bulletin of the same name, and also my "departure from maths" and my "trajectory", had been discussed in a Japanese newspaper (or newspapers?), in 1972 or 73. The "criticism of science" and denunciation of the military apparatus, and also, perhaps, the "criticism of a civilisation" aspect, must have "passed" a bit in some article, attracting the attention of one of the monks of Nihonzan Myohoji. He told others about it, and in particular to a younger monk from the same town (Kagoshima), who had become a monk under his influence and was somewhat of a "pupil". He was the first missionary monk of the group to land in the "West", more precisely in Paris, in the spring of 1974(†). He came to find me a few weeks later and without announcing himself, in the obscure/[*paumé*] village where I was living at the time, about fifty kilometres from Montpellier. Since that memorable day in May, when I saw, under the midday sun, a strangely dressed man, chanting on the road with the accompaniment of a drum and heading (there was no mistake...) towards the garden where I was working alone - since that day I have had the privilege and the pleasure of seeing many followers and sympathisers(‡) of Guruji pass by my house. Their contact has brought me a lot. At the beginning of November 1976, I even had the honour and joy of welcoming in my rustic house Fujii Guruji in person, then aged 92, in the company of a group of seven or eight monks,

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\* This episode is alluded to several times, in "Fatuity and Renewal" (the first part of Harvest and Sowing). "Survivre et Vivre" (which was first called "Survivre" without more) is the name of a group, first of pacifist vocation, then also ecological, which was born in July 1970 (on the fringe of a "Summer School" at the University of Montreal), in a milieu of scientists (and above all, mathematicians). It quickly evolved towards a "cultural revolution" direction, while widening its audience outside scientific milieus. Its main means of action was the bulletin (more or less periodic) of the same name, whose consecutive directors were Claude Chevalley, myself, Pierre Samuel, Denis Guedj (all four mathematicians) - not to mention an English edition, maintained at arm's length by Gordon Edwards (a young Canadian mathematician whom I had got acquainted with in Montreal and who was among the few initiators of the group and the bulletin).

The first bulletin, entirely from my pen (naive and full of conviction!) and printed in a thousand copies, was distributed at the International Congress in Nice (1970), which brought together (as it does every four years) several thousand mathematicians. I was expecting a massive response - there were (if I remember correctly) two or three. I felt above all a great deal of discomfort/[*gêne*] among my colleagues! By talking about the collaboration of scientists with the military apparatus, which had infiltrated somewhat everywhere in scientific life, I was mostly putting my feet in well-stocked dishes... It was in the scientific "big world" that I felt the greatest discomfort - the echoes of sympathy coming from there were reduced to those of Chevalley and Samuel. It was in what I have elsewhere called the "swamp" of the scientific world that our action found a certain resonance. The bulletin ended up with a print run of about fifteen thousand copies - an insane amount of administrative work, by the way, when distribution was done by hand. Didier Savard's juicy drawings certainly contributed a lot to the relative success of our canard.

After my departure and that of Samuel, it turned into a leftist group, with sharp jargon and unanswerable analyses, and the bulletin ended up dying a good death. What had been to be understood and said, at a certain point close to the effervescence of 1968, had been understood and said. After that, there was little point in turning over and over a record in perpetuity...

† He did assure me that he was the first Buddhist missionary monk in the West, in the history of Buddhism - but I cannot guarantee that this information is reliable! It is also not clear that making himself a missionary was really a great "progress" for Buddhism. From the beginning, this aspect of the Nihonzan Myohoji group aroused a reservation in me, which has only been confirmed over the years.

‡ It was precisely one of these who had the honour, as an "foreigner in an irregular situation", to be the occasion for the first literal application, in the jurisprudence in France, of a certain rather incredible article of a certain "Ordinance of 1949". I had the honour of finding myself in the Correctional Court, for having "gratuitously lodged and accommodated" such an outlaw. See on the subject of this episode the section "My farewell - or the foreigners" (n° 24).

nuns and disciples. I had already met him the year before, at the solemn inauguration of the group's temple in Paris, in the eighteenth district. Beyond the *de rigueur* words of courtesy, there was then a strong contact, an immediate sympathy. The more intimate and personal context of a visit of several days at my home brought me, of course, a much richer understanding of Fujii Guruji as a person, as well as of his relationship to the group of which he was the head, and the soul.

Interestingly, this visit by Fujii Guruji followed very closely, by only two weeks, the crucial turning point in my life that was achieved [*accompli*] between the 15th and 18th of October of the same year, which has been mentioned elsewhere(\*). The weeks that followed those days of crisis and renewal were among the most intense of my life, with each day bringing its own unexpected harvest of inner events and discoveries. To tell the truth, this visit, planned and prepared for weeks, of a whole group of monks and nuns around their revered master, seemed to come as a kind of strange interlude, as a diversion in the adventure that was absorbing the totality of my being. It was the respect for my guests, and especially for Fujii Guruji who came to honour my home, that allowed me nevertheless to have, for these few days, the availability that the occasion required. As has often happened to me, it was only once I was in the middle of the event As has often happened to me, it was only once I was at the heart of the event that I realised that this was not at all an "interlude" or a "diversion", but that it was part of the adventure that I was living through. Underneath its very "tales from the East" exterior, of a perfect delicacy and unusual charm, this so-called "interlude" brought me into the presence of men and women similar to me and to the men and women I had always known, in contexts that were less exotic, less extraordinary in appearance. It was because I felt this kinship, that I also felt that my guests were friends and brothers, and not characters straight out of a tale of a thousand and one nights, as must have been the case for many of the astonished villagers. And Fujii Guruji himself, who spoke to me so familiarly while his "relatives" kept a good distance as required by the respect due to the revered master, I felt very, very distant (from me as well as from his relatives), and yet close at the same time, as if he had been my father, or an elder and benevolent brother.

And as is not uncommon with a father or an older brother, even the most benevolent, he had towards me an expectation, which moreover he did not hide, an expectation shared by those who accompanied him and who were all my guests. And I also knew that I could not answer it. My adventure was linked to that of Fujii Guruji, by links that I could only dimly discern, deeper perhaps than I could see, and than that of his disciples who followed him with their eyes closed. But it was no more that of my prestigious and benevolent guest than it was that of my father, also prestigious for me and benevolent, very close and yet different: another person, another destiny.

It was not easy to "get across" that I would not be one of them in an enterprise that was theirs, and which I did not feel to be mine. From the picture of me that Fujii Guruji and his followers must have been given, this was the last thing they would have expected - especially since the relationship on a personal level, between the group or the different members of the group and me, was like a real honeymoon. It was also during this visit that some long-standing resistance, due to my education, faded away, and I joined my guests in chanting with them their mantra, accompanied by the drum:

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\* See the section "Desire and meditation" (n° 36) and the note "The reunion (the awakening of yin (1))" (n° 109).



"Na mu myo ho ren ge kyo!"

This mantra is the foundation, the alpha and omega, of their religious practice. They chant it most often to the accompaniment of the prayer drum, one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. This drum chant, following the teaching of the Japanese prophet Nichiren, is in itself the sovereign good, the dispenser of peace in and around the one who chants it. This chant is therefore for my Japanese friends what is commonly called a "prayer". The meaning they give to it, in accordance with Nichiren, and with their direct "preceptor" Fujii Guruji, is that of an act of respect for the person being addressed, and through them, for every living being in the universe - as a being promised (according to the Lotus Sutra) to become Buddha, the embodiment of perfect wisdom. These seven syllables also serve as a salutation to any other person, indeed to any other being one would like to salute[*saluer*], with the connotation of respect for that which is of divine essence in the other. They also serve as a thanksgiving before the meal. To tell the truth, it seems to me that there is hardly an occasion, whether in moments of surprise, or emotion, or reverence, that is not conducive for a Nichiren follower to say the sacred words. As for me, without sharing the religious belief of my monk friends(\*), it is with joy that I join them, when the occasion arises, to do Odaimoku - to chant to the drum what they call "the Prayer". It is in their memory, and as an act of affectionate respect towards their master, Nichidatsu Fujii Guruji, that I have also included "the Prayer" in my daily life, by chanting it before each of the two main meals of the day, at least when I am alone, or with friends, or with people I know will not be embarrassed by it(†). This is one of the things of great value for which I am indebted to Fujii Guruji and to those of his disciples whom I have known and who have given me their affection, without growing weary of my reluctance to associate myself in any way with their missionary activities.

There are several million Nichiren Buddhists in Japan, divided into many sects of very different physiognomy. The Nihonzan Myohoji group is one of the smallest in number, comprising a few hundred active monks, nuns and sympathisers. Yet it is well known in Japan and elsewhere, distinguishing itself from all the traditional religious groups by an unequivocal political commitment, the main emphasis of which is the struggle for peace, anti-militarist and, more particularly, anti-nuclear actions. At the time of the Vietnam War, it was the only Buddhist group (unless I am mistaken) that clearly took sides against the Americans, and fought against the presence of American bases in Japan (which served as logistical support for the continuation of the Vietnam War). In recent years, Fujii Guruji has also been in close contact with the chiefs of the movement of Indian liberation in the United States, the AIM (American Indian Movement). Monks from Nihonzan Myohoji have participated in Marches organised by the American Indians, as well as other Peace Marches in various places of the world. The Indian chiefs were obviously attracted and impressed by the unusual personality of Fujii Guruji. The fact that this man of indomitable energy, approaching one hundred years of age, was a great missionary of a

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\* I do not feel that I belong to any particular religious denomination. Through the education received by my parents I was an atheist (with an anti-religious nuance) until the age of fourteen. A remarkable talk by my natural science teacher, on the history of the evolution of life on earth, made me understand, without any possibility of doubt, the presence of a creative intelligence at work in the Universe. This understanding, which then remained at the level of the intellect alone, widened and refined in the course of my subsequent maturation, continuing after my departure from the mathematical scene in 1970.

† In particular, I refrained from chanting the prayer at the weekly meal I had at the College, in the company of a few students or colleagues, not being sure that one or other of them would not feel some kind of constraint, which I would impose on him because of my position as elder or "boss".

religious faith different from their own, did not seem to bother them at all. On the contrary, the religious dimension in the "anti-American" options with a zinc strand [*à brin de zinc*] of the venerable Master was surely, in addition to his age, one of the causes that made them welcome Guruji as they would have welcomed one of their own, as a father or a grandfather who was highly respected, and in whom they recognised themselves(\*).

Surely, this religious dimension played for me in the same sense - it made Fujii Guruji closer to me, even though I don't claim to be of any clearly defined religious faith. If I ask myself what attracted and struck me most about him, I see several things. The most apparent is an inner joy. This joy seems to flow spontaneously from a unity in his person, or rather, perhaps, from a faithfulness to himself. One senses that this man is happy, because all his life he has done without hesitation what he felt he had to do. He does not appear to me to be free of contradictions, but devoid of ambiguity. The meaning of some of his acts or omissions escapes me, but at no time did I harbour any doubt about the man's total integrity. If this is so, it is not as a result of an analysis of what is known to me about him through intermediary persons. It is enough to have met him once to know that he is a man who knows no ambiguity, a man in deep accord with himself. This is what the Indian chiefs of the AIM must have sensed, so that they gave him the place they had made for him among them. It is surely in this that also lies his extraordinary ascendancy over those who claim to be his followers, men and women whose ideological and philosophical options cover a range from pure Marxism-Leninism to the dyed-in-the wool conformism of the CEO of a department store chain. What unites them, is not the veneration of a certain Sutra which perhaps none of them had the presumptuousness [*outrécuidance*] to read(†), nor a certain prayer of Pali origin, restored in Japanese through the intermediary of the Chinese translation, and which professes the veneration of this Sutra. What unites them (or should we say: what had united them?) is a man, exercising over them an ascendancy which he no more sought to exercise, than the sun sought over its planets.

I also see that this man was alone, and that solitude did not weigh on him. It was his natural condition, perhaps since always. This solitude, and this integrity, or this agreement with himself, appear to me as so many different aspects of a single and same thing. Yet another aspect of the same thing is that of the force - a force without violence, and which does not care about being or appearing as "strong [*forte*]". It is that of the sun, again, which is sufficient to be itself to create around it this field of forces, and these orbits that the planets travel along.

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\* To give an idea of the bond of trust and respect linking the Indian chiefs to the person of Guruji, I would like to point out here that during the great annual initiation festival, held around the "sun dance", there was the participation of Guruji's monk disciples, beating the great prayer drum from sunrise to sunset, to the pulsing [*lancinant*] rhythm of the Na mu myo ho ren ge kyo! These large drums, hollowed out of a single trunk and stretched with ox skins, have an uncommon power of sound, and (I presume) are hard to bear for twelve hours in a row. (I did the experiment for two hours, during the inauguration of the temple in Paris, an experiment which was conclusive...) Still, Robert Jaulin (who was, with the monks, among the few non-Indians invited to participate in the festival) told me that the Indians stoically endured Grandfather Guruji's sacred drum, from the beginning to the end of the initiation, of which the Guruji drum-drum had been one of the many trials...

† More than one of Guruji's disciples has made it clear to me that he would consider it a presumptuousness to pretend to read the Lotus Sutra, even though there is a Japanese translation. Only a man of great depth of mind, such as his master Fujii Guruji himself, would be able and worthy to read this sacred text, which is infinitely beyond the intelligence of the profane. Obviously, the faith of these men and women is directly focused, not on such a more or less deified historical figure, such as Buddha, or the perfect Bodhisatva and prophet Nichiren, but on Fujii Guruji himself.

Surely, this is also the force of which I have spoken more than once in Harvest and Sowing, as "the force" in us - with this difference, that in one man it is fully apparent and sensitive to all who approach him, and in another it is buried more or less deeply, so much so that sometimes it might be thought to be non-existent. But if some of my monk friends seem to deny it in themselves, yet this Sutra which they profess to venerate, and the very prayer which they chant day after day, clearly proclaim that such a force lives in every living thing in the Creation, promised as they are, and as their venerated master Ososhosama himself, to the destiny of Buddha.

### **(161) The prayer and the conflict**

(13 January)(\*) Another four days have passed since I had the leisure and calmness to work - to continue the notes, I mean. The main reason for this lies in the quite unbelievable difficulties I have had in getting this third part of Harvest and Sowing typed up. In the thirty-plus years that I have been in the habit of having people do the typing work, I've never experienced anything like this. Obviously, the fact of having in my hands this text of a very strongly personal, not to say intimate, nature, triggered (surely unconscious) reactions of considerable force in the people in charge of the typing, going each time in the direction of a real sabotage of the work entrusted to them. In the space of a few months, the same scenario was repeated three times in a row, with variations, with three consecutive secretaries, who nevertheless did not give each other the word†! This third time, moreover, a sordid note is added, because the secretary, Mrs J., pretends to use the rather unusual manuscript that had been entrusted to her care, as a means of blackmail to extort a sort of ransom. She is a former executive secretary, with a great deal of experience in the profession. The first eleven pages of typing were impeccable and almost without a typo, just to show what she could do; and in the next fifteen pages alone, there were eleven lines skipped - it's rare that I've seen a text crippled so much! I didn't ask what the ransom was (beyond the agreed price for the text already typed) to get my manuscript back and the typing, having no desire to encourage this kind of process. This means that I will probably have to resort to legal actions.

Fortunately, I still have a draft of the manuscript, which I can use if necessary. Nevertheless, this kind of circus, especially when it becomes repetitive, can literally "saw you off". When I imagined the difficulties and antagonisms that my modest meditative and autobiographical paving stone would undoubtedly raise, I certainly did not imagine that it was from that side, from the brotherhood[*confrérie*] of typists-secretaries (instead of that of my honoured mathematician confreres) that the first troubles would come, and in the nature of a sort of war of usury! At this point I am no longer keen on entrusting this same text (once recovered) to the hands of a fourth

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\* (23 January) The whole of the first part of this note was written against strong resistance to mentioning the disturbances interfering with my work. These took on a vaguely ridiculous appearance, and to even mention them was a bit like graciously providing the rods to get me beaten! On the other hand, these disturbances, "which can literally saw you off", had become so grating and invasive in my work, especially during a week or two, that it would have been a kind of cheating, an inauthenticity in the testimony, to pass over them as if nothing had happened. I come back to my setbacks ten days later, in the note "Jung - or the circle of 'evil' and 'good'".

(7 March) This last note, the first of a whole series of "reading notes" on the autobiography of C.G. Jung, was finally discarded in a last part of Harvest and Sowing, formed by the part of the reflection aroused by this autobiography.

† Those who wish me well will have a good game here of accusing me of delusions of persecution - after the brotherhood of removers[*déménageurs*], here comes the brotherhood of typists-secretaries who are mobilising to do me harm! See, for the previous ones, the note "The massacre" (the name of the note already says enough about the subject...) p. 538, about the removal of my friend Ionel Bucur...

secretary, when nothing allows me to foresee that she will have more commiseration for it than those from whom she would take over. And to do the job of secretary myself would require a time investment of well over a month, which I am absolutely not willing to provide.

Perhaps I will have to give up for good the idea of typing up this third part of Harvest and Sowing, which I will hand over directly to the publisher in the form of a rough manuscript. (I don't expect the same kind of trouble with the staff [*portes*] responsible for typesetting for printing!) This would mean, above all, that I would forgo including this third part in the limited pre-edition of Harvest and Sowing which is to be made under the care of my university, the USTL, for personal distribution among colleagues and friends. Or maybe I'll have it printed later, if I end up finding a secretary who does a proper job. I will only send this part (surely the most "difficult" of the three) on the express request of those really interested in receiving it, among those who will have received the first two parts. I'm really looking forward to getting these printed and sent out (while I feel less of a rush for the third part). The typing of these two parts has been finished for months, it had been done (and without problems) under the care of secretaries of the USTL. They could have been printed ages ago, if I had not wanted to include a table of contents of all three parts of Harvest and Sowing, whereas for more than three months I believe I have been on the point of ending this endless third part. Here I will give myself until the end of this month to finish, or if not, take care of the printing of the first two parts (Fatuity and Renewal, and the Burial I, or the robe of the Chinese Emperor), without including a complete and definitive table of contents of the third part (The Burial II, or the key of yin and yang).

And now, after all these unpleasant incidents, I have to somehow find the thread of a reflection that was cut short.

The death of Fujii Guruji in his one hundred-and-first year, on the ninth of January, was an occasion to evoke, with his person, an aspect of my life that I had not previously touched upon. Not having the opportunity [*possibilité*] to see Guruji on his deathbed, and to participate in a funeral vigil along with his closed ones, I spent the night after his death in a solitary vigil, noting down some of the reminiscences and thoughts that were aroused by the event until the morning. Afterwards, I thought it would be a good idea for me to also try, on this occasion, to say what had been brought to me by the encounter with Fujii Guruji, and with those of his disciples with whom I had associated familiarly.

In the notes of five days ago, I have already spoken about the chanting Na mu myo ho ren ge kyo, which for many years has entered my life, and which is a blessing. There is also the affection received by Fujii Guruji himself, and by many of his disciples, young and old. It is this affection, surely, that gives its price and beauty to the chant that I have received from them, which is itself an act of respect and affection for all living things in the creation, including their person and mine.

Also, my contacts with the monks and nuns of Nihonzan Myohoji were my first and only close contacts with men and women whose main, if not total, investment is towards religiously-motivated tasks (just as for a long time my own investment was towards the work of mathematical discovery). This has been an occasion for me to realise that, as elsewhere, beyond a certain affinity through a common (so-called religious) vocation and allegiance to the same strong and charming personality, the differences in temperament, conditioning, and even profound choices, remain just as marked, and just as active in person-to-person relationships. To put it another

way, the efforts of some to model themselves after some religious ideal (in this case that of the "Boddhisatva", the tireless propagator of the Buddha's teachings) lead to more or less skin-deep attitudes, not to a process of inner transformation, of a maturation. Moreover, the adoption of a "creed" (however sublime) and the full investment in a so-called "religious" activity, seems to have no essential impact on the play of the usual egotic mechanisms. Conflict is no less present in monasteries, convents, temples and other religious communities of all denominations, than anywhere else in the world. And often the religious vocation is taken as one means, among others, to evacuate the conflict, by convincing oneself that it has disappeared by the virtue of the creed.

It is also true that on different occasions, in some of my monk guests there was an inner peace and joy that radiated from the person, sensible to me as well as to all those who approached them, and beneficial to themselves as well as to all. Obviously, such a state of harmony and fullness, of profound agreement [*d'accord*], is alien to any effort to be this or that - it is an "effortless" state, a state of perfect naturalness.

For four of the monks in whom I felt such a radiance, I have the impression that this has been their customary state, for many years, even decades. This is particularly true of Fujii Guruji himself. For two other friends of mine, I have seen them on other occasions as knotted and as torn as anyone else. It was as if that state of harmony in which I had known them, and a certain spontaneous understanding of things which was one of the signs of it, had become null and void - as if they had left no trace in them. I am convinced, however, that there is an indestructible "trace", deeper than a mere mark recorded in the memory - a trace in the nature of a knowing. Like everyone else, these friends are free at any time to take account of the knowing deposited in them at the creative moments of their existence, to let it act and bear fruit; just as they are free to ignore it, to bury it, to "play dumb" in short. This is, after all, the most common thing in the world...

The thought came to me that this state of perfect naturalness, of profound agreement with oneself, and the radiance that accompanies it, are not very common things, on the contrary. It is quite remarkable that in the rather limited group of monks I have been able to welcome to my home, whether for a few days or a few weeks, there have been so many in whom I have found this state of inner harmony, of strength in the full sense of the word, that in which humility and fortitude, the gentle and the incisive, are united. Is this not, in the end, well and truly the action of a creed, or of the Prayer that expresses it? The latter, while obviously unable on its own to create a state of grace, perhaps tends to encourage [*favoriser*] the appearance of such a state, and its renewal day after day? After all, the sole fact of chanting a beautiful chant and putting one's whole self into it, is already a "state of grace" to some extent - and the sole beauty of a chant (or of a prayer) already prompts us to "put our whole selves into it".

It is also true that the most beautiful of chants, when we repeat it with our spirit elsewhere, remains inactive, because we are not open to it. Or to put it better, what we repeat is not the chant we think we are chanting, and our soul is not nourished by it, any more than a paper or plastic rose is a rose, and a bee would come and gather it.

### **(162) Conviction and knowing**

(14 January) As I finished the reflection of a week ago, I had the feeling that I had "put my finger" on something important. That very night, I wanted to express in a lapidary way this "something" in the name named to this

note, "The cause of causeless violence" (note n° 159). I also knew that this sudden flash of understanding was not at all a culmination, or even an end point, of a reflection that for more than a month(\*) had been revolving precisely around the mystery of the "causeless violence", or "gratuitous violence". On the contrary, this new "perspective" that suddenly appeared was rather like a new starting point. The mechanism of "displacement" of a grudge or a resentment for wrongs and damages suffered in earlier days, towards an acceptable "target" instead of the real perpetrator or perpetrators, felt as out of reach or as "taboo" - this very mechanism, which I had at first sporadically recognised, in this and that isolated case in the course of my life, and tacitly taken for a kind of strange and erratic aberration of the unconscious, is at last recognised as one of the "basic mechanisms of the human psyche". At the same time, it appears to be responsible for the innumerable and disturbing manifestations of the "causeless violence"; both that which rages between wife and husband, between female and male lovers, parents and children, and the "anonymous" violence, which reaches its paroxysm in times of war or of great social convulsions.

I don't know if these links have long since become part of the ABCs of psychological or psychiatric science (assuming there exists such a "science"), or if what I say about them here will sound like the fantasmogoria of a "dilettante in psychoanalysis". Since my purpose is not to present a doctoral thesis in psychology, nor even to break lances for some old or new theory, but to understand my life through the situations in which my person is involved, I don't care about the "status" of what I come to put my finger on, or about the "perspectives" that I suddenly see opening up here and there. I know well that in any case, if I want to understand anything at all, I cannot do without personal reflection, whether in mathematics, or in my life and in those to which my life is linked in one way or another. And it is all the more so, when what is to be understood seems to defy the reason from the outset, and when I see everyone, around me and elsewhere, evading it like the plague, with reassuring clichés. (And it seems to me that the professionals of psychology are no more an exception than anyone else, at least as soon as their own person is directly involved).

I was well aware that the "sudden conviction" that appeared at the turn of a "last point on a last i", namely that "I had just put my finger on the spring common to all situations of 'gratuitous violence'", did not in any way exempt me from the task of examining on parts [*sur pièces*], and from all stitches, this new intuition that had arrived in the field of the conscious gaze, still by no means free from the diffuse halo of what had just emerged from the mists. Quite the contrary, this was precisely the first work to be done, where I could already see a host of new questions arising, both specific to these cases, and in general. If there was any certainty in this rash "conviction", or to put it better, a kernel of certain knowing, it did not tell me at all that the formulation I had just given to this conviction was "true", "correct", without any reservations or important retouches perhaps; but rather, that I had put my finger on a new (for me) and essential fact, that a new perspective on the violence had

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\* More precisely, since the note of 7 December "Velvet paw - or the smiles" (n° 137).

just been established(\*). As for the precise and nuanced meaning of this new fact and this new perspective, its exact scope and also, perhaps, its unforeseen extensions and repercussions, they cannot fail to emerge, as soon as I put the necessary work into it. The "knowing" that had just appeared told me, in particular, that the time was ripe for such a work, to enter further into an understanding of the violence, and in any case, into that of the "gratuitous violence"; that every hour and every day that I would devote to this task, to go to the end of what had just appeared, would make me penetrate further into this understanding. I do not remember that such a feeling of the appearance of a new and essential thing (even though it would still remain diffuse and approximate), and the intimate conviction of being able to penetrate further into the understanding of this thing, ever deceived me. If in my research there has been a sure guide to "place" my investments in this or that direction, it is the feeling of the appearance of the new, and this intimate conviction which tells me when the time is ripe to enter further into this "new" glimpse and to know it(†).

This does not mean that, whenever the time is ripe to launch myself in such a direction, and to know such things, I do indeed launch myself into it! This was impossible even in the days when I was investing all my energy in mathematics, when gradually, I found myself with ten irons, then with a hundred at a time in the fire! (§) And it was the same in meditation, that is to say, in the discovery of myself. At the level of conscious work, we can, alas, only do one thing at a time (which is already not bad, however, when we take the trouble to do it well...). This work on one of the "hundred irons in the fire" can, it is true, following the mysterious ways of the unconscious, also benefit all the others, or at least several of them - it can "heat them up", make them more welcoming to the blows of the hammer on the anvil of conscious attention, from the moment we turn to them. It

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\* While writing these lines, the comparison with the "standard conjectures" on algebraic cycles, which I presented at the Bombay colloquium in 1968, came to mind. They appeared to me then (and still appears to me today) as being, together with the resolution of singularities, one of the most burning problems in algebraic geometry. In working out these conjectures, I felt well that a "new perspective... had just been established", this time on algebraic cycles, their relation to Hodge theory and Weil conjectures. What struck me most, was that I could see an approach to Weil conjectures that would be "purely geometric", I mean, without having (at least in appearance) to go through a cohomological theory.

As I have already pointed out elsewhere (in sub-note n° 106.1 of the note "The muscle and the gut"), the reality of this "new perspective" and its scope, is entirely independent of the question (which remains in the limbo of the future) whether this conjecture will turn out to be true, or false. A conjecture, for me, is not a bet (which we win or lose), but rather a probe - and whatever the answer, we can only come out "winners", I mean: with a renewed knowing. (Compare with the reflection in the section "Error and discovery", n° 2.) Assuming that the conjecture turns out to be false, I can already see two or three "less optimistic" variants of it, which then refine it, and the weakest of which is practically equivalent to the existence of a "reasonable" theory of semisimple motives over a field.

To draw out these variants, for someone who is at least a little in the know, is an exercise of an afternoon or two (and perhaps the starting point for a long voyage into the unknown...). Drawing out the first statement (I was inspired, as usual, by an idea of Serre, set out in his article "Analogues kählériens des conjectures de Weil"), was not an exercise, but well and truly a discovery; or again (to use the expression of Zoghman Mebkhout's letter, quoted in the note "Failure of a teaching - or creation and fatuity", n°44') a creation. And it was an euphemism, when Zoghman ventured timidly to say that "my students don't know very well what a creation is" - or rather, I would say: that they knew it but forgot it long ago, monopolised/*accaparés*/ as they were by pushing at the wheels of a funeral cart...

† Compare with the note "The child and the sea - or faith and doubt", n° 103.

‡ See the note "One hundred irons in the fire, or: no point in drying up!", n° 32.

is still necessary to know how to choose from the outset "the right" iron from among the hundred - the one whose moulding will also advance the work on others, which are in the process of heating up like it.

### **(162') The most burning iron - or the turning point**

In the course of the reflection on the Burial, I met many "irons" that asked me to work on it, more or less hot depending on the case. It seems to me that they all heated up in the course of the work, some more, some less. The very first of these "irons" was the question of contempt for oneself in the case of my own person, first posed as a matter of conscientiousness, in the margin of the first embryo of Harvest and Sowing(\*). It remained rather tepid, until the reflection of 13 December (a month and a day ago), in the note "The violence of the just - or the release[*défoulement*]" (n° 141). It was the first time in my life, I believe, that I devoted a reflection, however cursory, to the few instances in my life when I myself had exercised and subjected myself to a "causeless violence", the violence "which surpasses understanding". I have sometimes thought about it in recent years, but always in passing, without dwelling on it, and above all: without devoting to it a written reflection.

Yet, the violence-that-does-not-say-its-name had profoundly marked my life - it was one of the crucial things, even the crucial thing of all, that I had to understand as deeply as I could, in order to understand my life, and "the life" in general, the human life. But that this is indeed so, something that is nevertheless obvious as soon as I take the trouble to think about it, had remained hidden. It finally emerged, as if by chance, in the margin of the reflection in the days preceding that of 13 December, continued in the set of four notes gathered under the name "The claw in the velvet" (n°s 133-136). It is in these notes that for the first time in Harvest and Sowing "the violence" is named, and becomes an object of attention. It has remained the focus of attention until now, or at least, until the note of 7 January (a week ago), "The cause of causeless violence".

This promising title may give the impression that this last note is a sort of culmination of the reflection on the violence that has been going on throughout the past month. And it is true that it is one of the main fruits. However, I know well that if there was a sudden appearance of this new perspective, and of this feeling of intimate conviction about a certain link suddenly glimpsed, it was because my own person was also directly involved in what had just appeared, among this "crowd of fragmentary and heterogeneous impressions stored up throughout my life". The last and freshest of all these impressions, felt at the time to be very "fragmentary" and insufficient indeed, went back precisely to that reflection of 13 December on the violence in myself. This reflection, which to the superficial reader may seem like a digression among many others in the investigation of the Burial, appears to me, on the contrary, now and with hindsight, as a neuralgic moment and a crucial turning point (at least in potential) in my reflection on myself. The very same day, moreover, I felt that I had, finally, taken a first step in a direction that I had evaded until then, and which would lead me straight to the heart of the conflict in my person. This "tepid iron", which had been lying there as if for memory for ten months already, was suddenly red hot - all I had to do was to pause and blow and strike it, so that it would turn white-red and reveal a form and a message to me. And it still remains so today.

But it is clear that this is not the place to work on this iron. Of all those that appeared in the course of Harvest and Sowing, it is certainly the one that is the most burning for me, and after it, the one that appeared closely

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\* See the note (n° 2) referring to the (June 1983) section "Infallibility (of others) and contempt (of self)" (n° 4).



intertwined with "The cause of causeless violence", if the child did not have a terribly adult boss on his back, stubbornly riveted to long-term tasks and the "priorities" they impose, it is this direction certainly, leading me to the heart of the conflict in myself and in others, that I would now be launching into, without having to fetch myself[*me sonder*]! But as the name implies, it is the boss, not the child, who most often makes the orders and who decides on the investments. The "enigma of evil" will therefore wait for a more favourable moment when the boss is on vacation (a very rare thing), or when he is not too encumbered with top "priorities", such as finally finishing the writing of Harvest and Sowing!

### **(162'') The endless chain - or the handover (3)**

But before returning to the Burial, I would like to note at least one of the associations of ideas aroused by the reflection of a week ago - one, perhaps, less obvious association than others, and for that reason likely to fade away without trace if I do not note it now. It is related to the Hindu idea of karma, and goes in the same direction as the association that appeared in the note "The enemy Brother - or the handover" (n° 156): in the direction of the tenuous intuition of a kind of "law of conservation of karma".

This original diffuse grudge in a person, which later translates into seemingly "gratuitous" impulses of aggression and violence, is not born out of nothing. It is the response to profound aggressions that were well and truly suffered, especially those suffered in early childhood. One can consider, it is true, that many of these aggressions, of a repressive nature, are not "acts of violence" in the strict sense of the term, that is to say, results of an intention to hurt[*blesser*] or harm[*léser*], especially on the part of the parents towards their child. It is also true that such an intention (almost always unconscious) is nevertheless present in many more cases than is admitted by common consensus. But perhaps from the perspective of a creation or transmission of karma, the question of intentions or motivations (overt or covert) is secondary, when a "violence" does take place, which inflicts "an evil", which causes a "damage". I cannot say.

Still, in most cases, a superficial look may have the illusion that such an "evil" suffered is null and void, that it is taken in and that, once taken in, it has "disappeared" without leaving any trace. And it is a fact that it is not very common for those who have sown in their children their anguish and their powerlessness to be themselves, to end up harvesting directly, at the hands of these same children, what they have once sown; or at least, one has the impression that they only harvest a tiny part of it! Or to put it another way, of the diffuse grudge that they have aroused in their children, there is only a tiny portion that condenses into a "hard" grudge, directed at them - and which they complain about with all their might[*à corps et à cris*], as if it were the blackest of ingratitude, it is a given! But the rest of this grudge or this accumulated "karma" is not lost for all that. It is used effectively, and in a way that may seem inexplicable, by this mechanism of "displacement" of the grudge towards makeshift targets; sometimes erratic targets, and sometimes also specially matched targets, appointed, pampered so to speak, brooded over for a long life!

In ordinary times, this intense work of karma, like an abscess deeply implanted in the lives of men, is done in the penumbra, and everyone makes a point of ignoring it, of agreeing to see it only as an occasional "burr" here and another there, in relation to what is considered as normal and suited.

It is in times of exception, when war or misery are raging (or in places of exception, such as penitentiaries and asylums), that this subterranean work erupts and spreads freely in the full light of day, in a frenzied outburst of contempt and murderous madness, exalted by the grandiloquent flags over heroic mass graves and over naked and cold cities...