THOMAS MANN

"Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man"

Translated, with an introduction, by Walter D. Morris

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CHAPTER 2

The Unliterary Country

There is considerable self-restraint in Dostoyevsky's description of the Germans as a "great, proud, and special people," for we know that he was far from loving Germany—not because of enormous sympathy for the countries farther west, but because to him, Germany, despite her protestantism, was still part of that "frivolous" Europe that he hated to the depths of his soul. Considerable self-restraint and appropriate moderation, then, the result of great, free, historical intuition, underlie his way of speaking about Germany. For instead of "proud, and special," he could just as easily have said "stubborn, callous, malicious"—terms that would, of course, have been mild in comparison to those that the Roman West, with its excellent manners, has used against us during the war. Indeed, Dostoyevsky's formulation of the German character, of German primeval individuality, of what is eternally German, contains the whole basis and explanation of the lonely German position between East and West, of Germany's offensiveness to the world, of the antipathy, the hatred she must endure and defend herself against—in bewilderment and pain at this universal hatred that she does not understand because she knows little about herself and has not developed very far at all in matters of psychological understanding—the basis and explanation also of her enormous courage that she has unflinchingly displayed to the surrounding world, the world of the Roman West that today is almost everywhere, in the East, the South, even in the North and across the ocean where the new Capitol stands—of that blind-heroic courage with which Germany is striking out everywhere with a gigantic reach. And it also explains the good sense of the charge of "barbarism," a charge that one cannot logically reject with indignation, because the heirs of Rome, articulate as they are, could indeed find no better, simpler, more effective, more persuasive word than precisely this one to characterize
those who have instinctively, from time immemorial, protested against their world. For the worst thing was not that Germany never wanted to combine her word and will with that of Roman civilization: she only opposed it with her will, her disturbing, stubborn, obstinate, “special” will—but not with her word, because she had no word. She was speechless, she did not love words, and she did not believe in them as did civilization; she engaged in a silent, inarticulate resistance, and there is no doubt that it was not so much Germany’s resistance itself as her wordlessness and inarticulateness that were perceived by civilization to be “barbaric” and hate-inspiring. The word, the formulation of the will, as with everything that has to do with form, has a conciliatory, winning effect, it can reconcile itself eventually with every type of will, especially when it is beautiful, generous, convincing, and clearly programmatic. The word is absolutely necessary to win sympathy. What good is great courage without the generous word? What good the stubborn conviction that “one will once again be in a position to speak one’s word and to lead mankind with it” if one cannot or will not utter it at the crucial moment? (For it comes to the same thing: ability comes from desire; fluency comes from love of words, and vice versa.) One cannot lead mankind without the word. Gigantic courage is barbaric without a well-articulated ideal to guide it. Only the word makes life worthy of a human being. To be without words is not worthy of a human being, is inhumane. In the innate and eternal conviction of Roman civilization, not only humanism—humanitarianism in general, human dignity, respect for human beings, and human self-respect, are inextricably bound to literature. Not to music—or at least in no way necessarily to it. On the contrary, the relationship of music to humanitarianism is so much looser than that of literature that the musical attitude seems to the literary moral sense at the very least to be undependable, at the very least, suspicious. Nor to poetry, where the relationship is too much like that of music; in it words and intellect play a much too indirect, cunning, irresponsible, and therefore also undependable role. Rather expressly to literature, to linguistically articulated intellect—civilization and literature are one and the same.

The Roman West is literary: this separates it from the Germanic—or more exactly—from the German world, which, whatever else it is, is definitely not literary. Literary humanitarianism, the legacy of Rome, the classical spirit, classical reason, the generous word to which the generous gesture belongs, the beautiful, heart-stirring phrase that is
worthy of a human being and that celebrates his beauty and dignity, the academic rhetoric in honor of the human race—this is what makes life worth living in the Roman West, what makes the human being human. It is the spirit that was at its height during the Revolution; it was its spirit, its “classic form,” that spirit that in the Jacobin hardened into a scholastic-literary formula, into a murderous doctrine, a tyrannical, schoolmasterly pedantry. Its champions are the lawyer and the literary man, the spokesmen of the “Third Estate,” and of its emancipation, the spokesmen of the Enlightenment, of reason, of progress, of “the philosophy,” against the seigneurs, against authority, tradition, history, “power,” kingdom and church—the spokesmen of the spirit that they consider to be the unconditional, sole, and dazzlingly true one, spirit itself, spirit in itself, while it is really just the political spirit of the middle-class revolution that they mean and understand. It is an historical fact that cannot be denied that “spirit” in this political-civilizing sense is a middle-class concern, even if it is not a middle-class invention (for spirit and culture in France are not originally of the middle class, but of noble-seigneurial descent; the middle class only usurped them). Its representative is actually the eloquent citizen, the literary lawyer of the Third Estate, as I have said, the representative of its spiritual as well as, not to forget, of its material interests. The victorious advance of this spirit, its expansive process, which is the result of colossal, turbulent, explosive forces within it, can be defined as a process involving the simultaneous conquest of the world by the middle class and by literature. What we call “civilization,” and what calls itself civilization, is nothing more than precisely this victorious advance, this propagation of the politicized and literarized middle-class spirit, its colonization of the inhabited areas of the globe. The imperialism of civilization is the last form of the Roman idea of unification against which Germany is “protesting,” and she has never done so more passionately against any of its other manifestations; she has never had a more terrible battle to wage than against this one. The agreement and unity of all those communities that belong to the imperium of the middle-class spirit today is the “entente”—a French name, how proper—and it is truly an entente cordiale, a unity full of the most heartfelt, spiritual, essential agreement despite many differences in temperament and despite divergencies in power politics: directed against Germany, which is protesting the final completion and conclusive establishment of this imperium. The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, the struggles against the
Roman pope, Wittenberg, 1813, 1870—all this was mere child's play compared to the terrible, perilous, and, in the most magnificent sense, irrational struggle against the world entente of civilization, a struggle that Germany has accepted with a truly Germanic obedience to her fate—or, to put it somewhat more actively, to her mission, her eternal and innate mission.
CHAPTER 3

Civilization’s Literary Man

It was thought that the ideal of the Slavophiles was: “To eat radishes and to write denunciations.” Yes, denunciations! They astonished everyone so much by their appearance and their views that the liberals had second thoughts and began to be afraid: What, did these strange people intend finally to denounce them, too?

Dostoyevsky, Works

The great communities, however, do not possess—and it would be almost boring if they did—that spiritual unity that they seem to have, and then only temporarily, in time of war. The task of investigating the extent to which this applies to other countries cannot tempt us here. We must concern ourselves with Germany—and here the word “concern” must be taken somewhat etymologically, for it can be stated without any chauvinism that all intellectual concern for Germany has constantly proven to be particularly rewarding. We will now tell how, in our humble opinion, things stand with Germany.

The antitheses that loosen and call in question the inner intellectual unity and homogeneity of the large European communities are generally the same everywhere: they are basically European, but they are still strongly differentiated nationally among the various peoples, and they are unified under the national synthesis, so that, for example, a radical-republican Frenchman is just as much a genuine, correct, complete and unquestionable Frenchman as is a clerical royalist. A liberal Englishman is as English as his conservative countryman; finally, the Frenchman comes to an understanding with the Frenchman, the Englishman with the Englishman best of all and for the best. There is, however, a country and people in which the situation is different: a people that is not and
probably never can be a nation in that definite sense that France and England are nations, because her cultural history and her idea of humanity are against it; a country whose internal unity and homogeneity are not only complicated, but almost abolished by intellectual antitheses; a country where these antitheses are more violent, fundamental, more malicious and less open to compromise than anywhere else; because there they are scarcely, or only loosely, enclosed in a national bond, scarcely combined on a grand scale as the contradictory wills of every other country always are. This country is Germany. Germany’s internal, intellectual antitheses are scarcely national; they are almost purely European, opposing one another almost completely without national coloration, without national synthesis. In Germany’s soul, Europe’s intellectual antitheses are carried to the end—"carried to the end" in a maternal and in a warlike sense. This truly is her real national destiny. No longer physically—she has recently learned how to prevent this—but intellectually, Germany is still the battlefield of Europe. And when I say, "the German soul," I do not just mean the collective national soul, but quite specifically the soul, the mind, and the heart of the individual German. I even mean myself as well. To be the spiritual battleground for European antitheses: this is German; but it is not German to make matters easy for oneself and to manifest the national weakness, the—as Nietzsche says—"secret infinity" of one’s people, by simply acting like a Frenchman. Whoever would aspire to transform Germany into a middle-class democracy in the Western-Roman sense and spirit would wish to take away from her all that is best and complex, to take away the problematic character that really makes up her nationality; he would make her dull, shallow, stupid, and un-German, and he would therefore be an antinationalist who insisted that Germany become a nation in a foreign sense and spirit.

A strange endeavor! Nevertheless, there are such Germans; and it would be quite wrong to believe that things were as simple in Germany as the great formula of the “protesting kingdom” would make it appear. Those who do not yet know, must certainly learn—for it is very important and interesting—that there are German intellects who not only do not join in the “protest” of their own community against the Roman West, but who even see their true mission and destiny to be part of a passionate protest against this protest, and who promote with all the power of their talents the intimate union of Germany with the imperium of civilization. But while the domestic opponents of the officials, of the spokesmen—oh, yes, of the spokesmen of France during
the war, are still completely and decisively for their country, our
antiprotestors give their struggling country no support and sympathy
but enthusiastically confess themselves, as far as such a confession is
permissible today, to be for the enemy, for the world of the West, of
the entente, and especially of France, and why especially France will
soon be explained. I will be careful not to call these people un-German.
The concept “German” is an abyss, bottomless, and one should be
extremely careful with its negative, the judgment of “un-German,” so
that one is not tripped up and hurt. Therefore, even though it may
seem pussyfooting, I will certainly not call these people unpatriotic. I
only say that their patriotism is manifested in such a way that they see
the prerequisite of the greatness, or, if not of greatness, at least of the
happiness and of the beauty of their country, not in its disturbing hate-
provoking, “special nature,” but, to repeat, in its unconditional union
with the world of civilization, of literature, of elevating, rhetorical
democracy that is worthy of a human being—with the world that indeed
would become fulfilled by the overthrow of Germany: its empire would
be complete and all-encompassing; there would be no more opposition
to it.

The German proponent of this literary civilization is obviously our
radical literary man, the one I have become accustomed to call “civiliza-
tion’s literary man”—and I do so because the radical literary man, the
representative of the literarized, politicized, in short, of the democra-
tized spirit, is a child of the Revolution, spiritually at home in its sphere,
in its country. Actually, the phrase, “civilization’s literary man,” is no
doubt a pleonasm. For I have, of course, already noted that civilization
and literature are one and the same thing. One is not a literary man
without instinctively despising Germany’s “special nature” and feeling
oneself bound to the imperium of civilization. To put it more precisely,
being a literary man is almost the same as being a Frenchman, indeed,
a classical Frenchman, a revolutionary Frenchman; for the literary man
receives his greatest traditions from the France of the Revolution. His
paradise lies there, his golden age. France is his country; the Revolution
is his grand period. He was quite well off then, when he was still called
a philosophe, and when he actually mediated, spread, and politically
prepared the new philosophy of humanitarianism, freedom, and reason.

When I speak of the German radical literary man, for whom the
national adjective seems so strange, I am not speaking of that ragtag,
bohetail group that one honors far too much by any study one makes of
them; not, then, of that scribbling, agitating pack of rascals that is
propagating international civilization and whose radicalism is mischievousness, whose literary world is without roots and significance—these literary scum, as leaven and national ferment, may be of some value to progress, but their lack of any personal rank or humaneness makes them only worthy of being handled with fire tongs. I am speaking of the noble representatives of this type—for there are some. Generally speaking, there is no doubt a degree of innate merit, of intellect and art, that cannot be subjected to criticism on the basis of the national idea. On the contrary, people of this rank define, and perhaps redefine and correct this idea—I will not forget this. I will not fail to consider that with such high rank one is a factor and an element of the nation’s fate—an unfortunate factor, perhaps—so much the worse for the nation! So much the worse for it, I say—for it is the nation’s misfortune, it is its own fault, it lies in the nation, in its character, if it is left in the lurch in its most difficult hour by some of its best intellects. And not just left in the lurch. By fighting against such intellects, against their opinions in spite of their rank, one ceases to be an artist, for as an artist one was accustomed to respect rank and not to pay much attention to its opinions. One temporarily becomes a politician—and one must therefore guard oneself all the more carefully against political vices such as, for instance, attributing anti-intellectual, that is, base motives, to one’s opponent, even if the reverse has already happened. The conviction of having “progress” on one’s side obviously produces a moral certainty and self-assurance that borders on callousness, until one finally believes that one is ennobling vulgarity simply by making use of it. This is an excuse. We who feel ourselves less morally secure are necessarily more apprehensive. But let us get to the point!

Germany’s radical literary man belongs, then, body and soul, to the entente, to the imperium of civilization. Not that he has had to struggle with himself, that the times have torn him in painful spiritual conflict; not that his heart is bound here and there, that he is trying by admonishing, punishing, appeasing, and preaching to pacify both sides, placing himself, like gentle Romain Rolland, above the fray. With full passion he thrusts himself into the fray—but on the side of the enemy. From the first moment he automatically took the entente’s side—naturally, for it had always been his own. With unerring accuracy he felt, thought and said exactly what entente journalists or ministers said simultaneously or later. He was courageous, he was original, but only in German terms, only relatively. I believe he has shown signs of making his own isolation appear tragic—not quite justifiably so, for it only existed when the time came to swor, time remember. The public opinion in America found a “great man” in both on this occasion, and he said that at the long time. Resist calling my power. The same time, it is remarkable. He devoted himself to saying that or rather to French: so was a real sentiment. Ken French was resolute, carried his admirable nature in the fog all to be triply brought it not merely to the conception of the ideals. He so does, as a antithesis of barbarism.
existed within Germany. He did not exactly think lonely thoughts: what he thought was not particularly sublime, superior, or lovingly all-embracing: it could have appeared in every *entente* newspaper, and it did appear there. In short, he thought as did every Tom, Dick, and Harry among our enemies abroad, and I do not call this tragic isolation. One can say he was well off during those first weeks and months of the war, times his compatriots who are not radical literary men will remember all their lives—the time when the world, the democratic public opinion of the world, was let loose upon Germany, when filth rained upon her: he was really quite well off, I say, for everything that this “great, proud, and special” people had to suffer then and later, both in word and deed—did not matter to him, did not make him hot or cold, did not touch or affect him—he excepted himself, of course; he said the others were right; what they said he had already said for a long time, word for word. Un-German? With all my strength I will resist calling him un-German, and I will not cease resisting it as long as my powers do not fail me. One can be extremely German and, at the same time, extremely anti-German. What is German is an abyss; let us stick to that. No, then! He is not un-German. He is merely an amazing, remarkable example of how alienated and disgusted with himself, how devoted to cosmopolitan ideas, how beside himself, a German may become even today, in post-Bismarckian Germany. It may be permissible to say that the structure of his intellect is *unnational*, but only insofar—or rather to the degree—that it is not German-national but nationally French: so completely so, in fact, that in more peaceful times it would be a real pleasure to study in him all the aspects of magnanimity, sentimentality, childishness, and maliciousness of the classically unbroken French national character that has as yet reached no critical self-reflection, no resignation. He is one of the best French patriots. Belief carries him and at times lends his style a magnificent tremolo, an admirable drive: the belief in the idea of the glory and the mission of his—of the French—people, that they have been called once and for all to be the teachers of mankind, to bring it “justice” after they have brought it “freedom” (which, however, comes from England). He does not merely think in French syntax and grammar: he thinks in French concepts, French antitheses, French conflicts, French affairs and scandals. He sees the war in which we are engaged entirely as the *entente* does, as a struggle between “power and spirit”—this is his principal antithesis!—between the “saber” and the idea, the lie and the truth, barbarism and justice. (I do not have to add on which side, in his
opinion, saber, barbarism, and lie, and on which side the antithetically corresponding ideals are to be found.) In a word: this war seems to him to be a repetition of the Dreyfus affair on a colossal magnified scale—for those who do not believe this, I will provide completely convincing documentation. According to the analogy of this case, whoever is engaged in a spiritual struggle on the side of the civilization entente against the forces of the “saber,” against Germany, is an intellectual. Whoever feels differently, whoever, following some kind of dark instincts in this tremendous struggle, remains loyal to Germany, is lost, a traitor to the intellect who stands against justice and truth—and whether he does so in elegant or sloppy style is justifiably immaterial to the moralist—he stands against them, and every suspicion of his motives is henceforth not only permissible but also imperative: eagerness for applause, acquisitiveness, the neat gift of profiting from the situation, probably also the only too human desire to seize the opportunity to outshine and to silence an opponent who is condemned to silence or to intrigue, to ambiguity—there is no guilelessness that civilization’s literary man will not seize upon with a grimace to present siding with “the saber” in the correct psychological light. But since, however (certainly a point against Germany), it is a much more ticklish and complicated matter to speak for Germany than for “civilization,” where only a good bit of dash and tremolo are necessary and the job is done—since to speak for Germany one must try, for better or worse, to dig a bit deeper, civilization’s literary man refers in such a case, with marked disdain, to his opponent’s “deep chattering.”

This is the way civilization’s literary man looks at things. His sympathy with the enemies of the protesting kingdom is intellectual solidarity. His love and passion are with the troops of the Western allies, of France and England, and probably also of Italy; he sees in them the armies of the spirit with which civilization marches. His heart goes out to them—to Germany his heart goes out quite indirectly: that is, in the sense that he yearns from the bottom of his heart for Germany’s defeat. That his motives are of a more spiritual and therefore of a more noble sort is a matter of course. He wishes a German defeat because of its spiritual significance, because of the spiritual consequences it would entail for Germany and for Europe. He wants it for “domestic” reasons—as a substitute, as it were, for the revolution that Germany has of course lacked until today: for 1848 was a failure, and the unification of Germany did not result from the democratic revolution but from the worst and most unpardonable circumstance possible: from France’s humiliation, fortune, for if the only providence according to intellectual man be his: so much more would incline a physical come before for palpable brutality rather for today, with invasion of the Marne-Valmouville civilization’s would welcome ambiguous happen. It is a country with measures, which is not will not have. He will have

I ask you to have forced in no desire at efforts in the style and to hasten to make the equation of the physical nation’s literary
humiliation. To be sure, France’s defeat blossomed into her greatest fortune, for it brought her the republic, that is: truth and justice. But if the only explanation of Germany’s victory at that time is that providence smiled upon France (for from an intellectual viewpoint, according to civilization’s literary man, Germany could never triumph under Bismarck, such a totally unintellectual man, such an anti-intellectual man of power), this is still no excuse for Germany. I do not know, it is hard to guess, what our radical literary man would have wished for at that time; today he wishes for Germany to be beaten and converted by the entente—its victory would be the victory of literature for Germany and for Europe, it would be his victory, just as its defeat would be his: so much has he made the cause of rhetorical democracy his own. He wishes, therefore, the physical humiliation of Germany because it would include her spiritual defeat; he wishes the collapse—but one says it more correctly in French: the débâcle of the Kaiserreich because such a physical and moral débâcle would—the moral one, by the way, may come before the physical one—finally, finally bring the warmly wished for, palpable, and catastrophic proof that Germany has lived in lies and brutality rather than in truth and spirit. Yes, if it could still be hoped for today, with all his heart he would certainly wish for the democratic invasion of Germany; he would not wish to let matters rest at any Marne-Valmy (it was, however, more like a Marne-Kolin), but to have civilization’s troops march into Berlin with a full band—how his heart would welcome them! How he would find ways and means to give ambiguous expression to the triumph of his soul! Alas, this will not happen. It is a thankless business to play the blaspheming prophet in a country where consequences do not follow, in the country of half-measures, which is at best only overtaken by half-catastrophes and which is not capable of a tidy, novelistic fate! Civilization’s literary man will not have the débâcle of the German second empire to write. Not at all. He will have to be content if Germany does not win far too impressively.

I ask you to believe me that if anything like scorn or bitterness may have forced itself into my lines, it has happened against my will. I have no desire at all to speak bitterly or scornfully; on the contrary, my efforts in this study are—let us say: to maintain a popular-scholarly style and to characterize a literary-political type. With this is mind, I hasten to make the following observation. The logical, psychological equation of the concepts, “beaten,” and “converted,” the equation of the physical and spiritual humiliation of a nation, proves that civilization’s literary man is not really an opponent of war, not absolutely a
pacifist, that he acknowledges incontestable intellectual validity in the
decision to wage war, and that he sees in war an ultima ratio, yes,
something like God’s judgment. Striking, but true. Here we see a type
of irrationalism that in truth is a spiritualized rationalism in which one
proclaims war to be God’s judgment as long as there is the slightest
chance that Germany may in any way be beaten, even if only by
economic suffocation. But on no account longer! For as soon as this
prospect disappears, war becomes injustice and raw power, its outcome
without spiritual significance. But this must not stop us from insisting
that “spirit” is not necessarily pacifistic—as Italy’s example teaches,
where “spirit” actually made war: for is it not true, the republicans,
Freemasons, radicals and literati of Italy who have waged the war
represent “spirit” in that country—and certainly not the Social Demo-
crats, who have resisted the war and who are really pacifists. The truth
is that civilization’s literary man does not denigrate war when it is waged
in the service of civilization. Here he follows Voltaire’s example, who,
though disgusted by Frederick the Great’s wars, could flatly demand a
war (against the Turks, with whom Frederick had instead almost allied
himself) for the sake of civilization. How, then, could the disciple of the
Revolution—not to say; its epigone—condemn on principle the spilling
of blood for the good cause, for truth, for spirit? “Resolute love of
humanity”—the phrase belongs to civilization’s literary man—resolute
love of humanity is not fearful of shedding blood. The guillotine, just
as much as the literary word, is one of its tools, just as the stake was
earlier, which, to be sure, was not bloody. We do not need Gabriele
d’Annunzio’s lewd estheticism at all to point out where civilization’s
literary man is on principle not an opponent of war. He finds fault with
this war because he sees it as a German war, an historical enterprise of
Germany, as an outburst of the German “protest,” because this war
carries a German stamp, its activity, its great deeds, are German. He
does not find fault with it to the extent that he sees it as a war of
civilization against the barbaric stubborness of Germany. In this sense,
for the other side, he sees it as good. In short, he does not so much find
fault with the war as with Germany, and only herein lies the solution
to all the contradictions of which civilization’s literary man seems guilty,
and which would truly seem amazing without this key. His attitude
toward the war vacillates between humanitarian disgust and the greatest
admiration for the military accomplishments of the enemies. On the
one hand, he sees in the entente something tender, fragile, precious,
nobly-weak, which is naturally in great danger of being brutalized by
Barbaric Germany. On the other hand, however, he has only the utmost contempt for those of his countrymen who underestimated the entente's military virtues and powers, or who even still underestimate them. He is delighted by the accomplishments of the powers of civilization; he admires their war materiel, their armor plate, concrete fortifications, aircraft formations, and poison and choking gas bombs, without asking how this fits the image of noble weakness, while he finds the same things on the German side disgusting. A French cannon seems venerable to him, a German one, criminal, repulsive, and idiotic. Here, too, he agrees with all the entente ministers and journalists that every German victory is only the result and proof of long-standing, sneaky preparation, while every entente success is a triumph of spirit over matter. On the other hand, however, his love cannot even abide the idea that an entente power, particularly France, could be poorly prepared or insufficiently armed. Armed? They are splendidly armed! Again, the logic of all this is not obvious. But who would be such a pedant as to demand logic of love!

As I have said, I want to remain scholarly and informative. But my sketch of civilization's literary man reveals that I do not quite agree with him. My position on the events—a position that I certainly did not "choose," a position that was at first quite unreflected and naively obvious—everything I said about it from the very beginning has embittered him. If I had not done so before, I have now ruined my relationship with him forever. With "pain and anger," he says, he has turned from me, but his pain did not prevent his anger from making ambiguous, half-public statements to me that may be excellent in a political sense, but that are, from a human point of view, simply outright meanness—clearly a nod that the "politics of humanitarianism" is still politics and not exactly conducive to humaneness. But this external estrangement is all the more regrettable because we are basically of one opinion—not of one feeling, but of one opinion on this war. He also agrees with Dostoyevsky's concept. He, too, recognizes in the war the ancient rebellion of Germany against the Western spirit, against his own spirit, that of the radical literary man—and the intervention of Rome (Western Rome, allied with Eastern Rome) against this rebellion: a war of intervention, then, of European civilization against stubborn Germany: for when the London Times announced one day that this war was being waged by the allies "in the interest of Germany's domestic affairs," this is assuredly almost exactly what one means by the words, "shameless audacity," but it was spoken completely in accord with the feeling of
civilization’s literary man who is also waging it for the sake of European interest in the domestic “conditions” of his country, and, like every Frenchman, after he suffered a period of demoralization in the first few weeks of the war, he has been convinced, since the miracle of the Marne, of the final victory. “Germany will have to conform,” he said then, and his eyes glowed. Germany will finally have to be well behaved, he said, and she will then be happy, like a child that cries to be spanked, and, afterward is grateful that its stubborness has been broken, that it has been helped over its inhibitions, saved, liberated. By beating Germany, by throwing her over our knee, by breaking her evil stubborness for her own good, and by forcing her to accept reason and to become an honorable member of the democratic society of states, we are saving and freeing her.

I have already admitted that I cannot quite follow this train of thought. I will go further and admit that I find it quite unpleasant, that it somehow personally insults and angers me, touches my innermost honor, yes, when I first heard it, worked on me quite like poison and opium. But whence comes all this? Whence comes the rebellion of my final and deepest personal-suprapersonal will against the feelings of a good European, who, because he is a good European, wishes for and believes in the defeat of his fatherland, in the taming of his people by the powers of Western Civilization? I was never one of those who felt that an easy and triumphant German military victory over her enemies, with drums beating and trumpets sounding, would be good for Germany or for Europe. I said this very early. But whence comes the feeling that, from the beginning of the war, has ruled my whole being to the very core that I did not want to live—although I am in no way a hero and resolute in the face of death—that I literally did not want to live anymore if Germany were beaten by the West, humbled, her belief in herself broken so that she would have to “conform” and accept the argument, the rationale of her enemies? Supposing this had happened, that the entente, for its part, had won a splendid and speedy victory, that the world had been liberated from the German “nightmare,” the German “protest,” that the empire of civilization had been fulfilled, and that it had become arrogant from lack of opposition; the result would have been a Europe that was—well, a somewhat amusing, somewhat insipidly humane, trivially depraved, femininely elegant Europe that was already all too “human,” somewhat implausibly adventurous and loud-mouthed democratic, a Europe of tango and two-step manners, a Europe of business and pleasure à la Edward the Seventh, a Monte-Carlo Europe in which likes of me to live, yes, a thoroughly would at least not been extremely art and the artiste, as able to feel as happy should give him c:

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a Monte-Carlo Europe, literary as a Parisian cocotte—but perhaps not a Europe in which it would have been much more advantageous for the likes of me to live than in a “military” one? Perhaps not an amusing, yes, a thoroughly amusing Europe, lack of desire for which, in a writer, would at least not testify to selfishness? For beyond doubt it would have been extremely arty, this entente-Europe for human freedom and peace, and the artiste, as far as he was precisely an “artiste,” would have been able to feel as happy as a lark in it. He should consider this and one should give him credit for it.

Seriously, my rejection is quite remarkable! Remarkable for me—and I have the bad habit of forcing upon others as remarkable what seems so to me. Remarkable—for the fact remains that my own being and essence are much less foreign to those of civilization’s literary man than would appear from the cold, objective critique I have subjected him to. What does he want, and if I do not want it—why not? It is, of course, not at all as if he were a bad citizen and patriot who did not care about Germany. On the contrary! He cares about her with all his might. He feels himself to the highest degree responsible for her fate. He wants and supports a development—that I consider necessary, that is to say, unavoidable, and that I also have a certain involuntary part in because of my nature, but that I still cannot see any reason to cheer. With whip and spurs he is hastening a progress—that to me, not seldom at least, seems irresistible and fated, and that I for my modest part am destined to further; but to which I nevertheless, for unclear reasons, am putting up a certain conservative resistance. I want to be completely understood. What I mean is, then: one can very well regard a progress as unavoidable and destined, without in the least feeling like egging it on with cheers and shouts—in my opinion, progress does not really need this at all. Progress has everything for it, above all, the good writers. If it appears that the good writers own the future, the truth in reality is much more that the future owns the good writers. A metaphysical proof of the goodness and imminence of a cause is the good writing in its behalf. However, one can also say that as long as a cause is supported by good writing, it, too, has value and justification, even if it is not progress. I repeat; progress has everything for it. It only seems to be the opposition. It is the conservative counterwill that in truth always and everywhere forms the opposition, that finds itself on the defensive, indeed, hopelessly on the defensive, as it well knows.

What is, then, this development, this progress I have been speaking of? Well, to indicate what it is about, I need a handful of shamelessly
ugly, artificial words. It is about the politicization, literarization, intellectualization, and radicalization of Germany. It aims at her “humanization” in the Latin-political sense, and her dehumanization in the German one. It aims, to use the favorite word, the battlecry and hosanna of civilization’s literary man, at the democratization of Germany, or, to summarize everything and to bring it over a common denominator: it aims at her de-Germanization. And I should have a part in all this mischief?

And ye nowadays well know the “power,” don’t ye? The power, in many respects, is excusable if not perfectly logical. And the arrogance is quite the thing. One’s conscience can be strong enough in the following cl

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