TRAGIC SENSE OF LIFE

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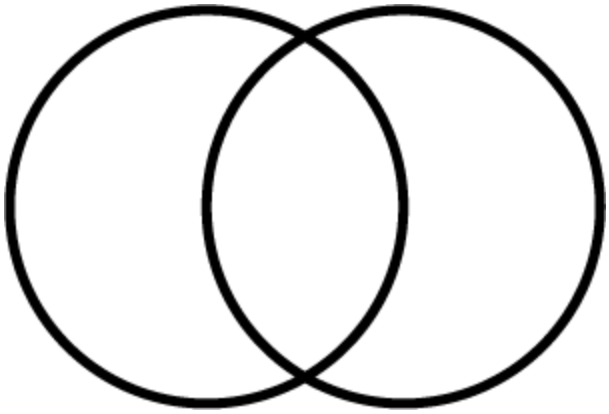
AUTHOR'S PREFACE



I intended at first to write a short Prologue to this English translation of my *Del Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida* , which has been undertaken by my friend Mr. J.E. Crawford Flitch. But upon further consideration I have abandoned the idea, for I reflected that after all I wrote this book not for Spaniards only, but for all civilized and Christian men—Christian in particular, whether consciously so or not—of whatever country they may be.

Furthermore, if I were to set about writing an Introduction in the light of all that we see and feel now, after the Great War, and, still more, of what we foresee and forefeel, I should be led into writing yet another book. And that is a thing to be done with deliberation and only after having better digested this terrible peace, which is nothing else but the war's painful convalescence.

As for many years my spirit has been nourished upon the very core of English literature—evidence of which the reader may discover in the following pages—the translator, in putting my *Sentimiento Trágico* into English, has merely converted not a few of the thoughts and feelings therein expressed back into their original form of expression. Or retranslated them, perhaps. Whereby they emerge other

than they originally were, for an idea does not pass from one language to another without change.

The fact that this English translation has been carefully revised here, in my house in this ancient city of Salamanca, by the translator and myself, implies not merely some guarantee of exactitude, but also something more—namely, a correction, in certain respects, of the original.

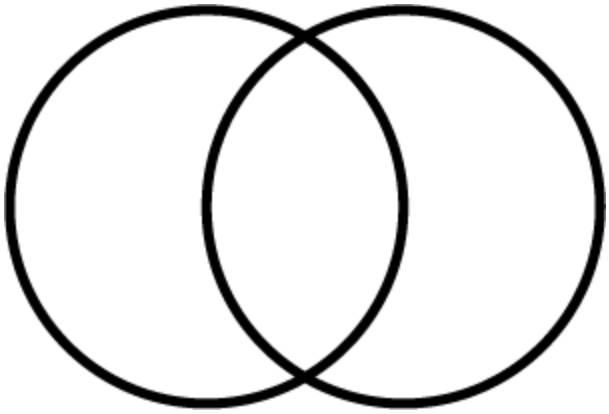
The truth is that, being an incorrigible Spaniard, I am naturally given to a kind of extemporization and to neglectfulness of a filed niceness in my works. For this reason my original work—and likewise the Italian and French translations of it—issued from the press with a certain number of errors, obscurities, and faulty references. The labour which my friend Mr. J.E. Crawford Flitch fortunately imposed upon me in making me revise his translation obliged me to correct these errors, to clarify some obscurities, and to give greater exactitude to certain quotations from foreign writers. Hence this English translation of my *Sentimiento Trágico* presents in some ways a more purged and correct text than that of the original Spanish. This perhaps compensates for what it may lose in the spontaneity of my Spanish thought, which at times, I believe, is scarcely translatable.

It would advantage me greatly if this translation, in opening up to me a public of English-speaking readers, should some day lead to my writing something addressed to and concerned with this public. For just as a new friend enriches our spirit, not so much by what he gives us of himself, as by what he causes us to discover in our own selves, something which, if we had never known him, would have lain in us undeveloped, so it is with a new public. Perhaps there may be regions in my own Spanish spirit—my Basque spirit, and therefore doubly Spanish—unexplored by myself, some corner hitherto uncultivated, which I should have to cultivate in order to offer the flowers and fruits of it to the peoples of English speech.

And now, no more.
God give my English readers that inextinguishable thirst for truth which I desire for myself.

I

I



THE MAN OF FLESH AND BONE

Homo sum; nihil humani a me alienum puto , said the Latin playwright. And I would rather say, *Nullum hominem a me alienum puto* : I am a man; no other man do I deem a stranger. For to me the adjective *humanus* is no less suspect than its abstract substantive *humanitas* , humanity. Neither "the human" nor "humanity," neither the simple adjective nor the substantivized adjective, but the concrete substantive—man. The man of flesh and bone; the man who is born, suffers, and dies—above all, who dies; the man who eats and drinks and plays and sleeps and thinks and wills; the man who is seen and heard; the brother, the real brother.

For there is another thing which is also called man, and he is the subject of not a few lucubrations, more or less scientific. He is the legendary featherless biped, the *ζωον πολιτικον* of Aristotle, the social contractor of Rousseau, the *homo economicus* of the Manchester school, the *homo sapiens* of Linnæus, or, if you like, the vertical mammal. A man neither of here nor there, neither of this age nor of

another, who has neither sex nor country, who is, in brief, merely an idea. That is to say, a no-man.

The man we have to do with is the man of flesh and bone—I, you, reader of mine, the other man yonder, all of us who walk solidly on the earth.

And this concrete man, this man of flesh and bone, is at once the subject and the supreme object of all philosophy, whether certain self-styled philosophers like it or not.

In most of the histories of philosophy that I know, philosophic systems are presented to us as if growing out of one another spontaneously, and their authors, the philosophers, appear only as mere pretexts. The inner biography of the philosophers, of the men who philosophized, occupies a secondary place. And yet it is precisely this inner biography that explains for us most things.

It behoves us to say, before all, that philosophy lies closer to poetry than to science. All philosophic systems which have been constructed as a supreme concord of the final results of the individual sciences have in every age possessed much less consistency and life than those which expressed the integral spiritual yearning of their authors.

And, though they concern us so greatly, and are, indeed, indispensable for our life and thought, the sciences are in a certain sense more foreign to us than philosophy. They fulfil a more objective end—that is to say, an end more external to ourselves. They are fundamentally a matter of economics. A new scientific discovery, of the kind called theoretical, is, like a mechanical discovery—that of the steam-engine, the telephone, the phonograph, or the aeroplane—a thing which is useful for something else. Thus the telephone may be useful to us in enabling us to communicate at a distance with the woman we love. But she, wherefore is she useful to us? A man takes an electric tram to go to hear an opera, and asks himself, Which, in this case, is the more useful, the tram or the opera?

Philosophy answers to our need of forming a complete and unitary conception of the world and of life, and as a result of this conception, a feeling which gives birth to an inward attitude and even to outward action. But the fact is that this feeling, instead of being a consequence of this conception, is the cause of it. Our philosophy—that is, our mode of understanding or not understanding the world and life—springs from our feeling towards life itself. And life, like everything affective, has roots in subconsciousness, perhaps in unconsciousness.

It is not usually our ideas that make us optimists or pessimists, but it is our optimism or our pessimism, of physiological or perhaps pathological origin, as much the one as the other, that makes our ideas.

Man is said to be a reasoning animal. I do not know why he has not been defined as an affective or feeling animal. Perhaps that which differentiates him from other animals is feeling rather than reason. More often I have seen a cat reason than laugh or weep. Perhaps it weeps or laughs inwardly—but then perhaps, also inwardly, the crab resolves equations of the second degree.

And thus, in a philosopher, what must needs most concern us is the man.

Take Kant, the man Immanuel Kant, who was born and lived at Königsberg, in the latter part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. In the philosophy of this man Kant, a man of heart and head—that is to say, a man—there is a significant somersault, as Kierkegaard, another man—and what a man!—would have said, the somersault from the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the *Critique of Practical Reason* . He reconstructs in the latter what he destroyed in the former, in spite of what those may say who do not see the man himself. After having examined and pulverized with his analysis the traditional proofs of the existence of God, of the Aristotelian God, who is the God corresponding to the *ζωον πολιτικον* , the

abstract God, the unmoved prime Mover, he reconstructs God anew; but the God of the conscience, the Author of the moral order—the Lutheran God, in short. This transition of Kant exists already in embryo in the Lutheran notion of faith.

The first God, the rational God, is the projection to the outward infinite of man as he is by definition—that is to say, of the abstract man, of the man no-man; the other God, the God of feeling and volition, is the projection to the inward infinite of man as he is by life, of the concrete man, the man of flesh and bone.

Kant reconstructed with the heart that which with the head he had overthrown. And we know, from the testimony of those who knew him and from his testimony in his letters and private declarations, that the man Kant, the more or less selfish old bachelor who professed philosophy at Königsberg at the end of the century of the Encyclopedia and the goddess of Reason, was a man much preoccupied with the problem—I mean with the only real vital problem, the problem that strikes at the very root of our being, the problem of our individual and personal destiny, of the immortality of the soul. The man Kant was not resigned to die utterly. And because he was not resigned to die utterly he made that leap, that immortal somersault, [5] from the one Critique to the other.

Whosoever reads the *Critique of Practical Reason* carefully and without blinkers will see that, in strict fact, the existence of God is therein deduced from the immortality of the soul, and not the immortality of the soul from the existence of God. The categorical imperative leads us to a moral postulate which necessitates in its turn, in the teleological or rather eschatological order, the immortality of the soul, and in order to sustain this immortality God is introduced. All the rest is the jugglery of the professional of philosophy.

The man Kant felt that morality was the basis of eschatology, but the professor of philosophy inverted the terms.

Another professor, the professor and man William James, has somewhere said that for the generality of men God is the provider of immortality. Yes, for the generality of men, including the man Kant, the man James, and the man who writes these lines which you, reader, are reading.

Talking to a peasant one day, I proposed to him the hypothesis that there might indeed be a God who governs heaven and earth, a Consciousness [6] of the Universe, but that for all that the soul of every man may not be immortal in the traditional and concrete sense. He replied: "Then wherefore God?" So answered, in the secret tribunal of their consciousness, the man Kant and the man James. Only in their capacity as professors they were compelled to justify rationally an attitude in itself so little rational. Which does not mean, of course, that the attitude is absurd.

Hegel made famous his aphorism that all the rational is real and all the real rational; but there are many of us who, unconvinced by Hegel, continue to believe that the real, the really real, is irrational, that reason builds upon irrationalities. Hegel, a great framer of definitions, attempted with definitions to reconstruct the universe, like that artillery sergeant who said that cannon were made by taking a hole and enclosing it with steel.

Another man, the man Joseph Butler, the Anglican bishop who lived at the beginning of the eighteenth century and whom Cardinal Newman declared to be the greatest man in the Anglican Church, wrote, at the conclusion of the first chapter of his great work, *The Analogy of Religion* , the chapter which treats of a future life, these pregnant words: "This credibility of a future life, which has been here insisted upon, how little soever it may satisfy our curiosity, seems to answer all the purposes of religion, in like manner as a demonstrative proof would. Indeed a proof, even a

demonstrative one, of a future life, would not be a proof of religion. For, that we are to live hereafter, is just as reconcilable with the scheme of atheism, and as well to be accounted for by it, as that we are now alive is: and therefore nothing can be more absurd than to argue from that scheme that there can be no future state."

The man Butler, whose works were perhaps known to the man Kant, wished to save the belief in the immortality of the soul, and with this object he made it independent of belief in God. The first chapter of his *Analogy* treats, as I have said, of the future life, and the second of the government of God by rewards and punishments. And the fact is that, fundamentally, the good Anglican bishop deduces the existence of God from the immortality of the soul. And as this deduction was the good Anglican bishop's starting-point, he had not to make that somersault which at the close of the same century the good Lutheran philosopher had to make. Butler, the bishop, was one man and Kant, the professor, another man.

To be a man is to be something concrete, unitary, and substantive; it is to be a thing— *res* . Now we know what another man, the man Benedict Spinoza, that Portuguese Jew who was born and lived in Holland in the middle of the seventeenth century, wrote about the nature of things. The sixth proposition of Part III. of his *Ethic* states: *unaquoeque res, quatenus in se est, in suo esse perseverare conatur* — that is, Everything, in so far as it is in itself, endeavours to persist in its own being. Everything in so far as it is in itself —that is to say, in so far as it is substance, for according to him substance is *id quod in se est et per se concipitur* — that which is in itself and is conceived by itself. And in the following proposition, the seventh, of the same part, he adds: *conatus, quo unaquoeque res in suo esse perseverare conatur, nihil est proeter ipsius rei actualem essentiam* — that is, the endeavour wherewith everything endeavours to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of

the thing itself. This means that your essence, reader, mine, that of the man Spinoza, that of the man Butler, of the man Kant, and of every man who is a man, is nothing but the endeavour, the effort, which he makes to continue to be a man, not to die. And the other proposition which follows these two, the eighth, says: *conatus, quo unaquoeque res in suo esse perseverare conatur, nullum tempus finitum, sed indefinitum involvit* —that is, The endeavour whereby each individual thing endeavours to persist involves no finite time but indefinite time. That is to say that you, I, and Spinoza wish never to die and that this longing of ours never to die is our actual essence. Nevertheless, this poor Portuguese Jew, exiled in the mists of Holland, could never attain to believing in his own personal immortality, and all his philosophy was but a consolation which he contrived for his lack of faith. Just as other men have a pain in hand or foot, heart-ache or head-ache, so he had God-ache. Unhappy man! And unhappy fellow-men!

And man, this thing, is he a thing? How absurd soever the question may appear, there are some who have propounded it. Not long ago there went abroad a certain doctrine called Positivism, which did much good and much ill. And among other ills that it wrought was the introduction of a method of analysis whereby facts were pulverized, reduced to a dust of facts. Most of the facts labelled as such by Positivism were really only fragments of facts. In psychology its action was harmful. There were even scholastics meddling in literature—I will not say philosophers meddling in poetry, because poet and philosopher are twin brothers, if not even one and the same —who carried this Positivist psychological analysis into the novel and the drama, where the main business is to give act and motion to concrete men, men of flesh and bone, and by dint of studying states of consciousness, consciousness itself disappeared. The same thing happened to them which is said often to happen in the examination and testing of

certain complicated, organic, living chemical compounds, when the reagents destroy the very body which it was proposed to examine and all that is obtained is the products of its decomposition.

Taking as their starting-point the evident fact that contradictory states pass through our consciousness, they did not succeed in envisaging consciousness itself, the "I." To ask a man about his "I" is like asking him about his body. And note that in speaking of the "I," I speak of the concrete and personal "I," not of the "I" of Fichte, but of Fichte himself, the man Fichte.

That which determines a man, that which makes him one man, one and not another, the man he is and not the man he is not, is a principle of unity and a principle of continuity. A principle of unity firstly in space, thanks to the body, and next in action and intention. When we walk, one foot does not go forward and the other backward, nor, when we look, if we are normal, does one eye look towards the north and the other towards the south. In each moment of our life we entertain some purpose, and to this purpose the synergy of our actions is directed. Notwithstanding the next moment we may change our purpose. And in a certain sense a man is so much the more a man the more unitary his action. Some there are who throughout their whole life follow but one single purpose, be it what it may.

Also a principle of continuity in time. Without entering upon a discussion—an unprofitable discussion—as to whether I am or am not he who I was twenty years ago, it appears to me to be indisputable that he who I am to-day derives, by a continuous series of states of consciousness, from him who was in my body twenty years ago. Memory is the basis of individual personality, just as tradition is the basis of the collective personality of a people. We live in memory and by memory, and our spiritual life is at bottom simply the effort of our memory to persist, to transform

itself into hope, the effort of our past to transform itself into our future.

All this, I know well, is sheer platitude; but in going about in the world one meets men who seem to have no feeling of their own personality. One of my best friends with whom I have walked and talked every day for many years, whenever I spoke to him of this sense of one's own personality, used to say: "But I have no sense of myself; I don't know what that is."
On a certain occasion this friend remarked to me: "I should like to be So-and-so" (naming someone), and I said: "That is what I shall never be able to understand—that one should want to be someone else. (To want to be someone else is to want to cease to be he who one is.) I understand that one should wish to have what someone else has, his wealth or his knowledge; but to be someone else, that is a thing I cannot comprehend." It has often been said that every man who has suffered misfortunes prefers to be himself, even with his misfortunes, rather than to be someone else without them. For unfortunate men, when they preserve their normality in their misfortune—that is to say, when they endeavour to persist in their own being—prefer misfortune to non-existence. For myself I can say that as a youth, and even as a child, I remained unmoved when shown the most moving pictures of hell, for even then nothing appeared to me quite so horrible as nothingness itself. It was a furious hunger of being that possessed me, an appetite for divinity, as one of our ascetics has put it. [7]
To propose to a man that he should be someone else, that he should become someone else, is to propose to him that he should cease to be himself. Everyone defends his own personality, and only consents to a change in his mode of thinking or of feeling in so far as this change is able to enter into the unity of his spirit and become involved in its continuity; in so far as this change can harmonize and

integrate itself with all the rest of his mode of being, thinking and feeling, and can at the same time knit itself with his memories. Neither of a man nor of a people—which is, in a certain sense, also a man—can a change be demanded which breaks the unity and continuity of the person. A man can change greatly, almost completely even, but the change must take place within his continuity.

It is true that in certain individuals there occur what are called changes of personality; but these are pathological cases, and as such are studied by alienists. In these changes of personality, memory, the basis of consciousness, is completely destroyed, and all that is left to the sufferer as the substratum of his individual continuity, which has now ceased to be personal, is the physical organism. For the subject who suffers it, such an infirmity is equivalent to death—it is not equivalent to death only for those who expect to inherit his fortune, if he possesses one! And this infirmity is nothing less than a revolution, a veritable revolution.

A disease is, in a certain sense, an organic dissociation; it is a rebellion of some element or organ of the living body which breaks the vital synergy and seeks an end distinct from that which the other elements co-ordinated with it seek. Its end, considered in itself—that is to say, in the abstract—may be more elevated, more noble, more anything you like; but it is different. To fly and breathe in the air may be better than to swim and breathe in the water; but if the fins of a fish aimed at converting themselves into wings, the fish, as a fish, would perish. And it is useless to say that it would end by becoming a bird, if in this becoming there was not a process of continuity. I do not precisely know, but perhaps it may be possible for a fish to engender a bird, or another fish more akin to a bird than itself; but a fish, this fish, cannot itself and during its own lifetime become a bird.

Everything in me that conspires to break the unity and continuity of my life conspires to destroy me and consequently to destroy itself. Every individual in a people who conspires to break the spiritual unity and continuity of that people tends to destroy it and to destroy himself as a part of that people. What if some other people is better than our own? Very possibly, although perhaps we do not clearly understand what is meant by better or worse. Richer? Granted. More cultured? Granted likewise. Happier? Well, happiness ... but still, let it pass! A conquering people (or what is called conquering) while we are conquered? Well and good. All this is good—but it is something different. And that is enough. Because for me the becoming other than I am, the breaking of the unity and continuity of my life, is to cease to be he who I am—that is to say, it is simply to cease to be. And that—no! Anything rather than that!

Another, you say, might play the part that I play as well or better? Another might fulfil my function in society? Yes, but it would not be I.

"I, I, I, always I!" some reader will exclaim; "and who are you?" I might reply in the words of Obermann, that tremendous man Obermann: "For the universe, nothing—for myself, everything"; but no, I would rather remind him of a doctrine of the man Kant—to wit, that we ought to think of our fellow-men not as means but as ends. For the question does not touch me alone, it touches you also, grumbling reader, it touches each and all. Singular judgments have the value of universal judgments, the logicians say. The singular is not particular, it is universal.

Man is an end, not a means. All civilization addresses itself to man, to each man, to each I. What is that idol, call it Humanity or call it what you like, to which all men and each individual man must be sacrificed? For I sacrifice myself for my neighbours, for my fellow-countrymen, for my children, and these sacrifice themselves in their turn for

theirs, and theirs again for those that come after them, and so on in a never-ending series of generations. And who receives the fruit of this sacrifice?

Those who talk to us about this fantastic sacrifice, this dedication without an object, are wont to talk to us also about the right to live. What is this right to live? They tell me I am here to realize I know not what social end; but I feel that I, like each one of my fellows, am here to realize myself, to live.

Yes, yes, I see it all!—an enormous social activity, a mighty civilization, a profuseness of science, of art, of industry, of morality, and afterwards, when we have filled the world with industrial marvels, with great factories, with roads, museums, and libraries, we shall fall exhausted at the foot of it all, and it will subsist—for whom? Was man made for science or was science made for man?

"Why!" the reader will exclaim again, "we are coming back to what the Catechism says: ' *Q* . For whom did God create the world? *A* . For man.'" Well, why not?—so ought the man who is a man to reply. The ant, if it took account of these matters and were a person, would reply "For the ant," and it would reply rightly. The world is made for consciousness, for each consciousness.

A human soul is worth all the universe, someone—I know not whom—has said and said magnificently. A human soul, mind you! Not a human life. Not this life. And it happens that the less a man believes in the soul—that is to say in his conscious immortality, personal and concrete—the more he will exaggerate the worth of this poor transitory life. This is the source from which springs all that effeminate, sentimental ebullition against war. True, a man ought not to wish to die, but the death to be renounced is the death of the soul. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it," says the Gospel; but it does not say "whosoever will save his soul," the immortal soul—or, at any rate, which we believe and wish to be immortal.

And what all the objectivists do not see, or rather do not wish to see, is that when a man affirms his "I," his personal consciousness, he affirms man, man concrete and real, affirms the true humanism—the humanism of man, not of the things of man—and in affirming man he affirms consciousness. For the only consciousness of which we have consciousness is that of man.

The world is for consciousness. Or rather this *for* , this notion of finality, and feeling rather than notion, this teleological feeling, is born only where there is consciousness. Consciousness and finality are fundamentally the same thing.

If the sun possessed consciousness it would think, no doubt, that it lived in order to give light to the worlds; but it would also and above all think that the worlds existed in order that it might give them light and enjoy itself in giving them light and so live. And it would think well.

And all this tragic fight of man to save himself, this immortal craving for immortality which caused the man Kant to make that immortal leap of which I have spoken, all this is simply a fight for consciousness. If consciousness is, as some inhuman thinker has said, nothing more than a flash of light between two eternities of darkness, then there is nothing more execrable than existence.

Some may espy a fundamental contradiction in everything that I am saying, now expressing a longing for unending life, now affirming that this earthly life does not possess the value that is given to it. Contradiction? To be sure! The contradiction of my heart that says Yes and of my head that says No! Of course there is contradiction. Who does not recollect those words of the Gospel, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief"? Contradiction! Of course! Since we only live in and by contradictions, since life is tragedy and the tragedy is perpetual struggle, without victory or the hope of victory, life is contradiction.

The values we are discussing are, as you see, values of the heart, and against values of the heart reasons do not avail. For reasons are only reasons—that is to say, they are not even truths. There is a class of pedantic label-mongers, pedants by nature and by grace, who remind me of that man who, purposing to console a father whose son has suddenly died in the flower of his years, says to him, "Patience, my friend, we all must die!" Would you think it strange if this father were offended at such an impertinence? For it is an impertinence. There are times when even an axiom can become an impertinence. How many times may it not be said—

Para pensar cual tú, sólo es preciso
no tener nada mas que inteligencia .
[8]

There are, in fact, people who appear to think only with the brain, or with whatever may be the specific thinking organ; while others think with all the body and all the soul, with the blood, with the marrow of the bones, with the heart, with the lungs, with the belly, with the life. And the people who think only with the brain develop into definition-mongers; they become the professionals of thought. And you know what a professional is? You know what a product of the differentiation of labour is?

Take a professional boxer. He has learnt to hit with such economy of effort that, while concentrating all his strength in the blow, he only brings into play just those muscles that are required for the immediate and definite object of his action—to knock out his opponent. A blow given by a non-professional will not have so much immediate, objective efficiency; but it will more greatly vitalize the striker, causing him to bring into play almost the whole of his body. The one is the blow of a boxer, the other that of a man. And it is notorious that the Hercules of the circus, the athletes of the ring, are not, as a rule, healthy. They knock out their

opponents, they lift enormous weights, but they die of phthisis or dyspepsia.

If a philosopher is not a man, he is anything but a philosopher; he is above all a pedant, and a pedant is a caricature of a man. The cultivation of any branch of science—of chemistry, of physics, of geometry, of philology—may be a work of differentiated specialization, and even so only within very narrow limits and restrictions; but philosophy, like poetry, is a work of integration and synthesis, or else it is merely pseudo-philosophical erudition.

All knowledge has an ultimate object. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is, say what you will, nothing but a dismal begging of the question. We learn something either for an immediate practical end, or in order to complete the rest of our knowledge. Even the knowledge that appears to us to be most theoretical—that is to say, of least immediate application to the non-intellectual necessities of life—answers to a necessity which is no less real because it is intellectual, to a reason of economy in thinking, to a principle of unity and continuity of consciousness. But just as a scientific fact has its finality in the rest of knowledge, so the philosophy that we would make our own has also its extrinsic object—it refers to our whole destiny, to our attitude in face of life and the universe. And the most tragic problem of philosophy is to reconcile intellectual necessities with the necessities of the heart and the will. For it is on this rock that every philosophy that pretends to resolve the eternal and tragic contradiction, the basis of our existence, breaks to pieces. But do all men face this contradiction squarely?

Little can be hoped from a ruler, for example, who has not at some time or other been preoccupied, even if only confusedly, with the first beginning and the ultimate end of all things, and above all of man, with the "why" of his origin and the "wherefore" of his destiny.

And this supreme preoccupation cannot be purely rational, it must involve the heart. It is not enough to think about our destiny: it must be felt. And the would-be leader of men who affirms and proclaims that he pays no heed to the things of the spirit, is not worthy to lead them. By which I do not mean, of course, that any ready-made solution is to be required of him. Solution? Is there indeed any?

So far as I am concerned, I will never willingly yield myself, nor entrust my confidence, to any popular leader who is not penetrated with the feeling that he who orders a people orders men, men of flesh and bone, men who are born, suffer, and, although they do not wish to die, die; men who are ends in themselves, not merely means; men who must be themselves and not others; men, in fine, who seek that which we call happiness. It is inhuman, for example, to sacrifice one generation of men to the generation which follows, without having any feeling for the destiny of those who are sacrificed, without having any regard, not for their memory, not for their names, but for them themselves.

All this talk of a man surviving in his children, or in his works, or in the universal consciousness, is but vague verbiage which satisfies only those who suffer from affective stupidity, and who, for the rest, may be persons of a certain cerebral distinction. For it is possible to possess great talent, or what we call great talent, and yet to be stupid as regards the feelings and even morally imbecile. There have been instances.

These clever-witted, affectively stupid persons are wont to say that it is useless to seek to delve in the unknowable or to kick against the pricks. It is as if one should say to a man whose leg has had to be amputated that it does not help him at all to think about it. And we all lack something; only some of us feel the lack and others do not. Or they pretend not to feel the lack, and then they are hypocrites.

A pedant who beheld Solon weeping for the death of a son said to him, "Why do you weep thus, if weeping avails

nothing?" And the sage answered him, "Precisely for that reason—because it does not avail." It is manifest that weeping avails something, even if only the alleviation of distress; but the deep sense of Solon's reply to the impertinent questioner is plainly seen. And I am convinced that we should solve many things if we all went out into the streets and uncovered our griefs, which perhaps would prove to be but one sole common grief, and joined together in beweeping them and crying aloud to the heavens and calling upon God. And this, even though God should hear us not; but He would hear us. The chiefest sanctity of a temple is that it is a place to which men go to weep in common. A *miserere* sung in common by a multitude tormented by destiny has as much value as a philosophy. It is not enough to cure the plague: we must learn to weep for it. Yes, we must learn to weep! Perhaps that is the supreme wisdom. Why? Ask Solon.

There is something which, for lack of a better name, we will call the tragic sense of life, which carries with it a whole conception of life itself and of the universe, a whole philosophy more or less formulated, more or less conscious. And this sense may be possessed, and is possessed, not only by individual men but by whole peoples. And this sense does not so much flow from ideas as determine them, even though afterwards, as is manifest, these ideas react upon it and confirm it. Sometimes it may originate in a chance illness—dyspepsia, for example; but at other times it is constitutional. And it is useless to speak, as we shall see, of men who are healthy and men who are not healthy. Apart from the fact there is no normal standard of health, nobody has proved that man is necessarily cheerful by nature. And further, man, by the very fact of being man, of possessing consciousness, is, in comparison with the ass or the crab, a diseased animal. Consciousness is a disease.

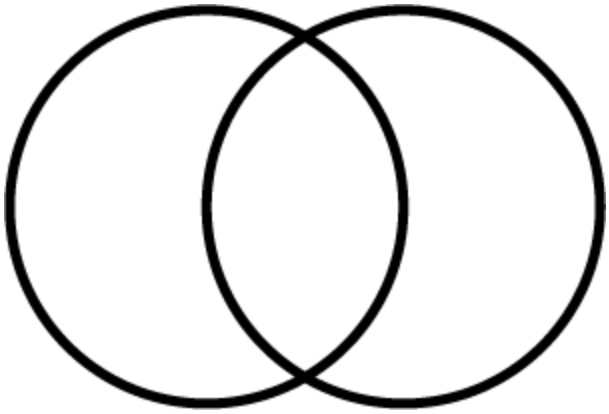
Among men of flesh and bone there have been typical examples of those who possess this tragic sense of life. I

recall now Marcus Aurelius, St. Augustine, Pascal, Rousseau, *René, Obermann* , Thomson, [9] Leopardi, Vigny, Lenau, Kleist, Amiel, Quental, Kierkegaard—men burdened with wisdom rather than with knowledge.

And there are, I believe, peoples who possess this tragic sense of life also.

It is to this that we must now turn our attention, beginning with this matter of health and disease.

FOOTNOTES:



[5] " Salto inmortal ." There is a play here upon the term salto mortal , used to denote the dangerous aerial somersault of the acrobat, which cannot be rendered in English.—J.E.C.F.

[6] " Conciencia ." The same word is used in Spanish to denote both consciousness and conscience. If the latter is specifically intended, the qualifying adjective " moral " or " religiosa " is commonly added.—J.E.C.F.

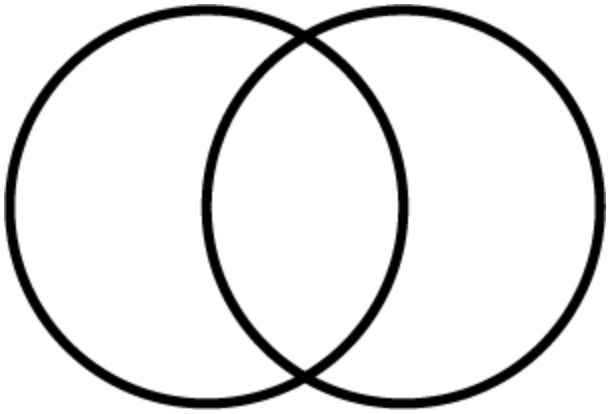
[7] San Juan de los Angeles.

[8] To be lacking in everything but intelligence is the necessary qualification for thinking like you.

[9] James Thomson, author of The City of Dreadful Night .

II

II



THE STARTING-POINT

To some, perhaps, the foregoing reflections may seem to possess a certain morbid character. Morbid? But what is disease precisely? And what is health?

May not disease itself possibly be the essential condition of that which we call progress and progress itself a disease?

Who does not know the mythical tragedy of Paradise? Therein dwelt our first parents in a state of perfect health and perfect innocence, and Jahwé gave them to eat of the tree of life and created all things for them; but he commanded them not to taste of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But they, tempted by the serpent—Christ's type of prudence—tasted of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and became subject to all diseases, and to death, which is their crown and consummation, and to labour and to progress. For progress, according to this legend, springs from original sin. And thus it was the curiosity of Eve, of woman, of her who is most thrall to the organic necessities of life and of the conservation of life, that occasioned the Fall and with the Fall the Redemption, and it was the Redemption that

set our feet on the way to God and made it possible for us to attain to Him and to be in Him.

Do you want another version of our origin? Very well then. According to this account, man is, strictly speaking, merely a species of gorilla, orang-outang, chimpanzee, or the like, more or less hydrocephalous. Once on a time an anthropoid monkey had a diseased offspring—diseased from the strictly animal or zoological point of view, really diseased; and this disease, although a source of weakness, resulted in a positive gain in the struggle for survival. The only vertical mammal at last succeeded in standing erect—man. The upright position freed him from the necessity of using his hands as means of support in walking; he was able, therefore, to oppose the thumb to the other four fingers, to seize hold of objects and to fashion tools; and it is well known that the hands are great promoters of the intelligence. This same position gave to the lungs, trachea, larynx, and mouth an aptness for the production of articulate speech, and speech is intelligence. Moreover, this position, causing the head to weigh vertically upon the trunk, facilitated its development and increase of weight, and the head is the seat of the mind. But as this necessitated greater strength and resistance in the bones of the pelvis than in those of species whose head and trunk rest upon all four extremities, the burden fell upon woman, the author of the Fall according to Genesis, of bringing forth larger-headed offspring through a harder framework of bone. And Jahwé condemned her, for having sinned, to bring forth her children in sorrow.

The gorilla, the chimpanzee, the orang-outang, and their kind, must look upon man as a feeble and infirm animal, whose strange custom it is to store up his dead. Wherefore? And this primary disease and all subsequent diseases—are they not perhaps the capital element of progress? Arthritis, for example, infects the blood and introduces into it scoriæ, a kind of refuse, of an imperfect organic combustion; but

may not this very impurity happen to make the blood more stimulative? May not this impure blood promote a more active cerebration precisely because it is impure? Water that is chemically pure is undrinkable. And may not also blood that is physiologically pure be unfit for the brain of the vertical mammal that has to live by thought?

The history of medicine, moreover, teaches us that progress consists not so much in expelling the germs of disease, or rather diseases themselves, as in accommodating them to our organism and so perhaps enriching it, in dissolving them in our blood. What but this is the meaning of vaccination and all the serums, and immunity from infection through lapse of time?

If this notion of absolute health were not an abstract category, something which does not strictly exist, we might say that a perfectly healthy man would be no longer a man, but an irrational animal. Irrational, because of the lack of some disease to set a spark to his reason. And this disease which gives us the appetite of knowing for the sole pleasure of knowing, for the delight of tasting of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is a real disease and a tragic one.

Παντες ανθρωποι τον εἰδεναι ορεγονται φυσει , "all men naturally desire to know." Thus Aristotle begins his Metaphysic, and it has been repeated a thousand times since then that curiosity or the desire to know, which according to Genesis led our first mother to sin, is the origin of knowledge.

But it is necessary to distinguish here between the desire or appetite for knowing, apparently and at first sight for the love of knowledge itself, between the eagerness to taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and the necessity of knowing for the sake of living. The latter, which gives us direct and immediate knowledge, and which in a certain sense might be called, if it does not seem too paradoxical, unconscious knowledge, is common both to men and

animals, while that which distinguishes us from them is reflective knowledge, the knowing that we know.

Man has debated at length and will continue to debate at length—the world having been assigned as a theatre for his debates—concerning the origin of knowledge; but, apart from the question as to what the real truth about this origin may be, which we will leave until later, it is a certainly ascertained fact that in the apparential order of things, in the life of beings who are endowed with a certain more or less cloudy faculty of knowing and perceiving, or who at any rate appear to act as if they were so endowed, knowledge is exhibited to us as bound up with the necessity of living and of procuring the wherewithal to maintain life. It is a consequence of that very essence of being, which according to Spinoza consists in the effort to persist indefinitely in its own being. Speaking in terms in which concreteness verges upon grossness, it may be said that the brain, in so far as its function is concerned, depends upon the stomach. In beings which rank in the lowest scale of life, those actions which present the characteristics of will, those which appear to be connected with a more or less clear consciousness, are actions designed to procure nourishment for the being performing them.

Such then is what we may call the historical origin of knowledge, whatever may be its origin from another point of view. Beings which appear to be endowed with perception, perceive in order to be able to live, and only perceive in so far as they require to do so in order to live. But perhaps this stored-up knowledge, the utility in which it had its origin being exhausted, has come to constitute a fund of knowledge far exceeding that required for the bare necessities of living.

Thus we have, first, the necessity of knowing in order to live, and next, arising out of this, that other knowledge which we might call superfluous knowledge or knowledge de luxe , which may in its turn come to constitute a new

necessity. Curiosity, the so-called innate desire of knowing, only awakes and becomes operative after the necessity of knowing for the sake of living is satisfied; and although sometimes in the conditions under which the human race is actually living it may not so befall, but curiosity may prevail over necessity and knowledge over hunger, nevertheless the primordial fact is that curiosity sprang from the necessity of knowing in order to live, and this is the dead weight and gross matter carried in the matrix of science. Aspiring to be knowledge for the sake of knowledge, to know the truth for the sake of the truth itself, science is forced by the necessities of life to turn aside and put it itself at their service. While men believe themselves to be seeking truth for its own sake, they are in fact seeking life in truth. The variations of science depend upon the variations of human needs, and men of science are wont to work, willingly or unwillingly, wittingly or unwittingly, in the service of the powerful or in that of a people that demands from them the confirmation of its own desires.

But is this really a dead weight that impedes the progress of science, or is it not rather its innermost redeeming essence? It is in fact the latter, and it is a gross stupidity to presume to rebel against the very condition of life.

Knowledge is employed in the service of the necessity of life and primarily in the service of the instinct of personal preservation. This necessity and this instinct have created in man the organs of knowledge and given them such capacity as they possess. Man sees, hears, touches, tastes, and smells that which it is necessary for him to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell in order to preserve his life. The decay or the loss of any of these senses increases the risks with which his life is environed, and if it increases them less in the state of society in which we are actually living, the reason is that some see, hear, touch, and smell for others. A blind man, by himself and without a guide, could