

Money

Money—this notebook’s author—the notebook which arrived—the notebook of which this is only the preface—is the man whom I need most. I was a little boy of eight years, lost in an excellent primary school, when M. Naudy was named director of the l'École Normale du Loiret.

Nothing is mysterious like the secret preparations which wait for men at the threshold of their life. Everything is played out before we are twelve years old. Twenty years, thirty years of hard labor, an entire life of labor, will not do, will not defer what had been done, what has been undone once and for all, before us, without us, for us, against us.

In an entire life there are cross-breadings¹, all life is ordered by very few of these certain cross-breadings; nothing is done without them; nothing is done just by them; and the first one of them orders all the others directly as well as the rest.

It was the time of *school follies*. The reactionaries called *school follies*, at that time, very honest constructions, in bricks or ashlar, where children were taught to read. These *school follies* were committed by the State, by the departments, by the communes; and sometimes by a generous donor. They were generally very clean houses, and in any case much better for the children than the mud in the stream. And that the stream of the streets. It must be admitted that at that time, they (these school follies) did indeed look a little unexpected. Not because they were sumptuous. We put it in the newspapers, that they were sumptuous. They were simply clean; and decent. But because they were a little too showy. They had grown a little too much everywhere at once. And maybe a little too fast. We had then placed too much at the same time. And those that we saw, we saw them too much. They were too white, too red, too new. Forty years have passed in these corners of the earth. A simple trip to Orleans would easily convince you that today all these school buildings are like us: they are not too conspicuous.

By what a cross breeding it was in this old suburb, three or four hundred meters from my mother, perhaps at least, because I had short legs, that we had just finished the school palace that was thus the École Normale des instituteurs du Loiret. At seven years they put me in school. I wasn't about to leave. But finally it was absolutely not my fault. And what followed was no longer without a doubt absolutely my fault.

¹ Péguy uses the word *recroisements* here, which is a biological term not found in Littré.

They put me in the École Normale. It wasn't to be the last time. This meant that I was made to enter this pretty little annexed school which lived in a corner of the first courtyard of the École Normale, on the right as you entered, like a sort of rectangular nest, administrative, solemn and gentle. This small annexed school naturally had a director of its own, whom it was necessary to be careful not to confuse with the director of the École Normale itself. My *director* was M. Fautras. I can still see him from here. He was a great government. He had been a prisoner in Germany during the war. He was coming back from afar. This gave it a severe luster, a grandeur of which we no longer have any idea. It was in this same school that I was to meet some years later the true master of all my beginnings, the sweetest, the most patient, the noblest, the most courteous, the most loved, M. Tonnelat.

If we live long enough to reach the age of *confessions*, if so many companies started with all hands leave us the space to write down a world that we have known, I will try to represent a little what this admirable world of primary education was towards 1880. More generally I will try to represent what all this admirable world of workers and peasants was then, let's say it in a word, all these admirable people.

It was strictly old France and the people of *ancienne France*. It was a world to which this beautiful name applied, this beautiful word of people, received its full, its old application. When we say the people, today we make literature, and even one of the lowest, electoral, political, parliamentary literature. There are no more people. Everyone is bourgeois. Since everyone is reading their newspaper. The few who remained of the old or rather the old aristocracies have become a lower bourgeoisie. The old aristocracy has become like the others a bourgeoisie with money. The old bourgeoisie has become a lower middle class, a bourgeoisie with money. As for the workers, they have only one idea, and that is to become bourgeois. This is even what they call becoming socialists. The peasants have hardly remained profoundly peasants.

We were brought up in an entirely different world. We can say in the most rigorous sense of the term that a child brought up in a city like Orleans between 1873 and 1880 literally touched old France, the old people, simply the people, that he literally participated in old France, by the people. We can even say that he participated entirely, because old France was still whole and intact. The debacle happened, if I may say so, all at once, and in less than a few years.

We will try to say it: we have known, we have touched *ancienne France* and we have known it intact. We were children of it. We have known a people, we have touched them, we have been of the people, when there was one. The last worker of that time was a man from *ancienne France*, and today the most insupportable of the disciples of M. Maurras is not for an atom a man of *ancienne France*.

We will try, if we can, to represent that. A very intelligent woman, who is happily heading towards her seventies, said: the world has changed less during my first sixty years than it has changed in the last ten years. We must go further. We must say with it, we must say beyond it; The world has changed less since Jesus Christ than it has changed in thirty years. There was the old (and Biblical) age. There was the Christian age. There is the modern age. A farm in Beauce, even after the war, was infinitely closer to a Gallo-Roman farm, or rather of the same Gallo-Roman farm, for manners, for status, for seriousness, for the very structure and the institution, for dignity (and even, basically, a farm of Xenophon), that today it does not resemble itself. We will try to say it. We have known a time when a good woman spoke, it was her very race, her being, her people who spoke. Who was going out. And when a worker lit his cigarette, what he was going to tell you was not what the reporter said in the

newspaper this morning. The free thinkers of that time were more Christian than our devotees today. An ordinary parish of that time was much closer to a parish of the fifteenth century, or the fourth century, let us put the fifth or the eighth, than a present day parish.

This is why we are exposed to being extremely unjust towards Michelet and all those of his race, and what is perhaps even more serious to be extremely *unbearing* of Michelet and all those of his race. To be unintelligent about him. When today we say the people, in fact we make a figure, and even a rather poor figure, and even a completely useless figure, I mean a figure where nothing can be put in at all. And in addition, a political figure, and a parliamentary figure. But when Michelet and those of his race spoke of the people, it was they who were in the very reality, it was they who spoke of a being and who had known this being. Now this being, this people, is the one we too have known, it is the one where we were brought up. It is the one that we have known still in its full functioning, in all its life, in all its race, in all its beautiful free play. And nothing foreshadowed; and it seemed like it would never end. Ten years later there was nothing left. The people were bent on killing the people, almost instantaneously, by suppressing the very being of the people, a bit like the Orleans family, a little less instantaneously perhaps, bent on killing the king. Besides, everything from which we suffer is fundamentally Orleanism; Orleanism of religion; Orleanism of the republic.

This is what should be marked in *Confessions*. And try to show it. And try to make it heard. All the more exactly, all the more preciously, and if we can, all the more only because we will never see it again. There are innocences that do not overlap. There are ignorances which absolutely collapse. There are irreversibles in the life of peoples as in the life of men. Rome never became straw huts again. Not only, on the whole, everything is irreversible. But there are ages, specific irreversibles.

It will be believed, we were nurtured in a gay people. At that time a building site was a place on earth where people were happy. Today a building site is a place on the ground where men recriminate, blame each other, fight; kill themselves.

In my day everyone sang. (Except me, but I was already unworthy of being at that time). In most of the trades we sang. Today we are reluctant. At that time, we didn't earn anything, so to speak. The salaries were so low that we had no idea. And yet everyone was eating. There was in the humblest houses a sort of ease of which we have lost our memory. Basically we didn't count. And we didn't have to count. And you could raise children. And we raised some. There was not that kind of awful economic strangulation which now year after year gives us one more turn. We won nothing; we spent nothing; and everyone was alive.

There was not this economic strangulation of today, this scientific strangulation, cold, rectangular, regular, clean, neat, without a smudge, implacable, wise, common, constant, convenient as a virtue, in which there is no there is nothing to say, and where the strangled one is so obviously wrong.

We will never know how far the decency and correctness of soul of this people went; such finesse, such a deep culture will no longer be found. Nor such finesse and precaution in speaking. These people would have blushed at our best vocal tone of today, which is the bourgeois tone. And today everyone is bourgeois.

We will be believed, and this is still the same thing, we have known workers who wanted to work. One only thought of working. We have known workers who in the morning thought only of work. They would get up in the morning, and at what time, and they would sing to the idea that they were

going to work. At eleven o'clock they were singing as they went to the soup. In short, it's still Hugo; and it is always to Hugo that we must return: *They went, they sang*. Working was their very joy, and the deep root of their being. And the reason for their being. There was an incredible honor to work, the finest of all honors, the most Christian, the only one perhaps that stands. For example, this is why I say that a free-thinker of that time was more Christian than a devotee nowadays. Because a devotee these days is necessarily a bourgeois. And today everyone is bourgeois.

We have known an honor of labor exactly the same as that which ruled the hand and the heart in the Middle Ages. It was the same one kept intact underneath. We have experienced this care taken to perfection, equal in the whole, equal in the tiniest detail. We have known this piety of the *work well done* pushed, maintained to its most extreme demands. I have seen all my childhood reseating chairs with exactly the same spirit and the same heart, and the same hand, that the same people had carved out their cathedrals.

What remains of all of this today? How was it done, of the hardest working people on earth, and perhaps of the only hardworking people on earth, of the only people perhaps who loved work for work, and for honor, and to work, this people of saboteurs, how could we make them this people who on a building site puts all their study into not giving a damn. It will be in history one of the greatest victories, and undoubtedly the only one, of bourgeois intellectual demagoguery. But we must admit that it matters. This victory.

There was the Christian revolution. And there was the modern revolution. These are the two to be counted. A craftsman of my time was a craftsman of all Christian times. And no doubt maybe from any ancient time. A craftsman today is no longer a craftsman.

In this beautiful honor of profession converged all the most beautiful, all the noblest feelings. Dignity. Pride. *Never ask anything of anyone*, they said. These are the ideas we were brought up on. Because asking for work was not asking. It was the most normal in the world, the most naturally demanding, not even demanding. It was putting oneself in his place in a workshop. It was, in a laborious city, to quietly put yourself in the place of work that awaited you. A worker at that time did not know what it was to beg. It is the bourgeoisie who begs. It is the bourgeoisie which, by making them bourgeois, has taught them to beg. Today in this very insolence and in this brutality, in this kind of inconsistency that they bring to their demands, it is very easy to feel this dull shame, to be forced to ask, to have been brought, by the event in economic history, to beg. Oh yes, they're asking someone something now. They even ask everyone everything. To demand is still to ask. It is still serving.

These workers were not serving. They were working. They had an absolute honor, as it is proper to an honor. A chair leg had to be well made. It was understood. It was a primary. It should not be done well for wages or by means of wages. It was not necessary that it was well done for the boss or for connoisseurs nor for the boss's clients. He had to be well done himself, in himself, for himself, in his very being. A tradition, risen from the depths of the race, a history, an absolute, an honor wanted this chair leg to be well made. Any part in the chair that was not visible was exactly as perfectly made as what was seen. This is the very principle of cathedrals.

And yet it is I who seek of it so long, myself degenerate. For them, with them there was not the shadow of a reflection. The work was there. We were working well.

It was not about being seen or not seen. It was the very essence of the work that had to be done well.

And an incredibly deep feeling of what we today call the honor of sport, but then spread everywhere. Not only the idea of making the best return, but the idea, in the best, in the good, of making the most return. Not only to who would do the best, but to who would do the most, it was a beautiful, continual sport, which was hourly, with which life itself was permeated. Woven. A bottomless disgust for a badly done work. A contempt more than of a great lord for one who would have worked badly. But the idea did not even occur to them.

All the honors converged in this honor. A decency, and a finesse of language. Respect for the home. A sense of respect, of all respect, of the very being of respect. A ceremony, so to speak, constant. Besides, the hearth was still very often confused with the workshop and the honor of the hearth and the honor of the workshop was the same honor. It was the honor of the same place. It was the honor of the same fire. What has all this become. Everything was a rhythm and a rite and a ceremony from early rising. It was all an event; sacred. Everything was a tradition, a teaching, everything was bequeathed, everything was the holiest habit. Everything was an elevation, interior, and a prayer, all day, sleep and waking, work and little rest, the bed and the table, the soup and the beef, the house and the garden, the door and the street, the courtyard and the doorstep, and the plates on the table.

They said, laughing, and in order to annoy the priests, that *to work is to pray*, and they did not believe so well to say.

So their work was a prayer. And the workshop was an oratory.

Everything was the long event of a beautiful rite. They would have been very surprised, these workers, and what would have been, not even their disgust, their incredulity, as they would have thought that one was joking, if they had been told that a few years later, in the building sites, the workers—the companions—would officially propose to do as little as possible; and that they would consider it a great victory. Such an idea for them, supposing that they could conceive it, would have been a direct attack on themselves, on their being, it would have been to doubt their capacity, since it would have been to suppose that they wouldn't give back as long as they could. It is like assuming from a soldier that he will not be victorious.

They, too, lived in a perpetual victory, but what other victory. What similarity and what of the others. A victory for every hour of the day in every day of life. An honor equal to any military honor. The very feelings of the Imperial Guard.

And as a result or together with all the beautiful feelings that are attached or related, all the beautiful feelings that are derived and filial. Respect for the elderly; parents, kinship. An admirable respect for children. Of course a respect for women. (And it must be said, since today this is what is so lacking, a respect for the woman by the woman herself). Respect for the family, respect for the home. And above all a proper taste and a respect for respect itself. Respect for the tool, and for the hand, this supreme tool.—*I am losing my hand at work*, said the old people. And that was the end of ends. The idea that they could have damaged their tools on purpose would not even have seemed to them the last of sacrileges. It would not even have seemed the worst folly to them. It would not even have seemed monstrous to them. It would have seemed to them the most extravagant supposition. It would have been as if they

had been told about cutting their hands. The tool was only a longer, or harder, (steel nails) hand, or more particularly affected. A hand that we had made on purpose for this or that.

A worker damaging a tool, for them, would have been, in this war, the conscript who cuts his thumb.

We didn't earn anything, we lived on nothing, we were happy. It is not a question of indulging in sociological arithmetic. It is a fact, one of the rare facts that we know, that we have been able to embrace, one of the rare facts to which we can testify, one of the rare facts which is incontestable.

Note that today it is not fun for them to do nothing on construction sites. They would like to work better. They are not in this laborious race in vain. They hear this call of the breed. The itchy hand that wants to work. The bothering arm of doing nothing. The blood running through the veins. The head which works and which by a kind of anticipated envy, by a kind of preemption, by a true anticipation, takes hold of the work done in advance. Like their fathers, they hear this deaf call of work that wants to be done. And deep down they are disgusted with themselves, damaging the tools. But there you have it, very good gentlemen, scientists and bourgeois explained to them that that was socialism, and that that was revolution.

Because we cannot say it too often. All the evil came from the bourgeoisie. All the aberration, all the crime. It is the capitalist bourgeoisie that has infected the people. And it precisely infected him with a bourgeois and capitalist spirit.

I expressly say the capitalist bourgeoisie and the grand bourgeoisie. The working bourgeoisie on the contrary, the petty bourgeoisie has become the most unhappy class of all the social classes, the only one today which really works, the only one which consequently has kept intact the working virtues, and for its reward, finally the only one who really lives in misery. They alone have held up, one wonders by what miracle, they alone are still holding up, and if there is any recovery, it is because they will have retained the status.

Thus the workers did not retain the working virtues; and it is the petty bourgeoisie which has preserved them.

The capitalist bourgeoisie, on the other hand, has infected everything. It infected itself and it infected the people with the same infection. It has infected the people doubly; and in itself remaining itself; and by the defective portions of itself which it has inoculated into the people.

It infected the people as an antagonist; and as a teacher.

It infected the people themselves, by itself and remaining itself. If the bourgeoisie had remained not so much what it was, but what it had to be and what it could be, the economic arbiter of value that is sold, the working class only wanted to remain what it had always been, the economic source of value that sells.

It cannot be repeated too often, it was the bourgeoisie that began to sabotage and all the sabotage originated in the bourgeoisie. It is because the bourgeoisie has started to treat human labor as a stock market value that the worker has also started to treat his own labor as a stock market value. It is because the bourgeoisie has begun to perpetually strike the stock market on human labor that the worker, too, by imitation, by collusion, and one could almost say by agreement, is set to continuously hit the stock market on his own work. It is because the bourgeoisie has begun to exert a perpetual blackmail on the work of the man that we live under this regime of stock market blows and perpetual blackmail that are notably the strikes: thus this notion of the fair price has disappeared, which our

bourgeois intellectuals today are making a big deal out of, but which has nonetheless been the lasting foundation of a whole world.

Because, and this is the second and no less formidable infection here: at the same time that the bourgeoisie introduced and practiced sabotage on a large scale for its own account, at the same time it introduced into the working world the licensed theorists of sabotage. At the same time, on the contrary, it gave the example and the model, at the same time inside it gave the it's teaching. The socialist political party is made up entirely of bourgeois intellectuals. They are those who invented sabotage and double desertion: desertion from work, desertion from tools. Not to speak here of military desertion, which is a special case of great desertion, just as military glory was a special case of great glory. Those who believe in the people both what was socialism and what was revolution. The socialist *trade union* parties have been able to believe more or less sincerely that they were operating or that they were in themselves a reaction against the political parties, against the unified party; by a very frequent historical phenomenon, by a new application and a new verification of a very old law of antagonisms, this reaction to a policy is itself political, this constituted party is itself a new political party, another political party, a political party antagonist. As for the trade union parties, they are themselves infested, and infected with the same political elements, with other intellectuals, other bourgeois. They may have believed more or less sincerely that they had gotten rid of the old socialist political staff. They did not get rid of the old socialist political spirit, which was eminently a bourgeois spirit, not a spirit of the people. At first glance it may seem that there are many more genuine workers in the socialist trade union staff than in the socialist political staff, which is almost entirely made up of the bourgeoisie. And this is true if we want, if we proceed, if we want to see, if we want to count by the superficial methods of a sociological census. This is only apparently true. In reality they are still infiltrated, and infected, with pure intellectual elements, purely bourgeois elements. And above all the very large number of workers that we see there are not really workers, do not really proceed, directly from the people, purely from the old people. They are in reality second-class workers, of the second training, bourgeois workers, (the worst of the bourgeoisie), workers if I may say in their Sunday best among the bourgeoisie, intellectuals with armor, the worst of intellectuals, workers advantageous, even more stupid, if it is possible, than the bourgeois their models and than the intellectuals their masters, unhappy people not only rotten with pride but hampered in leftist pride, embroiled in metaphysics in which they then do not understand, nothing at all, advantageous workers, cut off from their people, abbreviated from their race, in short, the unfortunate people who play the smart ones.

It cannot be said too often. Everyone is a Jaurist. That is to say that basically everyone is radical. That is to say bourgeois. It is everywhere the same demagoguery; and it is the same emptiness everywhere; one carrying the other; the other carrying one. This poverty of thought, perhaps unique in the history of the world, this lack of heart which in politics is the hallmark of the radical party has in common Jaurism the whole of the political socialist party and step by step the trade union party. All these people are at the bottom of the radical world. The same indigence, the same lamentable poverty of thought. Even lack of heart. Same lack of race. Even lack of people. Same lack of work. Even lack of tools. Everywhere the same awkward embarrassments. The same eloquence everywhere. The same parliamentarianism, the same superstitions, the same parliamentary rigging, the same changes everywhere. Everywhere this same hollow pride, these stiff arms, these speaking fingers, these hands

which do not know how to handle the tool. Everywhere these same metaphysical embarrassments. And these heads like nuts. They could give another subject, another point of application to their radicalism, or pretend. But the very mode and the being of their radicalism is the same. The same deep infertility and the same need for infertility. And this same deep need not to be reassured, on others, on themselves, as long as they do not experience this good feeling of infertility. This perpetual disarray, this anxiety, this mortal anxiety, this perpetual alert, this constant dread that there is, that it does not come somewhere from fertility, that it does not happen, that it does not come, that it is not founded, that it does not be born some life, some race, some work.

I do not want to come back here to the name of Jaurès. The man who represents German imperial policy in France has fallen below the contempt that can be addressed in the lowest possible way. This representative in France of the German empire, German capitalist and particularly German colonial policy fell into universal contempt. This traitor in essence was able to betray socialism for the first time for the benefit of the bourgeois parties. He was able to betray Dreyfusism a second time for the benefit of reason of state. And to what other profits. He was able to betray these two mystics for the benefit of these two policies. He tried to betray a third time. He tried to betray France itself for the benefit of German policy. And the most bourgeois German policy. Here he met a resistance which must warn him of what awaits him in the shameful crown of his career and that so much turpitude will not perhaps always find an equal success. What he had done with socialism, what he had done with Dreyfusism, he wanted to do with France too. A miserable wreck. But it turned out that France was better guarded.

I apologize to the reader for pronouncing the name of M. Jaurès here. It is a name that has become so basely filthy that when you write it down to send it to printers you have the impression that you are afraid of falling under who knows what criminal laws. The man who infected with radicalism and socialism and Dreyfusism. That kind of Mac-Mahon² of parliamentary eloquence. The man who has always capitulated in the face of all demagoguery. And not only who capitulated but who has always garlanded all capitulations with festoons of his airs of bravery. And not only who has always capitulated himself and for himself, but who has always had the mania, sickly, the monomania, to capitulate not only for all the causes that he represented, more or less usefully, but for a whole lot of causes that no one had ever thought of entrusting to him, and which he had the habit of taking care of himself. He has such a vice and an abject taste for capitulation that he not only capitulates at home and in his own causes, but he seizes on any causes anywhere, only to make it capitulate. This capitulation drum major. This man who was never more than a radical, and even an opportunist radical, a radical left center, and who infected with radicalism precisely everything that was the opposite of radicalism, everything that could hope to escape radicalism a little.

What I want to say today about M. Jaurès is this only. What can there be in common between this man and the people, between this fat bourgeois upstart, pot-bellied, with chunky arms, and a man who

² Marie Edme Patrice Maurice de MacMahon was the Preside of France from 1873 - 1879 and had led the French Army against the Prussians in 1870. They were Irish noblemen who fled to France after the Glorious Revolution.

works? How is it of the people. How does he know what the people are. What does he have in common with a worker? And is it not the greatest misery of this time, that it is such a man who speaks for the people, who speaks among the people, who speaks of the people.

All I wanted to say today is that this great contempt that we universally have for Mr. Jaurès prevents us from seeing that everyone, (I say in political parties), does Jauresism, and so radical. The government does a lot less, even when it's radical, even when it's the same staff, because radicalism is good for exploiting a country, but everyone, and even radicals, find it really impossible in order to govern it.

Subject to this reservation everyone does Jauresism and so inside everyone is doing radicalism. I mean everyone in political parties. And even and perhaps above all those who boast the most about not doing it, and doing the opposite. The unified are doing it, but the trade unionists are doing it, too. In France everyone is radical. (I don't say in government, I say in politics). The few who are not radical are clerical, and it is the same.

It is a great misery to see workers listening to a Jaurès. The one who works listening to the one who does nothing. The one who has a tool in his hand, listening to the one who only has a forest of hair in his hand. The one who knows how to finally listen to the one who does not know, and believing that he is the other one who knows.

Now that they do not make me say what I do not say: I say: We have known a people that we will never see again. I am not saying: We will never see a people. I am not saying: the race is lost. I am not saying: the people are lost. I say: we have known a people we will never see again.

We will see others. For several years, symptoms have been increasing, suggesting a better future. Today is better than yesterday, tomorrow will be better than today. The good sense of these people is perhaps not dried up forever. Perhaps the unique virtues of the breed will be rediscovered. They will no doubt meet again. You just have to know what we are going through, let's say that we have just gone through the worst crisis that this people has ever had to go through. And furthermore, an entirely new crisis. And furthermore, a crisis of which one could have no idea. We must not say: this race has seen many others, it will still see this one, as in the song:

I forgot many others, I will forget that one.³

We must say: this race has seen many others. It has never seen so many of them. It has never seen one like it. It'll be okay with that one. Too. More. It has the most beautiful carnal blood in her veins. And it has bosses like there aren't any in the world.

There are other wisdoms. There are other forms. There are other statuses. There is wise wisdom, vaccinated wisdom, serious wisdom, severe wisdom, wisdom after. But how not to regret the wisdom of before, how not to give a last memory to this innocence that we will never see again. We cannot imagine what the health of this breed was then. And above all this good humor, general, constant, this atmosphere of good humor. And this happiness, this climate of happiness. Obviously we were not yet

³ The old song is called "Le violette double."

living in equality. We did not even think about equality, I mean social equality. A common inequality, commonly accepted, a general inequality, an order, a hierarchy that seemed natural only stepped up the different levels of a common happiness. Today we only talk about equality. And we live in the most monstrous economic inequality that we have ever seen in the history of the world. We were living then. We had children. They did not have the impression we have of being in prison at all. They did not have, like us, this impression of an economic constriction, of an iron collar which holds on to the throat and which is tightened by a notch every day. They had not invented that admirable mechanism of the modern continuous strike, which always raises wages by a third, and the cost of living by a good half, and the misery of the difference.

Of all these people, the best were perhaps still those good citizens who were our teachers. It is true that for us they were not teachers, or hardly at all. They were schoolmasters. It was the time when contributions were still taxes. I'll try to make it someday if I can what it was while the primary education staff. It was civic-mindedness itself, unmitigated dedication to the common interest. Our young *École Normale* was the center of secular life, of secular invention throughout the region, and even I have as an idea that it was a model and in this and in all for the other region, at least for the regions. Under the direction of our private director, the director of the annexed school, young teachers from the *École Normale* came to teach us every week. Let's talk well: they came to teach us. They were like the young Bara of the Republic.⁴ They were always ready to shout, "Long live the Republic!" - Long live the nation, one felt that they had shouted it even under the Prussian saber. Because the enemy, for us, confusedly the whole enemy, the spirit of evil, was the Prussians. It was already not so stupid. Nor so far from the truth. It was in 1880. It is in 1913. Thirty-three years. And we came back to it.

Our young masters were as handsome as black hussars. Slender; severe; strapped. Serious, and a little trembling with their precociousness, their sudden omnipotence. Long black pants, but, I think, with purple piping. Purple is not only the color of bishops, it is also the color of primary education. A black waistcoat. A long black frock coat, straight, falling well, but two crossings of purple palms on the lapels. A flat, black cap, but a crisscrossing of purple palms above the forehead. This civilian uniform was a kind of even more severe military uniform, even more military, being a civic uniform. Something, I think, like Saumur's famous *cadre noir*.⁵ Nothing is beautiful like a beautiful black uniform among military uniforms. This is the line itself. And the severity. Carried by these kids who were really the children of the Republic. By these young hussars of the Republic. By these infants of the Republic. By these black hussars of severity. I think I said they were very old. They were at least fifteen years old. Every week he went up from the *École normale* to the Annex School; and it was always a new one; and thus this *École normale* seemed an inexhaustible regiment. It was like a huge government deposit, of

⁴ Joseph Bara was 14-year-old boy was killed during the French Revolution by Royalists. The story is that he was arrested and told to say, "Vive le roi," that is, Long live the King! Instead, he said, "Vive le Révolution!", long live the Revolution! He was then killed.

⁵ Former name for the *École nationale d'équitation*.

youth and civility. The government of the Republic was responsible for providing us with so much youth and so much education. The state was responsible for providing us with such seriousness. This École normale I was an inexhaustible reservoir. It was a large question, among the good women of the suburb, to know if it was good for the children to change masters like that every Monday morning. But the partisans replied that we still had the same teacher, who was the director of the annex school, which did not change him, and that this house, since it was the École normale, was certainly what there was more learned in the region of Loiret and therefore, no doubt, in France. And in all the other departments. And there was this time that the prefect came to visit the school. But this would lead me into confidences. I learned then, (as I had learned another piece of French history), that he should not be called monsieur at all, but Monsieur le Préfet. Besides, I must say, he was very happy with us. He was called Joli or Joly. We found it very natural (and even, between ourselves, a little necessary, a little sober) that a prefect should have such a gracious name. I would not be surprised if it were the same which still today, still served by this gracious name, but having slightly reinforced it, under the name of M. de Joly or de Joli today presides in Nice (or recently presided over) the destinies of the Maritime Alps and received or received many sovereigns. And the first verses that I heard in my life and of which I was told: we call it verse, they were the Soldiers of year II: oh soldiers of the year two, 6 wars, epics. We see that they served me. Until then I thought they were called *fables*. And the first book that I received as a prize, during the Easter holidays, was precisely the fables of La Fontaine. But this would drag me into sentimentalities.

I would like to say someday, and I would like to be able to say it with dignity, in what friendship, in what beautiful climate of honor and fidelity this noble primary education lived then. I would like to paint a portrait of all my masters. All have followed me, all have remained stubbornly faithful to me in all the poverty of my difficult career. They were not like our fine masters at the Sorbonne. They did not believe that, because a man was your pupil, one is bound to hate him. And to fight him; and seek to strangle him. And to envy him basely. They did not believe that the beautiful name of a pupil was a sufficient title for so much villainy. And to come up against so much base hatred. On the contrary, they believed, and if I may say so, they practiced that being a teacher and students constitutes a sacred connection, very much related to this connection which, the filial becomes the paternal. As Lapicque put it, they thought that we not only have duties towards our teachers but that we also and perhaps especially have duties towards their pupils. Because finally his students, we made them. And it is quite serious. These young people who came every week and whom we officially called student teachers, because they were learning to become teachers, were our elders and our brothers. There I got to know, I say as a student teacher, this man with such a big heart and such kindness who has read for such a beautiful and serious scientific career, Charles Gravier,⁶ and who is, I think, today, an assistant in malacology at the Museum. And who should be more. There I got to know, in the staff of the École normale itself, the treasurer, M. Lecorapte, the very type that everyone had of serious, severe, punctual, just, honest, and in same time of punctual and delicate; and at the same time of benevolent and friend

⁶ Charles Joseph Gravier

and severely affectionate; and at the same time silent and modest and good in its place. In him was summed up all the order of this fine society.

These functionaries, these teachers, this economy had neither entrenched themselves nor left the people. From the working-class and peasantry. Nor did they in any way shun the people. Nor did they in any way intend to govern it. Barely drive it. It must be said that they intended to train him. They had the right to it, because they were worthy of it. They did not succeed, and it was a great misfortune for everyone. But if they have not succeeded, I do not see who could congratulate themselves on it. And who, in their place, never succeeded. And if they did not succeed, it is certainly because it was impossible.

Coming out of the people, but in the other direction, sons of workers, but above all of peasants and small owners, often small owners themselves, of some piece of land somewhere in the region, they remained the same people, not in their Sunday best, I beg you to believe it, only a little more aligned, a little more tidy, a little orderly in these beautiful gardens of school houses.

Above all, they weren't smart. They were just in their place in a well-made society. They knew how far they would go, and so they infallibly got there.

It was in 1880. It was therefore in all the fury and glory of the invention of laicization. We didn't realize it. We were, however, well placed to notice it. Not only were the newly created *école normales*, I think, not only the young *école normales* were the heart and the hearth of the young secularization, but our *École normales* of Orleans was a pure between the pure ones. It was one of the heads and one of the hearts of laicization. Mr. Naudy personally was a great laicist. Happy childhood. Happy innocence. Blessing on a good race. Everything was good to us. Everything was successful for us. We took it with both hands and it was still healthy nourishment. We went to catechism on Thursdays I think so as not to disturb school hours. Catechism was a long way from there, in town, in our ancient parish of Saint-Aignan. Not everyone has a parish like this. You had to go up half of the suburb to Porte Bourgogne, down half of Rue Bourgogne, turn this street to the left, which I believe was called Rue de l'Oriflamme, and cross the cloister as cold as a cellar under its heavy chestnut trees. Our young vicars told us exactly the opposite of what our young student teachers told us, (or our young deputy masters, as they were also called, but it was a name perhaps, a little less exact, and above all a little less elegant). (A little less noble). We didn't realize it. The Republic and the Church gave us diametrically opposed teachings. What did it matter, as long as they were lessons? There is something so sacred in teaching and in childhood, there is in this first opening of the child's eyes to the world, there is in this first glance something so religious that these two teachings were bound together in our hearts and that we know well that they will remain bound there eternally. We loved the Church and the Republic together, and we loved them with the same heart, and it was with a child's heart, and for us it was the wide world, and our two loves, glory and faith, and for us it was the new world. And now...Now obviously we don't like them on the same level, since we have been taught that there are levels. The Church has our faith, and all that is due to her. But God only knows how much we have remained committed with honor and heart in this Republic, and how much we are determined to remain committed to it, because it was one of the two purities of our childhood.

We were serious little boys from this serious city, innocent and deep down already worried. We took everything we were told seriously, and what our lay masters told us, and what our Catholic masters told us. We took everything literally. We believed entirely, and equally, and with the same credence, in all that was in grammar and in all that there was in the catechism. We *learned* grammar and also and similarly we *learned* catechism. We *knew* the grammar and also and similarly we *knew* the catechism. We have not forgotten either one; either. But here we have to come to a much less simple phenomenon. I want to talk about what happened in us for these two metaphysics, since it is understood that there must be a metaphysics underneath everything. I have said it enough, when I was a prose writer.

Here we come to an extreme difficulty, to a point of difficulty. It is the moment not to avoid the difficulties, especially this one which is important. This is also the time to take responsibility.

Everyone has a metaphysics. Known, latent. I have said it enough. Or we don't exist. And even those who don't exist still have a metaphysics. Our masters were not those who don't exist. Our masters existed. And strongly. Our masters had a metaphysics. And why keep quiet. They were not silent. They have never been silent. The metaphysics of our masters was first of all school metaphysics. But it was then, it was mostly the metaphysics of *science*, it was metaphysics or at least a materialist metaphysics, (these soulful beings had a materialist metaphysics, but it's always like that), (and at the same time idealist, deeply moralist and if you will Kantian), it was a positivist metaphysics, it was the famous metaphysics of progress. The metaphysics of the priests, my God, was precisely the theology and thus the metaphysics that there is in the catechism.

Our masters and our priests, that would be a pretty good title for a novel. Our lay masters had a certain teaching, a certain metaphysics. Our master priests had, gave a diametrically opposite teaching, a diametrically opposite metaphysics. We didn't realize it, I don't need to say it, and that's not what I mean. What I want to say is more serious.

As I said, we fully believed everything we were told. We were serious and certainly serious little fellows. I had this disease among all and in the highest degree. I never got over it. Even today I still believe everything I am told. And I feel that I will never change. First of all, we never change. I have always taken everything seriously. It got me a long way. We therefore fully believed in the teachings of our masters, and also fully in the teachings of our pastors. We fully absorbed them or the metaphysics of our masters, and also fully the metaphysics of our priests. Today I can say without offending anyone that the metaphysics of our masters no longer has for us and for anyone any kind of existence and the metaphysics of the priests has taken possession of our beings to a depth that the priests themselves would be well kept from suspecting. We no longer believe a word of what our masters taught, of metaphysics. And we fully believe what is in the catechism and it has become and has remained our flesh. But that's not what I mean yet.

We no longer believe a word of what our lay masters taught us, and all the metaphysics that lay beneath them is for us less than empty ashes. We do not only believe, we are fully nourished by what the priests taught us, from what is in the catechism. Now our lay masters have kept our whole heart and they have our entire confidence. And unfortunately we cannot say that our old priests have absolutely all our hearts nor that they have ever had our confidence.

There is a problem here and I will even say an extremely serious mystery. Let us not hide it from ourselves. This is the very problem of the dechristianization of France. I will be forgiven for this

somewhat solemn expression. And this word so heavy. This is because the event that I want to express, that I want to designate, is perhaps itself quite solemn. And a little heavy. It is not a question here of denying; nor hiding the difficulties. It is not a question of closing our eyes. That those who have the confession certainly do not have the confidence is not an explanation, it is a fact, and the very center of the difficulty.

I do not believe that it depends on the very character of the priest. I realize very well that in recent years I have become more and more connected with young priests who come to see me at the notebooks two or three times a year. I do not feel any embarrassment, no hindrance. These beginnings of connection are made in total openness of heart, in all simplicity, in all open language. Really without any sense of defense. How is it that we have never had, even with our old priests, even with those we loved the most, even with those we loved as a family, only a somewhat reluctant affair and a certain feeling of defense. This is one of those secrets of the heart where one would find the deepest explanations. We no longer believe a word of what our old masters said; and our masters have kept all our heart, a demeanor, an entire openness of confidence. We fully believe what our old priests said, (I dare not say more than they themselves believed, because we must never say what we think), and our old priests have certainly had our heart; They were such good people, so good, so devoted, but they never had from us that proper kind of complete openness of confidence that we gave *de plano* and so liberally to our lay masters. And that we kept them all.

This is not the place to go deeper into this secret. There would have to be a dialogue, and even several, and I am not saying that I will not write them. This is the very problem of the temporary dechristianization of France. There must be a reason so that, in the country of Saint Louis and Joan of Arc, in the city of Saint Geneviève, when we start talking about Christianity, everyone understands that it is about Mac-Mahon, and when we are preparing to talk about the Christian order so that everyone understands that it is about the Sixteenth of May.⁷

Our masters were essentially and profoundly men of old France. A man is not determined by what he does and even less by what he says. But deep down, a being is determined only by what it is. What does it matter for what I mean that our masters indeed had a metaphysical which aimed at destroying old France? Our masters were born in the house they wanted to demolish. They were the sons of the house. They were of the race, and it's all there. We know very well that it was not their metaphysics that brought the old house down. A house never perishes except from within. It was the defenders of the throne and the altar who laid the throne down, and, as far as they could, the altar.

It is one of the most frequent confusions, (and I do not mean the most basic), to precisely confuse man, the being of man with these unfortunate characters that we play. In this jumble and haste of modern life, nothing is examined; it suffices that anyone who does anything (or even pretends), for one to say, (and even to let one believe), that this is his being. No account error is perhaps so false and perhaps so serious. Therefore no error is so common. A man is his extraction, a man is what he is. It is not what he does for others, for successors. It will perhaps be the others, it will perhaps be the successors who will be that. But he is not it.

⁷ May 16, 1877, when President MacMahon dismissed the Prime Minister, Jules Simon.

The father is not from himself, he is from his extraction; and perhaps from his children will be his.

The men of the French Revolution were men of the Ancien Régime. They *played* us, the French Revolution. But they *were* from the ancien régime. And it is still hardly so the men of '48 or we are of the French Revolution, that is to say of what they wanted to make of the French Revolution. And even there may never be. Thus our good lay masters introduced, *played* new metaphysics. But they *were* men from old France.

On the other hand and similarly, by a contrary and perfectly analogous situation, all these great tenants of the old régime among us are like everyone else. They are predominantly modern men and generally modernists. They are by no means, and even less than others, men of old France. They are reactionaries, but they are infinitely less conservative than we are. They are not demolishing the Republic, but they are working as hard as they can to demolish respect, which was the very foundation of the old régime. We can literally say that these supporters of the old régime have only one idea, which is to ruin all that we have kept beautiful and healthy from the old régime, and which is still so considerable. They look like leagues, they have made a mentality of leagues, forgetting that the league was undoubtedly not an institution of royalty, but that it was a disease on the contrary, and the announcement and the initiation of future times, the beginning of the intrigue and of the crowd and of the delegation and of the number and of the suffrage and of one does not already know which parliamentary democracy.

It's always the same story, and the same slippage, and the same postponement, and the same shift. Because it's always the same haste, and the same superficiality, and the same lack of work, and the same lack of attention. We don't watch, we don't pay attention to what people do, what they are, or even what they say. We pay attention to what they say they do, what they say they are, what they say they say. It is a misdemeanor quite analogous to that which constantly occurs in the famous great reborn quarrel of the romantics and the classicists.⁸ And ancient and modern. Provided that a man speaks of the classic *way* and as long as he declares himself a supporter of the classic, it is immediately understood that he is a classicist. We do not pay attention that he thinks like a fanatic, without order, and that he writes like a fanatic, and like a frenetic, without order and without reason, and that he speaks of the classic in romantic, and that he defends and that he preaches the classic in romantic, and that he is therefore a romantic, a romantic being. And we, who do not make so much hay, it is we who are classic.

And the theorists of clarity make cloudy books.

Likewise, and again, as soon as an author works in the Christian way, we make him Christian; he wrote in deep disorder, we make him the restorer of order; and his stage mechanics were it exactly those of *Marie Tudor* and *Angelo*,⁹ and *Lucrece Borgia*, we do not want to see that in the theater he is a romantic. And a madman.

⁸ French classicism is set of literary techniques and expectations which include but are not limited to rhyme, meter, unity of time, unity of place, etc.

⁹ *Tyran de Padoue*. (tn] *Angelo*, tyran de Padoue was a play written by Victor Hugo in 1835. Péguy footnotes the rest of the title in the original publication of *L'Argent*.

Our old masters were not only men from old France. They taught us, basically, the very morals and being of old France. I'm going to surprise them: they taught us the same: they taught us the same things as the priests. And the priests taught us the same thing as them. All their metaphysical contrarities were nothing compared to this deep community that they were from the same race, the same time, the same France, the same regime. From the same discipline. From the same world. What the priests said, basically the teachers also said. What the teachers said, basically the priests also said. Because both together they said.

Both of them and with them our parents and even before them our parents they told us, they taught us this stupid morality, which made France, which even today prevents it from undoing itself. This stupid morality in which we believed so much. To which, fools that we are, and not very scientific, despite all the denials of the fact, to which we cling desperately in the secrecy of our hearts. This fixed thought of our solitude is from all of them that we hold it. All three of them taught us this morality, they told us that a man who works well and has good conduct is always sure to not lack for anything. The strongest thing is that they believed it. And the strongest thing is that *it was* true.

Some paternally, and maternally; the others academically, intellectually, secularly; others devoutly, piously; all learnedly, all paternally, all with a lot of heart they taught, they believed, they *stated* this stupid morality: (our only recourse; our black secret arises): that a man who works as much as he can, and who has no great vice, who is neither a player nor a drunkard, is always sure to never lack for anything and as my mother said that he will always have bread for his old age. They all believed that, an old and ingrained belief, an ineradicable, uneradicable belief, that the reasonable and full man of conduct, that the laborious, was perfectly certain never to die of hunger. And even that he was sure to always be able to feed his family. That he would always find work and still earn a living.

This whole old world was essentially the world of *earning a living*.

To speak more precisely, they believed that the man who is confined in poverty and who has, even moderately, the virtues of poverty, finds there a little total security. Or to speak more deeply, they believed that daily bread is assured, by purely temporal means, by the very play of economic balances, to any man who, having the virtues of poverty, consents, (as moreover we must), to be confined in poverty. (Which moreover for them was at the same time and in this very fact not only the greatest happiness, but the only happiness even that one could imagine). (Stay well in a small house of poverty).

We wonder where could have been born, how could have been born such a stupid belief, (our deep secret, our last and our secret rule, our rule of life secretly cherished); one wonders where it could have been born, how could have been born, such an unreasonable opinion, a judgment on life so completely indefensible. That we do not seek. This morality was not stupid. It was right then. And even it was the only righteous one. This belief was not absurd. It was, in fact, founded. And even it was the only one founded in fact. This opinion was not unreasonable, this judgment was not indefensible. On the contrary, it proceeded from the deepest reality of that time.

We often wonder where it was born, how was born this old classical morality, this old traditional morality, this old morality of labor and security in wages, security in reward, provided we limit ourselves to within the limits of poverty, and hence and finally security in happiness. But that is

precisely what they saw; everyday. This is what we never see, and we say to ourselves: Where did they invent that. And we believe, (because they were schoolmasters, and priests, that is to say in a certain sense still schoolmasters), we believe that it was an invention, scholarly, intellectual. Not at all. No. On the contrary, it was this that was reality itself. We have known a time, we have touched a time when that was the reality. This morality, this view of the world, this view of the world, on the contrary, had all the scientific sacraments. It was this which was customary, experienced, practical, empirical, experimental, a de facto constantly accomplished. It was she who knew. It was she who had seen. And this is perhaps the most profound difference, the abyss that there has been between all this great ancient world, pagan, Christian, French, and our modern world, cut as I said, from the date I said. And here we intersect once again this ancient proposition of us that the modern world, alone and on its side, is suddenly opposed to all the other worlds, to all the old worlds together en bloc and on their side. We have known, we have touched a world, (children we have participated in), where a man who confined himself to poverty was at least guaranteed in poverty. It was a sort of deaf contract between man and spell, and this contract had never failed before the inauguration of modern times. It was understood that the one who made fantasy, the arbitrary, that the one who introduced a game, that the one who wanted to escape poverty risked everything. Since he introduced the game, he could lose. But whoever did not play could not lose. They could not have suspected that a time was coming, and that it was already here, and this is precisely the modern time, where the one who does not play would lose all the time, and even more surely than the one who plays.

They could not foresee that such a time would come, that it was there, that it was already overlooking. They couldn't even assume that there ever was, that there had to be such a time. In their system, which was the very system of reality, the one who braved obviously risked everything, but the one who did not risked absolutely nothing. The one who tried, the one who wanted to escape from poverty, the one who played at escaping from poverty obviously risked falling back into the most extreme miseries. But the one who did not play, the one who confined himself to poverty, not playing, introducing no risk, was not in any risk of falling into any misery either. The acceptance of poverty awarded a kind of patent, instituted a kind of contract. The man who resolutely confined himself to poverty was never hunted down in poverty. It was a reduction. It was an asylum. And it was sacred. Our masters did not foresee, and how could they have suspected, how could they have imagined this purgatory, not to say this hell of the modern world where he who does not play loses, and always loses, where he who limits himself in poverty is incessantly pursued in the very retreat of this poverty.

Our masters, our elders could not foresee, could not imagine this mechanism, this economic automatism of the modern world where we all feel, year after year, more strangled by the same iron yoke which tightens around our necks.

It was understood that whoever wanted to get out of poverty risked falling into misery. It was his business. He was breaking the contract concluded with the spell. But we had never seen that he who wanted to limit himself to poverty was condemned to relapse perpetually into misery. We had never seen that it was fate that broke the contract. They did not know, they could not foresee this modern monstrosity, this cheating, new, this invention, this breaking of the game, that whoever does not play constantly loses.

(Given that we make poverty to misery this difference in definitions, this discrimination so deep and which goes so far that there is from one to the other, a determination that I had begun to recognize, concerning Lavergne's admirable novel, in a notebook entitled by *Jean Coste*).

In the system of our good masters, parish priests, and lay people, and laymen, and it was the same system of reality, whoever wanted to get out of poverty from above risked leaving it, being thrown from below. He had nothing to say. He had denounced the pact. But poverty was sacred. Whoever did not play, who did not want to escape from above, ran no risk of being thrown from below. *Fideli fidelis*, to him who was faithful to it, poverty was faithful. And for us it was reserved for us to experience unfaithful poverty.

It was reserved for us that even poverty should be unfaithful to us. In short, it was reserved for us that the very marriage of poverty was an adulterous marriage.

In other words, they could not foresee, they could not imagine this monstrosity of the modern world (which was already overhanging), they did not have to conceive of this monster of a Paris like modern Paris where the population is cut into two classes so perfectly separated that never before had we seen so much money rolled around for the fun of it, and money being so refused at the point of work.

And so much money rolls over for luxury and money will deny itself at the point of poverty.

In other words, in another term they could not foresee, they could not suspect this reign of money. They could none the less foresee it as their wisdom was ancient wisdom itself. She came from afar. It dated from the most profound antiquity, by a temporal filiation, by a natural descent that we will perhaps try to deepen one day.

There have always been rich and poor, and *there will always be poor among you*, and the war of the rich and the poor is more than half of Greek history and many other stories and money never ceased to exercise its power and it did not wait for the beginning of modern times to carry out its crimes. It is nonetheless true that man's marriage to poverty had never been broken. And at the beginning of modern times, it was not only broken, but man and poverty entered into eternal infidelity.

When we say the ancients, with regard to modern times, we must understand together both the ancient ancients and the ancient Christians. It was the very principle of ancient wisdom that whoever wanted to come out of his condition, the gods hit him without fail. But they struck much less generally the one who did not seek to rise above his condition. It was reserved for us, it was reserved in modern times for man to be struck down in his very condition.

With regard to modern times, the ancient and the Christian go together, are together: the two ancients, the Hebrew, the Greek. The Christian was once an antique. Until 1880. Today he must be a modern. These are the commandments of these temporal governments. These are the catches of these seasons of the world. It is undeniable that Christian mores themselves have suffered this profound retaliation. It was reserved for us to inaugurate this new state. In short, Christendom had little by little extended to the temporal this word that *which is lowered will be raised*, and that *which is raised will be lowered*. Thus understood, in this sense, temporal, it is not only the word of David, *Deposuit potentes; et exaltavit*,¹⁰ it is almost the ancient word itself. The word of Hesiod and Homer; and Sophocles and Aeschylus. It

¹⁰ Luke 1:52

was reserved for us to inaugurate this regime where that which does not rise is lowered all the same.

I had been in this small primary school annexed to our Normal Primary School for a year when Mr. Naudy was appointed director of this École Normale, coming from another less important capital where he had spent perhaps ten years. It was, I think, in 1881. He was a man of deep culture, graduated from high school and who I believe had earned his law degree. Like many others he had thrown himself, so to speak, into primary education after the war, into this need for civic reconstruction to which we ultimately owe the reestablishment of France. Others had done the same, who made great temporal careers through this movement. M. Naudy was anxious to find something, in no way to make a temporal career. He had that founding temperament, which is so beautiful, which was so frequent in the beginnings of the Third Republic. I admit that it was a rudely beautiful thing that this École Normale of teachers where we were like little pupils, and that it was young, and that it was nine, and that it worked. The garden was cut like a grammar page and gave that perfect satisfaction that only a grammar page can provide. The trees lined up like young examples. (With only the few exceptions needed, the few exceptions to confirm the rule). (I saw them again. We do not know how it is that these trees today have become forty years old). We came back from high school, when we had become young high school students, we had constant sports competitions with young normaliens. Because we had also just invented sport, and founded this other foundation. But this would drag me into complexities.

So M. Naudy came to us as a super-director. Officially he only directed the École Normale. But his overflowing activity could not ignore or neglect the subsidiary. Shall I say he distinguished me. That would be talking rudely. He soon made himself my master and my father. I said above that he was the man in the world to whom I owed the most: he made me enter the sixth grade.

The bourgeois son who enters sixth grade, as he has goods and the same bourgeois movement, cannot imagine this my crossroads about entering or not entering sixth grade; and this point of invention, to enter it. I had already left, I had already slipped onto the other path, I was lost when M. Naudy, with that stubbornness of a founder, with that kind of rude brutality which really made him a boss and a master, succeeded to pull myself together and send me back to sixth grade. After my studies certificate, I was naturally placed, I mean that I was *put* in the Upper Primary School of Orléans, (so many schools, but you have to study well), (which was called then the vocational school). M. Naudy caught up with me, if I may say so, by the skin of the neck and with a municipal scholarship made me enter sixth grade at Easter, in the excellent sixth grade of M. Guerrier. *He must do Latin*, he had said: it is the same strong word which has resounded victoriously in France today again for several years. What was for me this entry into this sixth at Easter, the astonishment, the novelty in front of *rosa, rosae*, the opening of a whole world, quite different, of a whole new world, that is what we should say, but this is what would lead me to tenderness. The grammarian who once opened the Latin grammar for the first time on the declension of *rosa, rosae* has never known on which flower beds he opened the soul of the child. I was to find almost throughout secondary education that great affectionate and paternal kindness, that piety of the boss and the teacher that we had found in all our teachers in primary education. Guerrier, Simore, Doret in sixth, fifth, fourth. And in third, this quite excellent man who arrived from the West Indies and whose name I will have to find. He arrived properly *from the islands*.

This great kindness, this great descending piety of guardian and father, this sort of constant warning, this long and patient and gentle paternal fidelity, one of the most beautiful feelings of man there is in the world, I had found it throughout this small primary school annexed to the École normale of teachers of Orleans. I found it almost throughout the Lycée d'Orléans. I found it at Lakanal, eminently at Father Edet's, and then pushed, so to speak, in him to its point of perfection. I found it at Sainte-Barbe. I found it at Louis-le-Grand, especially at Bompard. I found it at the School, especially in a man like Bedier, and in a man like Georges Lyon. I had to come to the Sorbonne to know, to discover, with a theatrical stupor, what it is like for a master who is angry with his students, who dries up with envy and jealousy, and the need for tyrannical domination; precisely because he is their master and they are his pupils; I had to come to the Sorbonne to know what it is to be an embittered old man (the ugliest thing in the world), a lean and sour and unhappy master, a withered, faded face, not just wrinkled; receding eyes; a bad mouth; lips of vending machines; and those unfortunate people who are angry with their students for everything, for being young, for being new, for being fresh, for being candid, for being beginners, for not being bent like them; and above all the greatest crime: precisely to be their pupils. That awful feeling of an old woman.

Who has not sat at the crossroads of two roads. I often wonder with a sort of retrospective anxiety, with a dizziness behind me, where I was going, what was becoming of me, if I had not gone to sixth grade, if M. Naudy had not fished me out just at these Easter holidays. I was twelve years and three months old. It was time.

We will find in this notebook the results of a thirty-year experiment, pushed forward, continued in primary education by a man who was probably not originally, but who had done so without reservation. By a man who had done everything, without any restriction or ulterior motive, by a man who had made his life out of it. M. Naudy did not leave the École Normale d'Orléans, after ten or twelve good years of full practice, (which were really the twelve years of the founding of this school, and from which it emerged as a beautiful constituted body), than to take a primary inspection in Paris, where I think he hardly stayed less than twenty years. Once again, once after so many others, we therefore have this good fortune that we will be told about a profession, (and one of the first professions), by a man of this profession; who it it for thirty years; and more; not by a man who talks about it on papers; but by a man who has exercised; thirty years by a man of great sense, an open mind, very active, who operated there for thirty years, and in great detail. And who was always particularly well placed to talk about it. When he talks to us about teacher training colleges and inspections, he will not be talking about papers and office reports on teacher training colleges and inspections, he will be talking about teacher training schools and the inspections themselves. The ideas which are beginning to circulate, and which appear today in a number of reports and bills, he had them, those he needed, when they were needed, for a long time, drawn from long experience.

I need not say that I have not changed a line from my old master's copy. One will certainly find there, how shall I put it, a youthful strength and why should I not speak all my thoughts a virtue of illusion that we no longer have. It is a great sadness when men of sixty have kept all their illusions and when men of forty no longer have them. And it's still a sign of this time and the dawning of modern times

and none of it had come up in any other time. It is a great misery when men of sixty are young and men of forty are no longer that way. We will have been constantly a generation which will have passed through all the *minima* and sometimes through all the nothingness of contemporary history. This is what I once called a sacrificed generation. But I don't know why I insist on saying it again. Forty-year-old men know it very well without being told. Those before and those after, the men of sixty, by whom we were sacrificed, and the men of twenty, for whom we sacrificed ourselves, don't really care and even when they wouldn't care, they'll never believe it; and even if they believe it, they will never know it, no matter what. This is the very principle of the teaching of history.

It follows that we will find in this notebook this same ardor of laicization which fills the whole life of these men, which in some degenerated into a stubborn fury, but in others also was maintained as a simple ardor of combat, like a beautiful joyful ardor. It is an absolute rule since the beginning of these notebooks, it is our very principle and our fundamental statute and, I think, the best of our *raison d'être* that the author is free in his notebook and that I am only there to assure the temporal government of this freedom.

This fundamental rule has never suffered any exception. She was not going to suffer one when the copy was brought to me by one of the men to whom I am most attached.

This fundamental rule, obstinately followed for fifteen years, and which will be followed as long as the house is standing, has cost us dearly. It is to it, and to it almost exclusively, that we owe the fifteen years of poverty through which we have just passed. It is to it that we owe those that await us. And again, when I say that it is poverty, it is out of decency and I myself miss my definitions a little. We know very well that there is only money for those who join the parties and play party games. And when it is not the political parties, it must at least be the literary parties.

Such, however, are the customs of true freedom. To be a free person is precisely the opposite of being a modernist, and it is through an incredible abuse of language that these two words are usually seen. And what they designate. But the least indicated abuses of language are always the most successful. And here is an incredible confusion. And I hate nothing more than modernism. And I love nothing more than freedom. (And in itself, and is it not the irrevocable condition of grace).

Let's say the words. Modernism is, modernism consists in not believing what one believes. Freedom consists in believing what one believes and admitting, (basically, demanding), that the neighbor also believes what he believes.

Modernism consists in not believing oneself in order not to harm the adversary who no longer believes. It is a system of mutual declination. Freedom is to believe. And to admit, and to believe that the adversary believes.

Modernism is a system of convenience. Freedom is a system of deference.

Modernism is a system of politeness. Freedom is a system of respect.

We should not say big words, but after all modernism is a system of cowardice. Freedom is a system of courage.

Modernism is the virtue of worldly people. Freedom is the virtue of the poor.

I must do this justice to our subscribers that in this government of liberty they have remained admirably faithful to us. It is their honor. And it is ours. I have often reproached our subscribers for

not being numerous enough. And this year I blame them at least as much as ever. But I admit that it is a reproach which goes all the same a little more to those who are not there than to those who are. Those who have understood perfectly, I mean that they knew in advance as well as we do what the mores of true freedom are.

Already a word that I don't like, but after all life itself requires freedom. A review is only alive if it annoys a good fifth of its subscribers each time. Justice consists only in that it is not always the same, which is in the fifth. Otherwise, I mean when you try not to upset anyone, you fall into the system of these huge journals losing millions, or winning millions, to put it mildly. Or rather saying nothing.

Our subscribers have understood it perfectly, we must do them this honor. As much as we do, they have the taste and respect for freedom. They have shown it to us by this beautiful loyalty of fifteen years. They are, as ever, too few in number. But those who are there remain there.

By this harsh method, by this unique system of recruitment, a common abasement based on an incessant exchange of mutual concessions, which we constantly pass from one to the other, does not manifest itself, but it is thus that our notebooks have hardly been little by little formed as a common place of all those who do not cheat. We are here Catholics who do not cheat; Protestants who do not cheat; Jews who do not cheat; free thinkers who do not cheat. This is why we are so few Catholics; so few Protestants; so few Jews; so few free thinkers. And in all, so few people. And we have the Catholics against us who cheat; Protestants who cheat; Jews who cheat; free thinkers who cheat the Lavissee of everyone;¹¹ gone; the Laudet of all stripes.¹² And that's a lot of people. Besides that all cheaters have a security in order to recognize each other and in order to rely on each other; infallible security; invincible security; to support each other; an inexpiable security. A certainty of instinct, a certainty of race, the only instinct they have, which is comparable only to the profound certainty with which the mediocre recognize and support the mediocre. But basically, it is not the same. And aren't they the same. If only we honest people were true to honesty as mediocrity is true to mediocrity.

I do not understand that there is a question of teachers. First of all, if they had remained schoolteachers all that would not have happened. That they make their school, there is nothing more beautiful in the world.

Make no mistake, they have the best job in the world. They alone have pupils. (They and the teachers of secondary education). The others have disciples. The others are higher education teachers. And it is, alas, the writer.

Let it be experienced, one's experience is easy to do. Let everyone examine themselves carefully. Let everyone look at their being and go back down a bit in their memory. Who are we. Are we the innocent but equally abused student who scrupulously followed the courses of the Sorbonnards? No, we are not

¹¹ Ernest Lavissee was a French Historian (1842-1922) who taught at the École Normale Supérieure and the Sorbonne and was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature 5 times.

¹² Fernand Laudet was a French writer and theologian (1860-1933) who edited *La Revue hebdomadaire* which reviewed Péguy's *Le Mystère de la charité de Jeanne d'Arc* critically causing Péguy to respond with his powerful essay, *Un nouveau théologien, M. Fernand Laudet*.

this misery and we are no longer this prey. Let every man who has passed thirty-five years look at himself and recognize himself. Let every man see what he is, who he is, descend into his own being. We are not those pure young men, innocent and annoyingly enthusiastic, candid, blind, so naively pious towards their masters, that their masters have deceived. We are these children before the age of twelve, these same children, just as pure, perhaps more pure; and we are those same teenagers before sixteen. We are the men of our laborious childhood. We are the men of our laborious adolescence. We are by no means the men of our abused youth. That is to say on the other hand that we have undergone the impregnation of our parents; and our first degree teachers; and our second-degree teachers. But that we have not undergone any impregnation of our masters of the third degree. Moreover our masters of the third degree were very concerned about filiation and spiritual paternity and to reign over hearts. Their only concern was by a game of marriages, appointments, academic and university elections, intrigue, baseness, betrayals, denouncements and honors, to ensure, to perpetuate among them a temporal government of spirits. They got what they wanted. And beyond what they hoped for. Let them not ask for more.

This means that the most beautiful job in the world, after being a parent, (and moreover it is the job most closely related to the job of a parent), is the job of a schoolmaster and it is the job of a high school teacher. Or if you prefer, it's the job of a teacher and it's the job of a secondary school teacher. But while the teachers are therefore content with what is most beautiful. And that they do not seek in their turn to explain, to invent, to exercise spiritual government; and a temporal government of spirits. It would be to aspire to go down. It is precisely at this game that the priests lost France. It is perhaps not very indicative that by the same game the teachers lose it in their turn. We have to get used to the idea that we are a free people. If the parish priests were bound, and limited, to their ministry, the people of the parishes would still be crowded around them. As long as teachers teach our children the rule of three, and especially the proof by nine, they will be considered citizens.

Why above all establish or seek to establish this confusion that we see everywhere, in all their congresses, in their newspapers and reviews and demands. Why mix questions of money and questions of government. Would it be to honor questions of money, by mixing them with questions of government. But money is highly honorable, it cannot be said too often. When it is the price and the money of daily bread. Money is more honorable than government, because you cannot live without money, and you can live very well without exercising government. Money is not dishonorable, when it is wages, and remuneration and pay, therefore when it is wages. When it is poorly earned. It is dishonorable only when it is the money of worldly people. So there is, in other cases, I mean when it is not the money of the people of the world, no shame in talking about it. And to speak of it as such. There is even only that which is honorable. And that is right. And that is decent. We must always speak of money as money. That the teachers have the right to live, like everyone else, who denies it, and we will dispute it less than anyone, we who are not only with them, we who are of them, we who were the first to publish Lavergne's admirable novel here. *Jean Coste* has the right to feed his wife and children. There is no doubt. If he succeeds poorly today, here again he does like everyone else. He does like us. At least he does like everyone else who works. There is a little ease, in the modern world, only for those who do not work.

So this is a very serious question. But what I want to say today is that it is really a question of common law. It is a question of a certain common misery, of a great common misery. It is a question of the general life of the nation and of budgetary availability. This first question has nothing in common with this other question of this spiritual government that some teachers ask to exercise among us. For it is again, this again is a *demand*.

It is still very good that young teachers, and even older ones, go and work in the Faculties. I am sure that they are doing excellent work there, and that this collaboration is yielding the best results in the provinces. But it is not a secret either that in Paris the small clan of the Sorbonne had undertaken to rely on the teachers when it proposed to ruin secondary education in France and that a certain number of teachers, (a very small number), answered this call.

Here again I allow myself to find that it is not the teachers who are wrong. It was not the teachers who were the most to blame, nor even the real culprits. In all demagoguery, the one who is the subject and the object and the inert instrument is less guilty than the one who is the inventor and the author. And the first engine. Great pontiffs, men in honor came to tell schoolmasters that high school is useless, that nothing is learned from the beginning of the sixth to the end of philosophy. I do not have a grievance with these teachers for having believed it. I have a grievance with these professors, who went through the sixth grade and philosophy, for having said so. It is not a question of recruiting troops at any cost. All the same, we should not deceive the world too much.

This brings me to a singular question, and one that I am surprised that no one has ever asked. Why don't school teachers study. I remember very well how it was. I remember very well the path I was following when M. Naudy withdrew from me a little quickly. The young people who proposed to become schoolmasters, or rather the young people who were thought of to make them schoolmasters, to make them become schoolmasters *did* first three years at the primary school superior, which was then called, as I have said, the first vocational school; year, second year, third year; for three years they prepared for entry to the École Normal Primaire. Those who were received then spent three years in this École Normal Primaire. We started over: first year; second year; third year. In all, it had been six years. With the time that could be lost between the two at the cut-off, it was more or less precisely all the time it takes to study, from the beginning of sixth grade to the completion of philosophy. Now these children of peasants and these children of workers, already highly sorted, who were preparing and who were destined or who were being prepared and who were destined to become teachers, were on the average at least as intelligent as the petty bourgeoisie who entered high school a little confusedly. And they worked at least as much. And a few were working very well. They put in a lot more trouble, they put in a lot more work to pass the simple patent than we do to take the final fourth exam, which we do not take, and to take the higher certificate than we do to take the bachot. So we wonder. And it is so simple to ask oneself: So, at that cost, for that price, for this length of time, for so much work and for so much driving, one wonders at that price why we do not not do their studies. And why, instead of the higher certificate, which is nothing, we do not at least give them the bachot, which is not much. I don't see how knowing Latin and Greek would prevent them from teaching French, and even from teaching in French. I would make a good schoolmaster. One wonders if it was not the French bourgeoisie which did it on purpose, fearing competition, to have teachers who had not completed their studies. Because after all it is at least as difficult and it takes at least as much work and as much

labor to enter the École Normal of Saint-Gloud as to enter the École Normal de l'enseignement secondaire. (It is ours, my children).

So why did we go about it in such a way that the baggage of some was nothing but a jumble. If this is a calculation that the bourgeoisie made, as it is probable, it must be admitted that it is well rewarded today. To constantly find against it and under it this silent revolt of a primary education which precisely did not make its studies. And once again it must be noted that the sabotage came from above, from the bourgeoisie. And that it is paid for by antagonistic sabotage.

All this cleared up, and addressing myself to the teachers themselves, and no longer to their programs, which they are subjected to, and no longer to the conditions which the State has made them, which they undergo, I will allow myself to say to them : (And I say this naturally only to the few who are obviously worked up by this temptation), I say to them: why do you want to exercise a government of minds? And like all the others why do you want to exercise a temporal government of the spirits. Why do you want to have a policy, and impose it. Why do you want to have a metaphysics, and impose it. Why do you want to have some system and impose it.

You were made to learn to read, write, and count. So teach them to read, write, and count. It is not only very useful. It is not only very honorable. It is the base of everything. *He knows his four rules*, they said of someone when I was little. Let them teach us our four rules. I don't want to play with words, but without speaking of writing, it would already be a great progress, (since we are in a system of progress), to have, than to be a people who can read and who would know count. And when with it our teachers would use their activity to save this country from the two scourges which constantly threaten it, there is something in there for the life of a man and many men would like to be able to say the same. (These two plagues that I mean are naturally politics and alcoholism, and basically they are only ones, and as long as the teachers claim a point of support, an establishment against politics and the merchants of wine not only are they a hundred times right, but they are a hundred times reasonable, both for themselves and for the country). But these rules of great hygiene, these general hygiene practices go without saying; they can only be compromised, and perhaps completely masked, completely obliterated, completely annulled by a claim to a government of minds.

Teach the elements, teach children of good race these old truths on which everyone agrees: (and on which the world is founded): that Paris is the capital of France that; Versailles is the capital of the department of Seine-et-Oise. For the very learned, push until the extraction of the square root; and perhaps from the cube root, what a more enviable fate. And is it not infinitely more beautiful; and bigger; and wiser than haranguing drunken men. Talking about the metric system, which is reason itself, and which is so perfect. Speak also of the solar system, which is a kind of metric system, with multiples and submultiples, and which is really so large, of planets, satellites, of the Milky Way for the most learned; of rotation and revolution; and finally everything we learned in elementary school (everything we know). Be sure that everything you say is true, that everything you say bears, that it is understood, that it remains, what a happy fate, and there is nothing above it.

Make these beautiful logical and grammatical analyzes, where everything fell straight, where we knew everything, where we disarticulated completely, where we exhausted a sentence, where there was nothing left, where everything fell right. And of those beautiful arithmetic problems where it was necessary so carefully to separate the *calculations* from the *reasoning*, by a vertical bar, and where there

were always taps running to fill or to empty a basin (and often both), (to fill and empty out together), (funny occupation), (*after how many hours ...*); and there were always apartments to furnish. And we multiplied the upholsterer by the price per running meter.

Charles Péguy