

Bert Tells What He Reads



Robert Musil
Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften

VOLUME ONE
Chapter 102-123

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102. War and Love in Haus Fischel.

All that time Gerda waited in vain for Ulrich, who had forgotten his promise and had not returned to the Fischels. Whenever he remembered it, it was when he was busy with something else. Gerda hadn't forgotten, for she considered her arian symbolfriends little wankers.

This had not prevented chaos in Haus Fischel to spread and grow. She had made dramatic progress in turning it into a small scale test ground for what would happen to the entire German nation. Her demonstrative friendly bond with arian street adolescence had not united her parents. The war had escalated.

In the view of Gerda's schoolboys the Parallel Action was a stealth attempt to spiritually destroy the *Deutsche Volk*.

To complete the disaster Leo's neglected invitation by Diotima had become known. He now was treated as a bitten dog.

Hans Sepp had been promoted - how on earth could Leo have gone so far, he must have had some plan, but whatever it was, it failed - to salaried house teacher of Gerda and the house now usually was crammed with the youthful scum Sepp had surrounded himself with. On heated tone one deliberated how German nobility should be saved from Diotima's semitophil embracement. What these poor devils connected to German nobility was, understandably, not clear to Leo, who had no inclinations towards either. One read in "enlightenment sessions", Stephan George, an unknown to Leo. He had to consult the encyclopedia. Scholars, bankers, and industrial producers were called "little spongers".

"By 'humanity' I can't imagine anything, daddy", Gerda said, "but 'Mein Volk', that is very corporeal".

"Your Volk", her father made some allusion to her being the daughter of a jew, wanted to say something about the prophet, and his father, who had been a lawyer in Trier.

"I know!", Gerda would say, "but Mein Volk, that is meant spiritually".

"I lock you up in your room till you've come to your senses".

And then Gerda would explain him one more time that he was a patriarchal capitalist.

The hassle of Gerda's little friends brought a whiff of innocent lust in the house, providing Gerda's anti-parents pose the silent haughtiness of a martyr. One discussed the wrong and unspoken views of love of the older generation and their bullshit about the "fusion of the I's" had a faintly erotic edge:

every now and then, to seal their bond, they hugged a little. No sex, for that would be "property motivated".

Klementine opined that Leo indeed did react a bit old fashioned on all this, but he would say: "How does property kill the mind? Is my mind dead? Yours starts to look a bit crumpled but that's because you let your ears hanging towards them". He said it with a grin but he could have cried of rage.

Ever more often, after his work he passed by the park to sit on a bench in the snow. Playing children and their nursemaids helped him for a moment to think of his life before his disastrous marriage.

Ulrich liked to come there too and that is how they once met again. Leo complained about Ulrich's neglect of his house. Ulrich showed himself happy to see him again and complained about the Parallel Action. Then Leo again: about the bad times for business and the degeneration of social morality.

"And I thought", Ulrich said, "that I had to envy you for your profession, being a money merchant must be a sanatorium for the soul, at least the only profession with a purely ideal basis"

"That is true", Leo said, "but it does not make it any better".

Ulrich allowed himself to be kidnapped and taken to Haus Fischel.

There, the terriers were decisively on the loose again. Sepp's gang in full force. The company was near the final exams of school, or one year further, or stood in a shop. All had forgotten how they all joined, but the common denominator

was Haus Fischel, Leo's procurement of the budget of the household and his wife running it.

This club might seem absurd but it was not uncommon in those times of the bankruptcy of traditional European ideas. Little fire pools of spiritual unity, lit with torches, picked who knows where, and among the young anti-Semitic anticapitalists in the house of Bank Director Fischel it was all encompassing love and communality, within the framework of which one fiercely battled about everything.

Ulrich and Leo found Klementine there, who had stayed in the company despite angry looks and red stains on the cheeks of Gerda, and thus had become the target.

She was in fierce defense, if not counterattack. When Ulrich and Leo entered, to have things ended, Gerda poked her fist in the side of Hans who immediately said: "My friends, our times simply fail to achieve something great!", apparently presuming this to be the way to bring things on a track directed less personally at Klementine.

But unfortunately for him, Ulrich asked whether Hans had lost his hope to any progress, forcing him at once in reverse direction, if only because Ulrich, while posing his question, looked at Leo with a face indicating that Sepp would be definitively burnt off would he answer in the affirmative.

Sepp tried to escape by manifesting his preference, over our times, of the one of Beethoven, Goethe, Napoleon and Hebbel.

Those few seconds were all Ulrich needed to put himself down as a rival of Sepp in Gerda's direction, and lecture Hans, to

Leo's satisfaction, that Hebbel's birth date did not make him suitable to be in the list of celebrities of this episode of history.

A few moments later the entire gang left the room heads up. Klementine thrust her most aggressive glance in Leo's eyes, who joined to have a chat with them in the other room before they even ostentatiously left the house.

Then Klementine rose and Ulrich was alone with Gerda.

103. The temptation.

Gerda was visibly irritated by the general departure Ulrich had caused. Ulrich took her hand. Her arm started to tremble and she pulled herself loose.

"You have become even more insolent", she said, but her body seemed not to join.

"Yes, I know that everything that happens between you people has to meet the highest standards. That is exactly what seduces me to the behaviour that you so benevolently characterize. But don't you remember that in times past I talked with you in quite a different way?"

"You have always been the same".

"Shall I tell you some things about the salon of my niece?"

"No." That was a hard one for Gerda for she had loved to boast with the knowledge to Hans.

"Do you remember that story about those moons? I would like to tell you something similar"

"Are you going to lie again."

"I'll do my utmost to prevent that". And after a refreshing flight over statistics and quantitative methodology Ulrich landed on the law of large numbers saying that the average of many observations tends to be ever closer to a fixed value the more similar observations you make, a value that you do not know in advance, but of which, in this way, you get an ever more precise estimation.

Gerda had to learn some things like that at school. Her ambition suppressed her irritation. She sat at a distance, bent forward in a fauteuil with a small fold in her forehead.

To an impartial observer it would have been unclear whether Ulrich, while lecturing, enjoyed his power or was thinking about the next step. Gerda believed him for she was in love, and she did not believe him for she was part of a new unspoiled generation.

When Ulrich made a small detour over unexplained statistical constants like the proportions of male and female babies, self-mutilations to avoid military service and burglaries, Gerda grabbed her chance and attempted a breakthrough.

"Explain me progress". On defiant tone.

"But of course! That's what I'm getting at!". And there, arrow-straight behind the law of large numbers, appeared progress: for the one want this, the other wants that, whoever succeeds calls such progress, and history is the blind movement resulting from all those tiny chunks of progress together, hence has to be progress itself, though we understand nothing of it, for every one of us is one observation among millions, so either we deal

with an unknown Law of the Whole, or an irony of Nature creates the special by letting nothing special happen, and the highest form of being is reached like an enormous statistical population of massive nonsense of a certain mean value and a certain standard deviation. "And we depend on it, for otherwise we would have no babies in one year, no food in another and so on".

"Is that true?" Gerda asked, a bit unsure.

"I should not have to tell you".

"But the way just just told them chased them all away, and it looked like you did that on purpose".

"You always think badly of me. But I tell you: progress exists, but its shape always surprises us, neither do we know how all our little efforts together produced it. One thing is sure: progress is not the realization of all our ideals. Those never realize. And you can't simply form you opinion about what is progress. You have to calculate it using the law of large numbers".

"You are always telling how things might be, never how they ought to be".

See me, Ulrich thought in slight despair, putting the head of another beautiful woman in a little field of forces. It makes no fucking difference which woman and which forces.

The vertical fold of irritation in Gerda's forehead extended into the fold between her attractive breasts. What a pig-headedness locked up in such a tiny little body. He felt like having made a decision involving this young girl.

"Those people there in my niece's salon", he said, "are very radical as well and not happy with me at all".

Leo and Klementine seemed to have left the house, it was silent and Gerda felt the presence of the powerful man's body.

Ulrich sensed it and took her in his arms while summarizing his lecture. To do so, he had to force himself a bit.

Gerda got angry again: "You always start in philosophical pose, then you go and cackle like a cock!". Her cheeks acquired their red spots again. "What you make of it, that is exactly is what we do not want".

"Property kills?"

"I do not want to talk about it any more!"

"But what do Hans and you want?"

"Nothing. Do you see? You understand nothing of it."

"But what is then this plan for a demonstration against Leinsdorf?"

"You come to spy on us!"

"The list is long enough already, why not add that. But tell me"

Gerda backpedaled. "Nothing special. Slogans. That Parallel Action is a shameful affair".

"Why?"

Gerda shrugged her shoulders

"Why don't we just sit down and talk it over".

Gerda obeyed.

"First check my understanding. OK. Property kills, yes? Your parents of course are dead souls"

She made a gesture of arrogance.

"Property is bad, you want to roam, a wanderer looking around, Hans once said. For another sense, another existence. Yes?"

"Surprisingly well. Intelligence can fake soul".

"And intelligence is part of property? It measures, weighs and collects like a banker? But didn't I already say a lot about the soul?"

"That's cold soul".

"Yes, and now I have to explain why I am on the side of cold soul and bankers"

"Because you're a coward". It dawned on Ulrich that when she said something she showed her teeth a little bit like an animal in fear for its life.

"Yes, but cowardice of the type that would allow me to flee along the lighting conductor or the joints of the façade stones would I not know I would again be with Daddy out there."

Gerda was fed up. Ulrich now disturbed her line with Hans not only when he laughed about him but also, and worse, when he praised him.

"Suppose you marry Hans".

"Yes but I don't want that at all".

"Suppose. If things remain like they are you will anyway. Suppose you two succeed in remaining the critical youth in the positive soul-dead bourgeois adult world, and so in the morning you are brushing your teeth, Hans is opening his tax assessment. What will be next?".

"Should I know?"

"If Daddy understood he would say yes. OK, let me ask this: would Hans be free to love another woman? Loyalty is part of property-thinking."

"Don't think we never talk about these things. We are perfectly aware nobody is the New Human by simply turning a switch".

"Do you realize what your father wants of you? Are you aware of his power? He can offer money to Hans on the condition he finishes his study, meanwhile may be not give his consent to your marriage but at least withdraw his no, if Hans agrees not to show up again before he has his final certificate. How property-hostile will Hans show himself?"

"So that's what you came for".

"I just explain your father to you. The dark powerful god whom I promised to squeeze all imaginations out of you until

only reality has remained". Yes, there Ulrich noticed he still had a conscience for it slightly wailed.

In Gerda's eyes there were tears behind the rage. In one blow the road was free, for Hans, and since she did not fully realize she had Hans only to pester her father into that blocking posture, she did not understand Ulrich and distrusted him.

"And your father of course would like me to go after you and burn you off Hans"

"Forget it".

"Wouldn't work either, between us", Ulrich tenderly said "but I cannot go on like this, I've gone too far". He had no idea that was literally true. He tried to smile, got disgusted of himself, despised her and felt how her wavering triggered his lust of cruelty.

Gerda had turned magnificent as a fire.

"Come and visit me, we can't talk freely here".

"No".

Ulrich saw her lapsing back to usual and anti-Semitic.

104. Rachel and Soliman on the war path.

Whoever was so privileged to see the high mission and greatness of thought in Haus Tuzzi in full speed, would continuously see a small, agile, enthusiast person slip through everything. Decisively non-German as well, though it might well remind the observer to the music of Mozart. She did

everything fast, efficient and neat: taking coats, announce visitors, keep doors open, offer drinks. Ulrich liked her and solicited for some more attention, but did not seem to get it. Was it because of Soliman? That boy's advances in Rachel's direction had not escaped Ulrich.

The answer was no, and Ulrich could not possibly have guessed the true explanation: while Rachel's admiration for Diotima and Arnheim, as a result of Soliman's slandering, slightly diminished, he himself, Ulrich, had become Rachel's star. But this had made her keen to show him how fast, efficient and neat she could take coats, announce visitors, keep doors open, offer drinks.

Though Rachel liked to make herself all kinds of illusions, she never dreamt of conquering Ulrich, but she was ready to do him any size of service. For a start she and Soliman had taken a left-over invitation card for the Parallel Action committee meeting and sent it to General Stumm von Bordwehr, in the knowledge that he clearly was a friend of Ulrich and that Diotima hated him like the plague. One does not let things go as they do when one sees a good deed that can be done.

She was all the more eager to make sure Ulrich would think of her as an excellent maid due to a certain lack of consistency, lately, in withstanding Soliman.

Soliman braved many a danger in his advances. Rachel appreciated that, and those thick lips waiting for her on the most improbable places started to acquire quite an attractive power.

Rachel had told Soliman about the cigarette traces in her room, all kinds of things surely were happening, they concluded, so

they could not stay behind. One day, Diotima was out with Arnheim, the cook had a day off, and Tuzzi dined in a restaurant, Soliman asked Rachel to join him to Arnheim's hotel to search for the secret documents proving that he was a African king's son. Rachel would raise, they thought, the least suspicion if dressed in her maid's livery. Soliman professionally stopped a coach and called the destination. Once in, Rachel leaned back the way she had seen Diotima do and in that position got the broad stamp pad of Soliman's lips on hers with no further ado.

Not in a side street, but straight in front of the hotel they halted. Soliman descended as a ruler and walked inside, admired by Rachel for not being stopped. Gentlemen in fauteuils looked at the remarkable duo while it went up the stairs.

All cases were unlocked except one. There were a lot of things Rachel had seen arriving in Diotima's house lately, feeding her suspicion that all kinds of improper things were going on between Diotima and Arnheim.

Soliman failed to open that locked case, gratefully using that as the opportunity to suggest that the African paperwork would be in that one. He filled Rachel's pockets as full as he could with stuff from the cases. Rachel took them quickly out again, and told him it was time for her to return home.

But Soliman got a goodbye kiss. She pressed her lips so hard on his mouth that his neck bent backward and his breathing blocked. He sprawled until he got released with the feeling a stronger boy had held him under water.

He was furious but she was gone and it sank. He put everything back in the cases and had become a young man with the ambition to achieve something not beyond his reach.

105. High lovers have nothing to laugh about.

Arnheim passively observed how the point of gravity of his life moved to Vienna. He could get haunted by phantasies of jumping with Diotima from a high church tower or shooting Tuzzi and concluded that taking decisions in the matter was urgent.

But none of the options had the required level. Marriage was better than adultery but nevertheless needed to be preceded by a divorce. Had Diotima been a great American widow or a high lady of court ... but the divorced wife of a civil servant? His responsibility for his concern ... of course, he could do anything he got in his head, but would not this be a kind of betrayal of matters to a personal weakness?

Indeed he really had proposed marriage. And for the literary style of her unclear answer Diotima had been inspired by the very best of her reading books.

Neither had he himself been decided enough to come back on it.

Since then, their conversations about soul, humanity and history often touched on divorce, marriage, adultery and the like. At such moments Diotima for instance opined that in contemporary literature adultery too rarely was treated in connection to sense of discipline, suffering, heroic asceticism, too often too much sensualistic, which which Arnheim

immediately and entirely agreed - as a consequence of which one immediately was in need to find another subject.

Both tried not to realize they could, every moment, get what they wanted if they both would pay the price, and decisively refused to list for themselves the reasons why they kicked the can down the road, for that of course was: it needed major movement of less elevated nature.

106. Does modern man believe in God or in the president and owner of a world concern? Arnheim's indecisiveness.

Arnheim alone. Gazing out of his window in his Viennese hotel room

Thus far he never had a problem discerning what was void of soul: almost everything, for almost everything can be operated with money.

Some poor you can't control that way. He remembered some talented musicians and a painter whose support he once ended. Rare exceptions. Especially among the rich, things are different of course. Hence more soul in those circles.

Apart from those rare exceptions, possessing money is a necessary prerequisite for having soul, or rather to stuff your soul with morality. Once you've done so, moral questions are answered by a logic of moral regulations. But regulations are only possible if the cases dealt with repeat themselves: service, love, murder, etc. Lack of repetition would turn regulation into endless and useless writing and thus totally spoil the fun of it.

Now here comes the crucial connection: money is the most repetitive thing on earth! Hence it is morality and rationality

par excellence. And this is in the money, not in the owner, for as we all know, not every moral and wise man has money!

Well, let us be serious for a moment: Arnheim did not think exactly along these lines but he had no doubt that it is precisely property which obliges to education and religion.

And more than that: money also is the great example for science, where one measures and weighs as well. Even if things measured move while being measured one looks for constants in the movement. And from that, religion, in a blissful cross-fertilization, can profit again.

Then, as widely known, the maintenance of higher morality in society is not always a trifle. Considerations of higher nature often lack the power to discipline the citizen, moreover it is exactly that field in which controversies abound that stand in the way of a clear uniform message.

Until quite recently, social control by violence, acting on man's lower properties and urges was the method relied upon. But now we have: money!

Had Arnheim been asked to advise God how to organize the Thousand Year Reign, he would know what to say: use money, not violence. Money is an enhanced form of control, far subtler than violence, whereby everything can be controlled in a far higher grade of precision and evil will get no chance. If you know how to do so - and he knew he knew: no chance indeed, not in a thousand years.

Money, rationality, morality, those were three words that resounded in Arnheim from great depth. But then there was, deep down there, that other voice that said all could be done

without. This always made Diotima appear. Suddenly all those stable holds seemed not essential for mankind, strange, hard protuberances, like your nails and hairs, that you can cut without even feeling pain. When that feeling lingered on for a while he felt a desire to throw himself on his knees before Diotima, without, as it were, caring for his trousers, then reddened and pulled himself straight without appetite, for backpedaling he almost cursed the "mentality of calculation and bartering" that took over in him again.

He wanted to be redeemed, but did not know from which of the two opposed forces, tried simply to abandon the matter by walking to his desk, picking a file and calling Soliman to bring his secretary.

But standing there, a valuable insight popped up - or not? he thought: a man conscious of his responsibilities must, also when he gives his soul, give the interest and never the capital!

107. Count Leinsdorf has an unexpected political result.

When His Serene Highness thought of the family of European states ordered, in jubilation, around the Emperor-Patriarch, somehow Prussia failed.

This had to do with the German-German war lost by Austria, the surging role of Prussia among the German nations and Prussia's foundation of the German Empire. But Arnheim had made things worse. The count was profoundly disgusted by the man and this had not escaped Diotima, as a result of which her continued veneration of the count was not quite what it had been.

Leinsdorf was not alone in his aversion of the new Germany that Prussia had created in the past decades. The new German Empire was, in the family of European states widely in use as dumping ground for all sorts of feelings of displeasure. As we all know, one has quite some options for the purpose: witches, socialists, intellectuals, jews, generals, but in the run up to the First World War, Prussia scored a top popularity.

Other external targets were singled out for positive dreams and pleasure: one bought tickets for sports events to admire the champion and loved to read idealistic authors preaching what unfortunately one could, due to practical impediments, not do personally. And film was about to turn this flushing out into the general life style of modern man.

This made authorities feel uncomfortable for they could not believe this new system to be safe and stable. In those circles one hoped that science would develop methods to psychotechnically reintroduce the time honoured belief in demons, for that had consistently proven not to have those side effects and the demise of this belief was considered pitiful. Little could they know how smoothly the new system would start to work in the decades to come.

In Kakanian the new life style of flushing out thrived too, everybody did it, though each in his own way. Leinsdorf of course used his aversion against everything that moved beyond the illustrious history - the ever more ridiculous phantasy of patriotic historians copying each other - of his great imperial house, but in this hobby he was part of a worryingly shrinking elite of his fatherland.

Elsewhere, Leinsdorf's enemy whom he carefully studied, one flushed out in the dream of an "own nation" (Hungarian,

Slovenian, Bosnian, yes even German!) and scorned the Royal-Imperial Royal Empire.

Many correctly understood that Leinsdorf's Parallel Action was an expedient designed to counter these trends and thus to be a German inspired anti-Slavic action. But His Serene Highness had anticipated that and appointed as president of the propaganda committee Baron Wisnietzky, a loyal servant of the emperor who, by some erratic and unforeseen movements in politics had got the Germans against him and was branded anti-German ever since.

Leinsdorf, no doubt correctly, considered as the most dangerous the antipathies against his empire by the German part of the state and set out to first get the others - the other "Austrian tribes" he often said - on board. Then the Austrian Germans, even those who felt German before Austrian, would come too.

So: Wisnietzky.

But unfortunately this failed to win the non-Germans, who started to attack Leinsdorf's initiative as a pan-German attack, while the German's used Wisnietzky to claim that an anti-German assault was planned.

Leinsdorf saw it, the other leaders of the Parallel Action saw it, and posed fearful questions to Leinsdorf, who needed quite some effort not to look like a rat in a trap.

108. The unredeemed nations and Generaal Stumm's thoughts about the word-group save.

In spiritual intercourse, few word-groups behave as bizarre as the word-group "save". One can get as emotional as one is able to, as everything in the goddamn spectrum between rotten fish and gift of heaven, never ever will this involve the demand or supply of redemption.

But whoever - just by way of example - sees someone else being forced to continue a conversation in unpleasant company and finds a trick to get him out, could well be thanked in terms like: "thank you for saving me". So it typically concerns the alleviation of minor discomfort: waiting, an annoying obligation, such things.

In Kakania, General Stumm von Bordwehr thought, in contemplative posture, in his office, behind his desk, you had "unsaved nations". Hungarians not saved from Austria, Croats not saved from Austria. And even Germans not saved from Austria. And indeed, this had everything of a minor discomfort, for Austria did not cause a lot of suffering. To Stumm's regret, Austria did not even dare to raise enough taxes to finance the army's badly needed refurbishment. But nevertheless, say, the Hungarians so much longed to be saved that once saved and among each other, they would readily pull their wallets for the necessary war decorations and shooting gear.

At the moment his thoughts arrived there, Stumm got grabbed by such an overwhelming sentiment of injustice and irrationality that he switched his door light on "important meeting".

In the winds of discourse on Diotima's vast fields of spirit, redemption regularly blew past as well. In the beginning that had bothered Stumm little, since wherever it did not mean "saving from a minor discomfort" he had classified it as "swollen word", and to be honest, when Diotima said something it would give Stumm some feeling of delight anyway.

But when you arrive at the use of the word-group in churches, art magazines, and Arnheim's books, held high by Stumm, then there would be something abstract in it, something playing a role in the intercourse between one spirit and the other, and Stumm could not stay free of the impression that all those loudly manifested squeamish complaints in Diotima's salon, that there was too much of this and too little of that, was in the same corner.

And that was not the only reason that spirit, mind, thought, "Geist", was no longer on the rise in Stumm's esteem. His tiny fat little fist banged on his desk: disorder! All of it! They all think that "Geist" is ordering life, but if - look at the army!!! - life is ordered, you don't need "Geist" at all!

Relieved, Stumm turned his red door light off, went to the mirror and patted his hair so as not to give entering inferiors a glance on traces of his soul's exercise.

109. Bonadea, Kakania; systems of bliss and balance.

If there was one single person in Kakania totally void of political interest, that was Bonadea. But nevertheless, she was related to the matter, for Bonadea had a system and Kakania had not.

Bonadea's system for coping with her dilemma as posh lady filled with corporeal passion was the doublelife. It is commonly known that in such a life, switching back and forth requires some effort, even to who is good enough never to be noticed leading it. But a system it is, in the sense of not being an animal's instinctive reaction to stimuli but a conscious balancing, reflected upon by weighing pros and cons, and a careful falsification of that balance to make the pros look superior.

Everyone does like that, assisted by the circumstance that sadness can purify, money does not make you happy, and even happiness can have its setbacks, etc. just as it is possible to take the sky with something lighter than air, but with something heavier as well.

In all this, one's own balance is connected to that of the environment, as a result of which all kinds of mutual moral credit complicates matters. To come back to Bonadea: she had failed to win Ulrich back, now lived the stealth half of her life as a widow, and considered herself to have lost from ... Diotima, what caused Bonadea to ... look up to her.

A chain of misunderstandings, and she developed them in even greater detail, but that's how things go. It gave her a feeling of purity, made her sit in front of the mirror and do her hair Diotima's way. Thus she liked herself better, and her lavish dressing budget allowed her to take the matter seriously, until she said to her husband, who playfully tickled her neck: "don't spoil my hair!". For the first time ever he got the idea to ask her whether there was someone else.

In itself, clothing has the absurdity of the koteka, the bone through the nose and the lip ring, but who carefully looks for

something suitable will derive substantial benefits. And that goes beyond clothing, for nothing can yield more than well chosen convictions, prejudices, theories, beliefs, even thoughtlessness will in some cases make a decent profit, all these things yield all kinds of things to fill your pockets without any further investments needed!

That requires a ... system. And everyone has one. Successful people have very good ones. The universe is damned big and a fly's poop like a human should get its self-confidence from somewhere if it ever wants to get the guts to do something, whether you are a sage or an idiot.

In a powerful country all those self-confidences are firmly interlinked, especially when one sings the national anthem together. But Kakanian was not a good example of that. Something imaginary, that you find in all powerful countries in the world had started to lack there.

This lacking thing was missed and one felt off balance. Something Kakanian would get blamed for it. Everybody dreamt of new imaginary imaginations ("forward to ..."), or old ones ("back to ..."), and one passionately engaged in attempts to turn those into real imaginations, for without those, so it felt, there was no hope.

If this would not be hindering, Kakanians could very well with be the peacefully grazing herd of cows people essentially are. And they wanted that too. They wanted to get rid of this painfully lacking thing. But how? There were thousands of opinions.

110. Moosbrugger's solution and storage.

Moosbrugger still was where he was. That's with a precision of about six square meters. His sense of time faded, but he did not care. News media had been forced to turn their attention to other sex-murderers, less appealing to the imagination but still active, or if gone in the judicial mill, at least a bit more lively. And that decline in interest was mutual. Moosbrugger was ready to presume somewhere a sovereign would be received, soldiers would do their drills, whores would roam around, carpenters would hang at façades. There would be bedbugs. Or not. Moosbrugger started to think of the world as less relevant.

Yet, sometimes, when in thoughts, he would reach for his door, and if in doing so he made a sound, someone outside would curse him putrid. And he did occasionally feel the urge to smash everything to pieces, but that was beneath him, and he restrained himself.

A horde of officials was determining his fate, earning their little salaries by obediently applying all little rules they had learned: psychiatrists corresponded about clinical pictures, lawyers about grounds for reducing punishment, a bishop complained about the general decline of morality, a hunter complained to Bonadea's husband about a plague of foxes, to the detriment of Moosbrugger for the good man had positioned him not far from that area in his head. Moosbrugger knew very little about this vast mass of details.

Documents got produced with codes and abbreviations carefully designed to prevent any fruitful understanding except by some initiates.

Moosbrugger thought, wrongly, that he would have understood everything had he access to all of it, which saved him for the disappointment to realize it would not help him at all.

As a wild, locked up possibility of a feared act he found himself, an uninhabited coral island, in an ocean of documents beyond anybody's control.

III. According to lawyers there are no half crazy people.

This chapter is useful for anyone who thinks this ocean of judicial documents might be navigable, or at least that becoming a criminal is easier than, for instance, digest the studying load you need to become a scholar.

To become a criminal, premeditated, you have to know what crime is, hence know the law. But the law is not taken from nature, it penetrates nature with the fire of thought and the sword of morality.

Every now and then the exact way the sword hits its target has to be reconsidered, for which the parliament appoints a committee as the one in which, as related, Ulrich's father had ended up in fierce battle with his old friend Professor Dr. iur. A. Schwung.

A concise treatment like the present one is of course in danger to do injustice to justice: there always is a limit but a simple calculation teaches that with twenty scholars in the parliamentary commission there is a capacity of several thousands of different points of view.

Obviously, anyone who considers to become, with malice aforethought, a criminal, should forget his ambition at once if

he shies away for studying the relevant literature. We can only guess what traces Ulrich father's total abhorrence for the entire concept of judicial *non compos mentis* were left in Ulrich's muscular soul. His father's dense sequence of urgent letters on the matter had gradually forced Ulrich to study almost the entire bundle of attachments that he had put aside in the initial stages of the drama on his father's parliamentary committee.

If really nothing could prevent the weakening of the law, then, in a redrafted version, any defense in any case should, in father's severe conviction, absolutely prove that during the act the perpetrator had been victim of a fallacy such that, had this fallacy been not a fallacy, but a true model of reality, this would have made the act legitimate.

His colleague Schwung, however, opined that in an unstable individual, moments of *compos mentis* and *non compos mentis* alternate, may be even rapidly, and that one should hence lean on the rock of the will: if the will had not been controllable during the sequence of events caused by the act, guilt could not exist.

Both gentlemen thought of Justice as the Highest Good, so from both viewpoints a candidate-criminal should satisfy the highest of requirements to be guilty of crime. After all it is not the task of criminal law to offer moral thinking an easy chair! But where those requirements as the rival parties saw them turned out inconsistent, one reproached one another with error, pretty soon after that with lack of logic, then premeditated misrepresentation of opposite positions and finally cynicism, which is, as generally known and widely customary, the stage in which one turns to the professional journals to publish about the subject in unambiguous ways. It was a good thing that in journals of law, psychologists were not allowed to publish, for

this rival profession had taken an unfair lead in the past fifty years. Theology and philosophy, though, had themselves duly represented.

The meetings of the parliamentary commissions got more and more often deferred and a subgroup of participants launched a search for a pragmatic solution, for instance, that someone should be judged mentally able to commit a crime to count as *compos mentis* (which indeed would make a sentence a kind of certificate).

In those doldrums of affairs Ulrich's father had suddenly decided he could get the upper hand by becoming a convert of the "social school" which simply holds that, to the benefit of society, dangerous people should be locked up. Instead of a weakening, this seemed even an improvement, for this would bring the crazy ones among the wrong-doers behind bars first!

But Schwung had found a truly biting rejoinder in which the world "social" had consistently been put between inverted commas, while claiming that father's position was Prussian materialist state spirit in disguise.

This unfortunately had met with wide assent.

Thus Schwung had maintained himself, in Ulrich's father's view by bringing out of balance an apostle of justice, morality and truth, using the expedient of throwing before the good man's feet a totally unexpected, illegal and immoral banana-skin, as a result of which father had no other option left but to write his son: " ... I, who always have stayed clear of the backstairs, am now in the position of necessity to address myself to you, my son and call for ... etc. etc.",

your loving,

Father

112. Arnheim moves his father Samuel over to the ranks of the gods and decides to win Ulrich. Soliman would like to be informed about his father.

Arnheim. In his hotel room again. Agitated this time. He just had rung to send for Soliman who was roaming around in the hotel. He got fed up with that ironic attitude of Ulrich.

Ulrich was a rare case indeed for Arnheim. Not to be admired and sought. Beautiful women get pissed off in such cases. A great man inflates himself even more than usual, but nevertheless ceases to be a great man.

Very annoying. Contradiction is an act of mere rationality, hence Arnheim thought of it as despicable. It was quite understandable, he held, that he could not accept this.

For the rest things went well for Arnheim in Vienna. Of course, Tuzzi and Leinsdorf would never become his friends, but that was not a problem. Ulrich never put his ridicule on display, so Arnheim knew he was the only one to suffer it, apart from - slightly, maybe - Ermelina.

But this was unacceptable. This suppression of Ulrich's cool jokes, and winning him, had acquired an aggressive priority. Arnheim now imagined to have a kind of fatherly love for him. This boy was totally unable to recognize the advantages of life. His posture even suggested he thought that life should adapt to the mind!

What was this? Suddenly he was on the track of his previous hotel room contemplation, exactly where he had broken off the train of thought to get back into his business affairs: this was a man who would sacrifice of his soul not only the interest, but the entire capital if a situation asked for it.

Yes. That was the thing. Who could take such an attitude serious?

Soliman got found and slipped in. Why had he called for him? Arnheim had forgotten but the company of the boy somehow relieved him.

"Sit down", he answered the question mark on the black face, and started to lecture Soliman about Goethe on thought and action.

And while knowing only one half, this Ulrich wants to be my opponent, he thought. A man void of intuition who leans on thought only, is ignorant of the limits of irony, and time and again crosses them. And every time he does so he spends more than his interest and encroaches on his capital (Arnheim immediately was highly satisfied with that one, especially when he observed its consistency with his use of it in the Diotima-context which had suggested it to him).

"And therefore, to your own benefit", he said to Soliman, who meanwhile had been of a ration of Goethe, "I took you books away and put you to work".

Soliman, silent, put the face of dedicated attention that he thought was now required of him.

"You saw my father a few times, do you remember?"

Soliman deemed it apt to roll the white of his eyes for a second.

"He never reads. He is over seventy and still controls everything essential to our concern".

Of course Arnheim could not tell everything about his father. Some of his decisions had caused severe setbacks, from which fortunately he later recovered. Few had seen it, for a Napoleon wins his lost battles as well. And this Napoleon, considering the studies of his son as a time consuming though not totally useless hobby, could after long technical meetings thank everybody for his contribution and then do the contrary, and who asked about it would get a mysterious smile.

And that was, Arnheim now explained to Soliman: *intuition*.

One time, he had explained that to his father as well, who had thrown a surprised glance off his newspaper, but when Arnheim had started the explanation his eyes had gone down again. Soliman had no such newspaper, not even a book. So he opted for a tense look far away like when as a child that gets tested whether it has understood the lesson.

That prompted Arnheim to cut it short: "Yes, of course you cannot yet understand that, but remember this, Soliman, making money is not always a portly business, all that calculation and barter can have something small-minded ... look, out of murder one has succeeded to mould the noble virtue of bravery, but whether this could ever be achieved with commercial calculation is not so sure at all, and I consider that analytical brainy craving of the mind as a necessary evil." Here his flow of words interrupted for some personal thoughts concerning the family in which he was born, and the

astounding superiority such cravings had turned out to have in business life.

Now Arnheim got haunted by some regret about the way he just had introduced Soliman to noble virtue: of course, there would have been, just like in business life, a lot of scheming, swindling and other types of calculated action. And, would not, in those circles as well, people have handed down to their youth myths about their ancestors?

No, after all one should not overstate the difference. His father was not so different from such an ancestral god the nobility venerated.

But ancestral nobility had put Soliman on another track and stepped from the background: "Please", he asked, "was my father a king?"

"I know nothing about it". Arnheim said, highly surprised.

Soliman's mimic had looked slightly martial while posing the question and it moved Arnheim. "I have no idea, but it does not seem probable to me, after all, I found you in a group of acrobats in the Mediterranean".

"How much did I cost", Soliman asked.

"How could I remember, my boy, that's so long ago, but it surely was not much. But what is the difference? We are born to make our own kingdoms! I put you on a business course next year and then you can start in one of our businesses. Then all will depend on your performance, but I'll keep an eye on you. I would not be surprised if you could be very useful since you are black. African countries are on the rise, and who

knows when black people will start to assist the white in the business of that vast continent!"

This brought Arnheim's soul to a temperature even higher than it had at the outset of this fruitful conversation and so he arrived at his ambitions concerning his own kingdom. For he saw the road before him rise. Seriously. There had even been times he was totally void of irony and jest, not at all for lack of talent, but because he took it as a danger for the career he had in mind, for he belonged to the people who think gods never grin. Now the worst of the fear was over, but yet he stopped short of running away for his elevated feelings towards Diotima with some well taken self-aimed jokes.

Soliman still patient, or perfectly looking like it, waited till this would be over, and Arnheim felt slightly ridiculous every time he looked at him, especially when the boy looked back.

He felt a huge cleft between him and everything he had ever touched in the world. Yes "touched" is what one says, but that feeling was gone for a moment. Something like that should be the case with Ulrich, only with different effects.

He liked that idea. That Ulrich in a sense was a kind of brother of his. He followed that track to arrive at how Ulrich radiated the freedom and incorruptibility that reminded him, Arnheim, of the "secret of the whole" so skeptically addressed by Ulrich. This man does not simply lack some details, it must be something general! And there unexpectedly appeared his father, moved to the realm of gods, just a few minutes ago, whose skepticism suddenly seemed - or not? - Ulrichian. The thought he then got gave him some scare: "This man has soul!"

In every human being, Arnheim knew, the soul gradually dissolves in mind, morality and great ideas, and this is irreversible. But Ulrich had not finished the process. This seemed to be associated with the soullessness, the rationality and the mechanic thinking, something at any rate outside culture.

This train of thoughts had a curious effect on Arnheim, for now he felt that he - as the only one! - understood Ulrich. He should absolutely win him, even if he had to adopt him as a son!

Soliman, whose curiosity about the events inside the head of his Maecenas had reached a peak, got kicked out to buy flowers for Diotima.

113. Ulrich converses with Hans Sepp and Gerda in the fusion language of over- and understanding.

Despite the rather opposed nature of his father's request to Ulrich's earlier improbably successful lobby for a rerun of the analysis of Moosbrugger's death sentence, Ulrich would like to honour it. But though he had shown himself he could do such things, curiously enough he had no idea how to do it this time and to forget matters he decided to visit Gerda.

Hans Sepp was there too, so the meeting immediately was under the appropriate stress. Hans did not wait to start the examination. Gerda clearly had told him all about her previous conversation with Ulrich, and now he demanded to be informed about Ulrich's motivations, ready to debunk them.

"I think I told too much about it rather than too little", Ulrich protested.

"Yes", Gerda said, "and I understand what you said but I do not believe it". She had assumed the tone of a reconciling question.

"We understand it but we do not believe it", Hans said, more like a press announcement. Gerda seemed not to like the way he said that and her glance to him had something of a thrust in his side.

Ulrich did not get far with his answer for Hans instantly interrupted him and asked what had driven Ulrich in the hands of this niece of his who had fallen victim to those spiritual swindlers.

Neither was there a lot of patience for Ulrich's answer on that one: "You talk as if you do not know we want to block that action!"

"Yes, tell me", Ulrich asked, "why is that?"

"This Parallel Action is a gross attempt to undermine the German essence of this state. Are you really unaware what countermovements are on the rise? The Deutsche Nationalverband? The Turnerschaft? The Cartel of the Armed Austrian High School Associations?" Our own Association of German Youth? If necessary we'll take to the streets, but if they would have used their brains they would never have started this, for it is doomed to fail anyhow.

"But do not all races have its own mythos?" Ulrich crept in the enemy jargon.

"And what would be the Austrian race", Hans started, entirely as expected, "Austria has everything from others, nothing of itself".

Gerda did not know whether she had to be proud of Hans or be ashamed. Hans was a thin postulous boy with greasy hair and moist hands, with the chief advantage of being able to exasperate her parents. As a man, the big blond muscular Ulrich attracted her more lately, just like she got more corporeal pleasure of imagining the muscular, washed and oiled bodies of the classical pagans, but the emaciated early Christians, smelling of their musty basements, that of course was more elevated, like Hans. Ulrich knew all about this frame of mind, for while in Kakania religion, though neatly brought in the order of a modern theological rationality and put in the portfolio of the responsible ministry, had a hard time maintaining itself vis à vis the unguided projectiles of the rational paradigm, it meanwhile from the rear nearly succumbed to, mind you, the old, ancient mystical religious experience that had started again like a night bird haunting loads of souls, naked hordes of drunken and horny human shadows dancing in the dark with a god.

Not always fun to be emperor, Ulrich thought. How to burn this appalling Sepp off Gerda? K.O. no option. Sepp should loose on points. With Gerda, to whom this Sepp was of great strategic value in Haus Fischel, as referee and jury.

The points to hit: this platonic test-marriage-like idea of relations in their group, with that whiff of promiscuity, platonic as well, the "expressionism" of the soul, the related rejection of "flat observation", the "Heimatkunst", and so onwards to the superiority of the German race (and inferiority of jews - and business people generally), then bourgeois education deemed

despicable for its orientation on cold authoritarian facts and stress on conformity, the "rights" of the unspoiled youth - they themselves of course, though well over twenty- it trampled on, and this youth hence got chained by it and forced into efficiency (hence efficiency was held to be despicable as well). Sepp: "We should all be and stay children!". The lofty ultimate aim: destruction of the bourgeois world by love.

Cautiously Ulrich trod around in the jargon of these infantile doctrines, hiding behind questions, tracing useful errors of construction. Why did Hans not try (Ulrich looked at Gerda) to redirect the Parallel Action - Ulrich offered his help - to the universal demand for a Community of the mature I-free people?

"Because that would not work", Sepp said, in the defense, and angry, for he thought this was not Ulrich's business but dared not tell him because Ulrich had so casually put his question in the accepted secretive language.

Hans Sepp wanted, so to say, disarm man. The lightest armour you could already take off by doing something altruistic. But the most difficult armour to remove, yes, the original sin, that is the "second obstacle", namely this: whatever a human being feels, even attachment and self-denial, seems primarily to be a taking rather than a giving. This obviously holds for learning: extending your knowledge is ceding to the urge of possession, but isn't this even so for love?

With some agility Ulrich turned and twisted this into something that he could "fully agree" with (thus profoundly irritating Hans): as long as a predicate has a subject, the latter was undeniably belonging to something.

But there he found Hans, who smelled a rat, vehemently against him.

What was it that attracted Gerda in this postulous post-puber? She just sat there. Mouth nor body attempted any language.

Ulrich stalked Sepp from yet another side: the highest elevation of course could not be attained in the way of Leo and Klementine, in the egoistic bourgeois way, but neither could it be attained, like Hans and Gerda tried, by the exalted opening of the I. You have to achieve a stable situation, like standing water.

This brought Gerda to life. Suddenly, to the irritation of Hans, she wanted to know how Ulrich meant that.

Ulrich claimed that al that love of Hans only caused opening and change, and thus did not give true relaxation.

Now Ulrich's quasi mystical mentally deficient babbling further boosted Gerda into curiosity.

Hans looked decisively dissatisfied with his performance in the conversation. Ulrich had surprised and irritated him by so easily wording Hans' own ideas and positions. He felt overtaken from an unsuspected side.

It had not escaped Gerda, though her attention had now shifted to Ulrich, for the poor child thought he had now opened his mind. She thought: he is a lot softer than he pretends.

All this quarreling by these kinds of children would make you forget it, but in those circles softness was an asset. It should not degenerate to a taking the other into possession such as so

many young people in love do, for that would be a capitalism of the soul. So it got restricted to a semi-corporeal being "looped into each other". They called this *bejahren*. When Hans did this with Gerda her body screamed for more, but that would be bourgeois, and was something she still had to wean off, she knew. The *bejahren* consistently caused confusion in her counterparty as well, but Hans opined - in silence - that this had something to do with Gerda's half jewish descent that he, as a full-blooded German, despite the setback, stepped over magnanimously. But at such moments Gerda longed for a real man to help her in full blossom, and she felt some contempt of Hans, with regret and self-reproach, for these of course were all lower urges that she still had to liberate herself from, she knew that very well.

But as long as someone of whom you could almost smell the muscular breast participated as a third in the conversation she could forget about her redemption.

Hans vaguely sensed the erosion of his position and went for another attack: "Your biggest mistake is to catch everything in concepts again and then analyze it. You should learn to live first. Jesus already saw on the twelfth, without a doctorate!"

"But if you want to live, why don't you go all the way? I would take Gerda in my arms, stop thinking of anything and hold her until your bodies would be ashes or transubstantiated "

Now Hans got so jealous that instead of looking at Ulrich, he looked at Gerda, who was pale, absent minded and shy, for she thought Ulrich had just given a codified love declaration of a less platonic nature.

Hans, looking at Gerda, failed to reach her, now smelled rats everywhere and started some vehement rearward skirmishes with another exposé about the path to exaltation. The other two went into the polite posture of pretending to listen.

Ulrich even reacted, albeit a bit on the automatic pilot. To put down the last tiny hotbeds of resistance he called attention for the problem in these modern times of the worrying excess supply of redeemers: had Jesus been born now, would He be able to acquire a position in that market?

Now he had her loose, Ulrich sensed a slight aversion of something old-maidish in her. But she kept attracting him. Last time, he had invited her to visit him but he was not sure whether she still considered it. Once back on the street he felt sorry for not having to mention it again, but he felt some relief as well.

For God's sake, what was he doing again, he thought of himself.

He had no idea.

You can't deal with everything at the same time.

114. Situations get tense. Arnheim praises General Stumm. Diotima prepares to go beyond all limits. Ulrich's phantasy of the possibility to live as one reads.

Leinsdorf had insisted Diotima should visit the Hofbibliothek library for pictures and stories about the Makart-cavalcade. It had taken place forty years earlier on the occasion of the silver wedding of the emperor, had been a great success,

especially Makart's floats with medieval themes. Leinsdorf had lively memories of it.

Diotima went reluctantly, and things did not get better, with Arnheim and Ulrich, in the library. She even told them she was going to walk home. But at the entrance they met General Stumm von Bordwehr, proud not a little to be caught in his learned activities, and ready at once to join the returning company on the home walk, so Diotima now wanted a coach.

Once on the square no coach was to be seen. One resigned and lapsed into conversation. Stumm with Arnheim, Diotima with Ulrich.

Arnheim switched himself against Stumm in his usual way in the lecturing mode. Unstoppable. Stumm, not at ease anyway with the great man whom he admired, as a great man and as a man, felt more and more deficient in finding the proper moments to nod understanding and appreciation, and finally sheer panic triggered in him an obsessive urge to go on his knees and eat the grass from between the pavement stones.

In this predicament he looked around for Ulrich and Diotima, who stood at some distance in the shadow of a wall and seemed to be in a quarrel.

"What a disconsolate view again", Diotima said, "you seem to forget there are people."

"But I explained this so often!"

"Now how does a woman choose between obligation and passion otherwise than with her character?"

"You should not choose at all."

"How dare you, I did not say at all this was about myself!"

In silent anger they looked over the square together.

"Do you think", Diotima asked, "the soul can step out of its normal shadow?"

Ulrich looked at her. "Have you planned to make supernatural contact?", he blocked.

"Don't act as if you do not understand what I mean"

Is this giant chicken going to talk like me? Ulrich felt a slight scare and forced himself to think this was pure chance.

This was not the first time lately that he felt come up a longing for tenderness, dream, kinship or God knows what, and in such cases his defense would be pretty rough. That was what made his part in this conversation into an unambiguous nagging. But at the same time this made him show cards he used to keep at his chest. Moreover, Diotima handled some of his teasing attacks pretty well and when the subject Arnheim entered their discussion he could seem to forget Diotima was his target, and let her feel her suspicion of jealousy to be corroborated.

Meanwhile, Arnheim had concluded the next paragraph of his lecture to Stumm by unambiguously stating that in our times the soul was on the verge of coming to its end.

Stumm, already groggy, saw his eyesight turn black: in the army, all whining about the soul passed, for ages already, as papal driveling and here he stood with a producer of cannons

and armour plating dealing with souls as if he saw them passing by at the other side of the square. After light had returned to him, Stumm could not help automatically straining his eyes, while Arnheim continued - unstoppable. But without seeing Stumm's predicament - did he actually care who listened? - he inadvertently came to his help by opening the library book he had taken on a page showing the medieval picture of an angel.

And a famous one as well, though Stumm had never seen it. He threw a glance on it and was about to remark we might deal here with some confusion between a human and a woodcock when Arnheim said: "This is how the creatrix of the Austrian action wants to represent the world".

A sigh of relief escaped Stumm for having been saved by Arnheim's insistence in keeping the word. Clearly, he concluded, he had underestimated the matter at first sight, and should be more careful.

"This is perfect simplicity and unity", Arnheim continued, "the modern sciences and arts are fragmented. Look at us in Germany. We have the largest number of business people and the strongest army, but it is all calculation and violence, empty rationality. Now look here in Austria: here, you still sense something of the past and people still have a whiff of the original intuition. If the German essence can still be saved from cold rationalism than it should come from here. But even here there already is resistance against great ideas, we live, so to say, in a state of an armed peace of morality (I have to remember that one, the speaker thought). And who still realizes today that all important things in life, politics, honour, war, art, are based on the irrational? That is why I always admired the ranks of the military, especially the Austrian, where one still

firmly bases oneself on the ancient warfare traditions of unmemorable times. It is a profound joy and reassurance to me that you are assisting Ermelina. All great things stem from great obligations!"

In a seemingly automatic gesture, he turned to Stumm, who had started to regard himself as unnoticed, and shook his hand.

Stumm dumb.

After a while - it felt like he had been unconscious for a while - he awoke. With only one thought: "Damn, this man needs me for something!".

Thus the angel had spread its wings and given Stumm a glimpse of what was under. Stumm could not yet deal with the question what favor he could ask in exchange, and resolved to postpone that matter till he had arrived home. All his suffering was gone. He looked like another man.

Some steps further down on the square, in the shadow of the wall, Diotima, even though still, with a threatening posture, dealing with the problem of "a woman", coming down to abstinence, adultery, or something in between if it could be found, had largely undressed the abstract female.

Ulrich joined the game: how can "a woman" do the right thing? If you call an animal a dog it is because you observe a lot of dog-like things, but every dog is different. Just like there is no such thing as "the" dog, there is nothing like "the" right thing to do. Neither does "the" truth exist: no observation of what is claimed to be an example of it is exactly like it, and they are all different. "A woman" facing a tough decision should not look for a moral law. If "a woman" insists on referring principles,

the best thing to take is the civil code for that is the most unambiguous thing available.

"A lecture!", Diotima said, "and what to do if reality requires a decision?"

"Let it happen"

And in the same breath: "Want to try with me?"

"With you?". She stretched the vowels. "Well, draft an offer".

"OK. The thing is this, you read a lot, but you always skip what you do not like. And before you the author already did the same. As in dreams and phantasies. That ties you to the thing and produces beauty. No abstract inner struggle between contrary feelings and thoughts greying each other out. Just focus on the moment. Children and imbeciles are good at that. My offer is: let us love each other like we are figures in a poem in which we meet, while totally ignoring our physical blubber".

Now Diotima was fed up and looked for a way to end the conversation, but without running the risk of being thought not to have understood the matter: "But in art, many people say, you escape reality with the aim of returning into it with new forces".

"And I am so irrational to be of the opinion that any kind of escape is to be avoided in any set of circumstances. Eternal salvation sports no holidays. I even have my suspicions against sleep".

Diotima took her chance: "Well, I am afraid I do not envy you"

"I exaggerate", Ulrich said calmly, "but think of a great author: there it is. Written down. In a book. Fossilized lines. But what were they saying? Nobody knows. They are the field, and we, the author himself as well once he finished it, are the bees going over it hence and forth. Well isn't that how our life is going? So when we live like in a poem in which we skip everything we don't like we live life in its original form".

"My dear friend, your words seem to be about nothing"

"Looks like it. Hopefully I did not speak too loud".

"Fast, softly and long. And not about what you really wanted to say. You just wanted to abolish reality again, but as always without saying how".

"Yes, that would require a lecture of similar length", Ulrich said, "Look, remember you once said you wanted to fly away with Arnheim into a kind of holiness. Another reality. Your only slight error in that is to opt for an alternative reality where you should not opt for any at all. Realities have lost their meanings".

"Arnheim would disagree radically".

"Because that exactly is the difference between us. He wants a meaning for his eating, drinking, being the great Arnheim and not knowing whether or not to marry you, so that is why he collected the treasures of the world ... ". He stopped. Looked a bit distracted. That remained for a while.

"... Do you understand why I say all this ... When I was a small, you won't believe it, I was a good boy. Soft as the air in a warm

moon-night. I could be totally in love with a dog or a knife ... ", and sank in thoughts again.

Diotima looked at the man who used to lecture her the precision of sentiment, wavering herself, for that eternal salvation sporting no holidays had touched her profoundly. Arnheim used to say: "One should never totally hate *nor totally love*"!

"Experience without limits, do you think it exists?" Ulrich asked.

"O, there surely are feelings without limits", for this gave her - but think for a moment how strange that is - more solid ground under her feet. "But we should relieve Arnheim of the general"

Ulrich offered to take care of the general.

They started moving.

But Diotima put her hand on his arm and softly said: "Only feelings without limits have value".

115. The tip of your breast is a poppy leaf.

Bonadea did not make any progress. Her attempts to chum up with Diotima had not stood a chance, so her ambition to arrogantly put Ulrich at a distance in union with Diotima had foundered entirely. She had visited Ulrich a few times to tell him that he really did not deserve her visits, but never had reached the stage to say so, due to interruptions while she was courteously received, so frequent that they seemed organized. So that was not going to work as well.

At night her head, thick of unsatisfied lust, rested on her shoulders like a coco-nut, but with its strawy monkey hair at the inside. More and more she started to feel the rage of an alcohol addict robbed of his bottle.

What next?

She decided to employ Moosbrugger. For days, she would picket - veiled - at the Tuzzi house, tense, until one night the number of visitors suggested that a salon evening was about.

She rang and asked whether she could speak to Ulrich. Rachel immediately understood the visitor should be a lover, felt her admiration for him run in a turbulent rapid, ran to announce him the person at the door.

This slightly disconcerted Ulrich. While smiling, he bought time to find a way to get her out without crying and screaming. Around the corner in the hall, Rachel carefully listened in and heard that another one of her heroes, Moosbrugger, was in acute danger and all important people present should march out at once to save him. And, though acutely aware Diotima should never get air of this, Rachel returned and opened the door to the only vacant room at the moment.

Diotima's room. A bit of a mess of socks, hair brushes and furniture removed, for the evening, from other rooms. Rachel, busy with guests and kitchen, had not tidied up there, for it should be done tomorrow anyway.

"The little one did something stupid", Ulrich said with a laugh, "we can't stay here. And you should not have come. Nothing can be done for Moosbrugger anyway".

"I should not have gone through the trouble?", she said almost voiceless. She looked out of the window. "And you have no problem to sleep while such injustice is done? I don't sleep for nights! Come on Ulrich, you are not so bad, you act as if you are. But with your being good you even cause yourself troubles!"

A full hit. He stepped next to her and put his arm around her shoulder

He felt a soft uncertainty and pulled her a bit tighter.

"Well, we're of??", Bonadea asked.

"No way, I do not even feel sure it is injustice. It is more like when I had dreamt about the tip of your breast, that is was a poppy-leaf. How could I know that is really so?"

Silence. Ulrich thought: the other person, that's is only a small list of similarities. Bonadea thought: come we go.

"That is impossible", said Ulrich - trusting it would escape her that he really could not boast having a profile of expert in that field.

But: "Why don't you just do what is right before you?" Bonadea asked. Another full hit.

Quite some times Ulrich had dreamt of getting high on a steep mountain slope, crossing it, and vertigo forcing him to return. Now he understood this was about Moosbrugger, thought he still did not grasp the nature of that connection.

It took some trouble to control himself, but he managed and said: "Now you have to go, and forgive me, I do not know when we can see each other again, I have a lot of work with myself".

And behold: Bonadea went. No protest whatsoever.

Ulrich gave quite a decent tip to Rachel and praised her presence of mind. She, without noticing it herself, held his hand, with the money for so long that he had to smile and tapped the blushing girl on the shoulder.

116. The two trees of life and the demand for a General Secretariat for the Precision of the Soul.

Diotima's salon was, it seemed, over its peak. The few smart people of the clientele were less seen. For the less spiritual giants of the Austrian mind the excitement over who would, and who would not manage to enter the circle was over. Arnheim still functioned as prestigious furniture, but even Leinsdorf, when announced, as for this evening, could not surge the interest. Whoever showed up retired early. When Ulrich entered, after having managed to get rid of Bonadea he saw a pugnacious Leinsdorf holding a post-mortem of the evening with Diotima, Arnheim, Stumm, and Tuzzi, who meanwhile had returned home from office - saved from a view of Bonadea by Rachel's daring initiative.

"Now to our Germans Wisnietzky is a Slavophil and for the Slavs he is a wolf dressed in sheep's clothes", his Serene Highness said, "just because he is a patriot. Above parties. He remains my man! But we quickly have to implement the cultural side, to give people something positive. We have to come with something, a second tower for the Stephanskirche or

an African colony, something people want to belong to, want to take part in, outdo each other".

Of course Arnheim took the floor to support him without any qualifications ("exceptionally life-true", he said). "The mood in the salon has changed as well: the burdensome variety of proposals has gone for the old ones have all been rejected and no new ones are coming, so an initiative is possible"

"My dear doctor", Leinsdorf looked at Ulrich. "Say something. Is clarity arriving?"

"Unfortunately no", Ulrich said, "The archive keeps growing, I am founding associations like mad, and send people to the appropriate ministries which, however, rarely take action".

"No wonder", His Serene Highness addressed the public after this a bit perspicuous one-two-one combination, "there is a lot of state consciousness among the people, but an entire lexicon of conversation is insufficient to fathom the plethora of directions popular energy is assuming. It is only natural that collisions result. Our ministries have no means to steer it. We have to interfere from above now."

Arnheim: "In this connection I would like to mention the way General von Stumm raised the attention of the participants to the conference lately".

"With what?", Leinsdorf asked, so openly surprised as to be possibly even be thought somewhat offending to Stumm.

"This is a bit painful", poor Stumm said, "I did not have the intention here as a soldier to take the initiative. But you may

remember how in earlier stages I drew the attention to the poor state of the army, the lack of modern artillery and a navy ...".

"And -- ?" interrupted Leinsdorf and looked at Diotima with a disturbed and inquiring mimic.

Diotima, seeing Stumm did not look at her, shrugged her shoulders to show this was a surprise to her as well. He now had so often broken her barriers in magical ways that meanwhile she had gotten used to see him bounce through the scenery uncontrolled, like a joker.

"The Emperor surely would consider the upgrade of the army a very nice present", Stumm said, "and the Prussians would be in for a surprise, if Mr. Arnheim would be so kind to excuse me".

"That should not become something to worry about", Arnheim said, and stressed that of course he had nothing to do with it but that he felt delighted the way he, as a total outsider, was so appreciated by this company.

"Indeed, more and more one thinks in this direction", Stumm said, "personally I am attracted by the thought to connect it to one or another great civilian idea"

And since after all he stood in his own house, Tuzzi opted for a small intervention: "It could, I think count on the support of Foreign Affairs".

"Well, well, we have found each other already". The sarcasm of His Serene Highness bounced from the walls.

"That is a good one", Tuzzi replied, "to maintain disagreement with Foreign Affairs, War would be ready to advocate disarmament!"

The vast repertoire of jokes about the tribal conflicts between ministries got duly cut into but its gradually growing excess contrast with the Parallel predicament suddenly ironed the faces again. Leinsdorf controlled his inclination to say something, suddenly remembering that on tricky moments you had to let others talk.

Silence

Finally Diotima said: "No, that's impossible".

Everybody looked at her.

"We would do what we blame Germany for: arm".

"But then what?", Leinsdorf asked gratefully.

"Germany is boasting rather naively with its power", Arnheim said, to let Diotima forgive him about his country, "one introduced gun powder and liquor".

Tuzzi smiled about what he thought was a daring joke.

"Recently, Prague granted a sizeable investment to the French while the German offer was cheaper and better", Arnheim continued, "this is what the German people do to themselves".

"Germany", Stumm said, "suffers the general Western problem but to the worst degree. And, with apologies for the paradox, that is why Austria should not stay behind too far".

At this moment Ulrich felt he wanted to say something. "Our correspondence shows that the gentlemen underestimate the friendliness towards Germany in our Empire. And I hear that one plans to counter us for we are thought to be inimical to it. One suspects the gentlemen Tuzzi and Arnheim in conspiracy".

Tuzzi's face displayed, to Ulrich's, a question mark. Arnheim smiled and stood up.

In the small melee thus produced, Tuzzi took Ulrich at his arm to the side and asked him whence he got that information. Ulrich told him it was a common rumour and he had heard of it in private contacts. Tuzzi cashed down: "Meanwhile I've come to know Arnheim is an intimate friend of Prince Mosjoutoff and persona grata at the Czar. He has to keep the Parallel Action pacifistic. Private ideological hobby of the Czar. Russian government is not involved, they know nothing about it. Nor does Leinsdorf".

Everybody had stood up except Leinsdorf. His fingers tussled beard hairs into strings. Pugnacious. "Something has to happen".

"Do you have an idea?"

"No, but something has to happen. Absolutely".

All around one saw brains being shaken out like empty money-boxes.

Leinsdorf went over the best options lately, and the reasons why they had been shot off.

Ulrich lapsed back in thoughts. The world was not created using a theory but using violence. And ... he decided to make it two and add: love. But the usual connection between the two is false!

Both concepts he used in a special meaning, violence as the anger and hardness of the skeptical, fact-oriented and alert state of mind. This included even mathematics, at least his mathematics. The interwoven system of branches and leaves got fed by one invisible stem.

Love on the other side. In this sense it was a more abstract force. The state in which you want to rid the tiniest part of yourself of loneliness. Or you feel you have all qualities just as you have none. Or that life is dumped into some dozens of baking moulds that constitute reality. Or thinking that we never found something that gives us peace. All that together is another tangle of branches and leaves, of that other tree now dubbed love.

That hassle of the first tree, from becoming reserve officer cadet to being a mathematician and so on, ultimately intends, despite all its efforts to achieve unreality, to attack the world with fiery ardour.

What in himself did Ulrich associate with the other tree? It reminded him of his trust and surrender when he was a child. And of the major's wife of course.

On balance the last months he had gotten more and more the feeling that in the end that hard half, of truth of the logician and the exploiter, was irrelevant, and that the other half was the one to head for, the half of similarity, association, the image, the

logic of the soul as it takes over when you dream. Art, religion, passion, disgust, admiration, leadership, subjection, imitation.

That separation process, maybe historically inevitable, of similarity and truth is a kind of evaporation whereby similarity goes in the air, you lose its great value, except maybe the quasi true rules of morality, similarities boiled down, smelling of that disgusting grease of humanitarianism.

In himself, Ulrich thought, the piling up of thought experiments had produced a shaky high scaffolding the peak of which was wavering dangerously high above natural life.

Where from here? He gazed at Tuzzi and it dawned on him Tuzzi was speaking, " ... nowhere foreign policy is harder than here. The French: *revanche* and colonies. The English: farmer's chess on the world board. The German Empire: a place under the sun. But our empire does not need anything. What kind of great ideas should one keep ready for use? That is extremely hard to predict!"

Apparently, Tuzzi preached prudence. And he was serious. The dangers of the lack of needs, Ulrich's brains absorbed it avidly. It woke him up.

"Playing with great political ideas is *va banque*", Tuzzi never had talked so much.

"But conservation leads to war", Arnheim said.

"I do not want to strictly deny that", Tuzzi said, "and then you have to choose how to get into it. But think of Czar Alexander II, a reformer. His father had restricted himself to maintaining

order and died a natural death. Alexander did not survive his fourth assassination attempt".

"Yes, those radicals, I noticed that too, they have no limits" Diotima joined her husband, against Arnheim, though she might not have realized, but Tuzzi smiled.

Ulrich was surprised to notice words surfacing from within: "This is because the champions of the soul despise logic which prompts them to quickly grab vague concepts and half-truths".

Nobody reacted. What could one say? Ulrich did not have the feeling ever to have taken seriously even one of these people, neither did he now, but this time it made him feel lonely. And it gave him a feeling that he never ever had taken a serious decision and that this had to happen soon. He felt slipping away again from the company, but to his own amazement this produced an almost corporeal protest and he switched back to monitor the impression of his senses.

"Well, what are we going to do?", Leinsdorf said. "We have at least for the time being to do something decisive to cope with the danger!"

"Your Serene Highness, the Parallel Action has only one task! We have to act as if 1918 is the year of the last judgment, as if the entire traditional body of human self awareness shall be abolished and a higher one shall be launched. I propose you found, in the name of His Majesty the Emperor, an Earth Secretariat of the Precision of the Soul; as long as that first step had not been taken, none of the rest can be solved or only in appearance!"

He was not surprised to see eye balls rolling out of their sockets, and even upper bodies waver on their pelvises. So he continued calmly to illustrate his proposal with some salient elements derived from his latest mental absence.

Leinsdorf was the first who succeeded in pulling himself together again. "Exactly!" he said, "so we must rise above all suggestions made thus far and find a true one!"

Arnheim set out to save Leinsdorf of Ulrich: "Our friend believes that proper life can be produced synthetically, like we have achieved with rubber and nitrogen, but unfortunately the human mind performs badly when treated in chemical plants"

But Leinsdorf shook his head, irritated. "I understand him very well", he said, "people used to get born in a clear world, stable for ages. One entered in one of a limited number of social positions. And you grew into that by copying the type self-awareness established in that class. Thus you became a carpenter, weaver, military officer, nobleman and so forth. Nowadays that system of positions is changing itself. Continuously. New professions to which the old mental and spiritual orientations no longer fit, so the morality of such new positions is as new as the position itself and has to be designed, just like the new position is designed. If you leave that to the people you get what we now see around us, people quickly grab something new that seems better, after some disappointment drop it again, and so on. This implies that also in forging the new soul, tradition and manual work has to be replaced with the rationality of industrial production." Leinsdorf was surprised of himself, but yes, this was it! He now looked sure of himself while during talking he had stared at Ulrich with some disconcertion.

"But what Herr Doktor says is totally unfeasible!", Arnheim said.

"Is it?", Count Leinsdorf said, with aggressive posture.

Diotima threw herself in between them: "But haven't we tried in all our meetings what my nephew wants?"

"And why did it come to nothing?" His Serene Highness shouted, "I sensed it right from the start. This psychoanalysis and relativity theory or how you call all that crap, it bubbles up irresponsibly, and does not care for the larger social consequences. Herr Doktor might have expressed it with some flaws but is not he totally right: we quickly knock something together and before we even started to look whether it is something viable we are already engaged with the next, or even missed the whole thing! A piggery!"

Down to the brass tacks, Leinsdorf thought. Let's own up! And this Arnheim is no different. And the rest the man says we don't need since for that we have religion already.

It was hard to see whether Arnheim sensed it all, but what he sensed of it made him pale. Not shy, though. Indignated rather. At the same time his recent hotel room decisions to win Ulrich now seemed a bridge too far, so the problem he had covered with those decisions reemerged painfully. As a Hans Sepp he started a rear guard skirmish and asked Ulrich: "Suppose you get the go for your plan, what are you going to do? Now we are all very curious to know".

Tuzzi's wife now got haunted by all kinds of thoughts about Ulrich, Arnheim, her husband, adultery and murder. Tuzzi sensed not the faintest of that, admired in stealth Leinsdorf, and

was highly pleased to have witnessed this super ideological shipwreck of Diotima and her Ludicrous Lads.

Ulrich thought of Gerda. The time of conversations was now over, he now stood with her, he realized before the "second obstacle", Hans Sepp would say. So it was fuck or break. Break, he concluded.

He felt no desire at all to answer Arnheim, looked on his watch, smiled, and said his answer had better wait for another occasion.

This linked him up with the others again. Tuzzi made a bedtime movement, Leinsdorf had relaxed again. He would have loved to see the Prussian being flushed by Ulrich, but things had gone well enough. If you like someone, he thought, than it simply is so, how nice the other's yackety-yak may be. And he even said so: "The bottom line is that a decent, sympathetic person is unable to say something stupid at all!"

Break-up. The general had not yet found a new place for his new horn spectacles and tried several pockets of his uniform, in vain, while he mumbled to Tuzzi: "armed peace of ideas".

"Well, what did we decide", the count asked.

No reaction.

"Well, we are going to see that after all", he told the backs.

117 Rachel's black day.

The awakening of the man with Rachel as his target had given Soliman a the cool focus of a hunter. But his ignorance of the

trade made him feel again the little boy he was: he tied bed sheets and scanned facades for climbing possibilities.

Rachel's Ulrich-adventure had caused an erotic flower precipitation landing on Soliman. But everybody was busy, the cook was ill and their superiors kept them short, apparently in common deliberation.

Rachel turned out to be the more practical of the two. She understood that a quarter of an hour was the most that was to be had, carefully studied the duration of all recurring events in the house, waited for an opportunity to show Soliman a second way to get into her room, held some training exercises endowed with a valid explanation in case they got caught, and then got set to wait her chance.

And it came: late one night they had stopped ringing for her, the salon-bragging got the monotonous sound suggesting nobody yet was about to leave.

Once in her room it was Soliman who put the bolt, but neither of them dared to make light. He had to restrain his urge to celebrate his male triumph and squeeze her so hard as to make her scream, but he managed.

What next? Rachel knew, for in the context of their discussions concerning the exact details of the love between their superiors the two had discussed the frivolity of Diotima's latest underwear. And since Rachel was allowed to adjust to herself all of clothing Diotima ceased to wear, she now could show Diotima's immorality giving Soliman a view on the slip she was wearing with a lace edge, while showing herself convinced that Soliman was wearing black underwear since, she said, so she was told.

And there buzzed, in the dark, the floating storm of love, put them roughly back on the ground and disappeared, and the dark looked like black coal they had stained themselves with.

Now even Rachel had lost her sense of time. Quickly both adjusted their clothes, but Soliman had torn off that black dress with all those little buttons. Rachel helped him, more efficient than affectionate, and neither needed Soliman that last kiss, he did not seem to care how he would leave things behind and wanted to make his way to safety, like a thief with the booty.

Rachel got haunted by disappointment about the contrast between her dreams and this little black liar. She was a maid again, but now one fearing to have become pregnant.

She pulled the bolt. "Now you have to kiss me". To her that was part of the event.

To both of them it tasted like tooth paste.

To Rachel's surprise the salon was as she had left it: everybody was still talking on the same slightly bored tone.

After the ending she came to comb the hair of Diotima, who tapped her maid's hand and said: "I am pleased my admonitions had a positive effect on you!"

118. Kill him finally!

Walter was dressing in his good clothes. A demonstration in town had been announced. "They're right", he said with irritation, "this Parallel Action is a scam!".

"And what is the shouting going to achieve?", Clarisse asked.

"On the street at least they form a physical train and do not think or write, that is good for a start!"

The cabinet was in conflict again since last week. The Polish, holding the balance, were home for consultation. The Empire-wide irritation about the Parallel Action was a gift from heaven to troublemakers of all sides. The President of Police sat next to his plan of the town and reshuffled his horse platoons.

"Is Ulrich at the enemy side?", Clarisse asked.

"He is not interested in politics, but he roams around in those circles".

"I join".

"No, then I'd rather stay home with you". Walter thought her mind was too brittle for it.

"No, you go". She wanted to be alone. She was reading Nietzsche, held the book in a hand with the finger somewhere between the pages.

But Walter had already lost his appetite to go. "Where are you reading?"

That was not his business (the Impoverishment of the Will by Modern Decay, Its Degeneration into Details, the Loss of the Whole, but she would not tell him).

Her refusal made clear to Walter that the home front was more threatening than the Parallel Action. He stayed. For here was, after all, where it should happen: normalization. A child. Five, rather, if he could afford it.

But she did not want. He reached for the book.

Resistance.

Well, what use that book after all, he let it loose.

"Why don't you show me what you read, let us speak".

"One cannot 'speak' ! You want a child to have an excuse for refraining from any achievement of your own". She knew that any indulgency on this point would be the end of everything. And she was heading for the other direction: bowing or breaking.

There she stood. Hate. Well, like lately: piano rage.

Walter paled. His teeth showed. "Beware of the genius! Especially you!". He shouted.

That was Ulrich. And it had escaped his throat on its own initiative. Genuine sarcasm.

Had he been allowed to read the Nietzsche passage around Clarisse's thumb, that she thought was about him, he would immediately have applied it to Ulrich. He had a sensation of putting his hat on and going to town. Houses blew to the side to make way for him. Friendly people around. From this phantasy he said to Clarisse: "Especially when you feel contrary to other people you must feel a fundamental inclination towards them".

Every person is linked to some animal. Walter felt sure about this. His animal was the fish, the medium it is leaning on the same as the one in which it moves. Not like people, leaning on the earth, moving by pushing air.

Clarisse knew about it and had baptized fish as "water bourgeois". By the way, Walter also liked to clean and eat them. No fun for those animals.

Walter remembered it and it felt like an insult. While remembering, his imagination still put him somehow half in town and the weather turned good for fishing. People wore hats but no collars. No bourgeois, factory workers. But with those bare necks ... disturbing. Then it started to rain fish. Somebody shouted for his little dog. Through some hole in his imagination he saw Clarisse again. She would be proud when she knew he could be so *non compos mentis*. But he was not going to score on the issue, for he felt ashamed towards the philosophy of life he had come to adopt. The whole thing resulted in the suspicion something terrible was about to happen.

While he no longer dared to say what he wanted for fear of not having noticed the conversation had progressed in the meantime, Clarisse said: "If you want to kill Ulrich, why don't you do it! You have too much conscience; and artist can only make good music when uninhibited by conscience".

Walter did not know what to say. He refused to understand what she had said, until he started to think she had stated the very cause of his flight into this town-fish hallucination, and that his urge to become a normal human being had to be suppressed by his urge to distinguish himself. "How do you get it in your brains!", he said it several times.

Again he felt her frowning upon him was caused by love for Ulrich. Again he failed to stop himself asking her: "Are you ...
"

"I don't want a child from you; I don't want a child from you".
Every time she said it she gave him a little kiss.

And gone was she.

There he stood, jealous, at the piano. He sat down. Lighted a cigarette. And the spinal marrow music of the Saxon magician sounded again.

He took his hat and left to town.

But everything looked normal. He felt related with the peace of the fixed price of the tram ticket, the stops, the clocks.

119. Speculation à la baisse and seduction.

He knew about it for some days but now saw it reported, for the first time, in a newspaper, so he could announce it in his house. Excited but smooth-faced, the newspaper hanging loosely down from between thumb and finger of his right hand, Leo left his room to find his wife and daughter. He found only Gerda. Casually, he read the news about their hero: "... plans to bring the Galician oil fields under his control ...".

A full hit!, he thought, very satisfied. It pays to wait. And strike at the right moment. With the newspaper at its neck-skin like a pitbull he immediately returned to his room, thinking that he never expected anything else from a sensible man like Arnheim, forgetting that until a few days ago, in brave silent resistance against his family he had thought of him like a braggart.

And thus nobody witnessed the astonishing effect of this message on Gerda. She ran to the mirror and nervously started

plucking herself, mumbling: "He does not love me, how could he when I am looking like this. He is not worth making a fool of myself". She grabbed her coat and her hat, even pulled a veil out of a drawer and ran out of the house. To Ulrich.

Without further ado, Ulrich put his arm around her shoulder and kissed her, slowly, everywhere between her collar and hairs. When he reached her lips it felt like a small child put her little arms around his neck. He thought of the splendid bodies of Bonadea and Diotima.

This welcome took Gerda entirely off the world, but when he looked at her she managed to get her feet down. "You haven't asked me at all why I came!"

"For you love me".

"No, I come to tell you that your friend Arnheim fools your niece; he has other plans!". And she forwarded her father's ultra short message.

Ulrich was shocked. He felt pretty sure Diotima knew nothing about it. Another opportunity to make clear to her that she was spreading the wings of her soul to fly into a ridiculous disappointment.

And here he sat, distracted by all this, with Gerda. "Your daddy is great", he said.

It put Gerda into the role of a walk-on in the script. By her own doing, but she had not foreseen it. What had she expected? She forgot. This unexpected role contrasted agreeably with her standard business of irritating Daddy and insisting on being "taken seriously" with Hans. More than a contrast: a somewhat

bizarre return in the family even, which prompted her to acquire a higher level by resisting Ulrich and saying: "We first want to feel more human togetherness, the rest will come by itself", a small eruption of the Hans-nonsense, that for the rest she seemed to have healed of.

But Ulrich's arm remained solidly around her shoulder. Ulrich understood he should now forget other matters for, first, though he felt a disturbing lack of appetite, Gerda needed to be fucked. That after all was what she had come for.

Her back bent, Gerda directed her eyes firmly down in the direction of the tips of her shoes, focusing on human togetherness. That posture can't be held very long, Ulrich knew, so he quietly waited. And yes, she turned her head and faced her seducer.

Kisses.

And there she went. To his bed it was only ten steps. Void of will, as if she was wounded or ill, she allowed herself to be guided, strange, foot by foot, but she walked herself. When passing a mirror she saw her copper red face. It must be, she thought.

Ulrich did not get himself as far to tenderly help her undressing. He stood next to her and threw his clothes off. Gerda saw the powerful man's body, a balance of violence and beauty. With terror she saw she got goose-flesh. What an awful sight!

She wanted to say something which would make Ulrich her lover in a way totally different from what they were going to do now. For a short moment, she imagined herself in a

immense field of candles, stuck in the ground like little step-mothers and going alight all at the same moment. But she failed to utter a word. She felt ugly and pitiful, her arms trembled, she found herself unable to take off her last clothes, pressed her bloodless lips together for fear they would start to flubber without speaking.

Ulrich sensed her precarious situation, untied her shoulder strap. Ze slid in bed. It seemed Ulrich that, now nothing anymore could be done about it, she wanted it to have it quickly over with. Everywhere his hands felt fearful goose-flesh. He himself felt only disgust. A young girl's body, one half already flaccid, the other still immature.

To avoid jumping out of bed, Ulrich's soul employed the heaviest means: demons of emptiness, as you find them behind all images of life, appeared and moved him sex-murderish, even sex-selfmurderish, if such a thing exists.

He suddenly remembered how he got robbed that night on the street, but this time he wouldn't ... but something dreadful happened that those robbers had not in their repertoire.

For meanwhile, in Gerda's perception the whole thing started to seem an execution. She still felt some inarticulate friendship and tenderness, but not for this naked man the hostility of whom she guessed, who did not take her offer serious but neither let her any choice.

Suddenly she started to scream. A pulsating alarm scream. Hands against her breast, nails out, thighs closed in convulsion. Lips moving like waves, eyes rolling. Her body refused any further cooperation. Strange, it had come over her, she had no

power over it whatsoever, but she experienced it as shameful theatre.

Ulrich had read about this. Screaming back loudly could be a remedy, or a slap. He thought a younger man might just have penetrated her, and that it could well be a remedy too, may be one should not concede anything to a stupid goose that had gone this far.

But he whispered consoling words. That he was not going to do anything, that nothing had happened yet, that he was sorry, and so on and so forth, ridiculous and unworthy. The bitch.

He failed to find the switch of the alarm but gradually it yielded and then stopped altogether. She rose in the bed to upright position but was far from conscious. In the absence of a conscious person to deal with, Ulrich's disgust grew by the sight of what now merely was just an unattractive thin little body.

There she was again. She noticed she was naked, got aware of Ulrich and blushed. Ulrich repeated what he said before, presuming she would not have heard anything of it. Her awareness of what brought her in this situation restored. This industriously whispering man next to her sounded much more tender than he did before, but that was because he had made her ill. She wanted not to be there. Nowhere really. She pushed him away and started looking for her underwear. Ulrich helped her with her clothes. Both felt they were dressing a child.

Gerda went up, staggered a bit, but was again able to compare her feelings when leaving home with those she would have returning there. Ulrich offered to get a coach. She refused and disappeared without looking at him

Ulrich saw her walking away and felt like a boy. Of course he should not have let her go like this. But he was still naked himself, which was yet another impediment for a balanced control of the situation.

120. The Parallel Action causes uproar.

Walter left the tram in the town centre. At first nothing special was to be seen, but there was something in the air, something that made you forget yourself a little, forget that you were a civil servant at the Department of Art, a failed musician and painter, tormented husband of Clarisse and more such things.

Gradually the density of people grew to that of dirt and leaves when upcoming wind starts to move it over the ground. Walking turned into marching in procession.

One sensed how easy it got to start conversations with strange neighbours marching left and right. Thus, Walter heard that a demonstration of patriotism was about, another had heard that this was against an overly patriotic group, again others thought the Germans wanted to show government that stronger restraint should be forced on the Slavic ambitions. Then again, one heard that benevolent Kakanians wanted to show they were fed up with all the unrest lately. A German and a Hungarian shook hands demonstratively and under widespread laughter, in their common aversion to the Empire.

Protest, of the old against the new, or the new against the old, everybody thought the time had come for something to happen. While Walter proceeded, the crowd kept growing denser and one saw less and less women. Everybody was fed up and the mood was excellent.

Large platoons of police on horseback with red collars seemed like a festive accompaniment of this excited martial happening as at a great international sports game. One smelled brotherhood, togetherness, stimulation, a rain of flowers.

The mood got enhanced by a group of students returning from battle, as it seemed from their excited and loud talking.

The development of a social process like this is well known in recent psychology, police have their experts in it, demonstration leaders carefully make use of it in their planning: tension grows and somewhere at the place with the lowest resistance it will start to discharge. This place usually is someone who is vulnerable, simple and easily irritated. The tension discharged through such a person is not merely his own; through him passes the tension of everybody behind him. Different people surely will have built up this tension in different ways, through the weeks or even through the years, but this no longer matters when you are together.

In military battles, talented officers know which individuals to put in the front ranks. The same holds for officers of police horse platoons like the ones here in action. In unorganized masses, such people somehow get in front spontaneously.

Walter had no little understanding of the process and kept clear of it, but he felt the force that tried to grab him and had to resist it. Walter thought that Clarisse would have become totally unmanageable here at this stage. She was on her way to get crazy, and he too, if he went on this way. But that would still be better than going under in this mass. Nevertheless, he did it. A little bit.

Meanwhile Ulrich had arrived at Leinsdorf's palace using a back road. The count had learned he was the target of the demonstration.

"I have to take something back", he said, ironically, "I have repeatedly stressed that when many people are for something, always something useful results. But of course there are exceptions".

The majordomos brought the news that the head of the demonstration was about to reach the palace, and asked whether he should close the shutters.

"Are you off your rocker", His Serene Highness said, "Keep open. There's enough police"

There they came. Left and right a row of police on horseback. The head of the demonstration decreased its pace and the crowd thickened. The thickening band moved backwards as in a muscle preparing for a strike. And the strike came: something got scanned, but at the palace the words could not be understood. Due to the distance, one saw all mouths opening before the sound reached the facade of the palace.

"What are they shouting", His Serene Highness asked. Ulrich thought it wise not to come up with what he guessed. He had wanted to report Arnheim's Galician oil ambitions to the count but its urgency had ceased. He became a cavalry officer again and said: "One could clear this square with one company".

Violence. It reminded him of how he had jumped on Gerda like a big dog on a screaming little dog, the shame of it tormented him, except when he thought of Arnheim. Well, all comedy, he thought, on this square as well. These people did not stand

ready for the kill, not one policeman nervously checked his weapon. You, you are all together there in convivial atmosphere, he thought, jealous. Asymmetry. Pity. He had no part in it. Or he should get aggressive and advance.

Suddenly he noticed they saw him and thought he was the count. Would-be aggressively they swung sticks, but their exuberance was what transpired above all else. Demonstrators behind the head pressed the front off the square to have their turn, those leaving the square seemed to realize theirs was over and turned back to normal. It amused Ulrich until he thought: "This life is just unbearable. I do not want to witness it any longer and I am tired to resist it".

There he stood. Before him the theatre of the people, behind him that of Leinsdorf antique desk and wall paper. Those two formed one integrated spectacle, with him, not even part of it, as the sole spectator, in between.

With force he pressed these thoughts away, Leinsdorf noticed, without guessing what. "What's with you today?" he said, "don't let it put you down, we are doing well, we need to bind the Germans by first drawing the non-Germans towards us. This might cause some pain, but it will work!"

Despite the count's wrong diagnosis of Ulrich's qualms, Ulrich cheered up having been seen suffering and been encouraged. He landed back on earth, strangely enough promising himself to commit a real crime at short notice, as though he had spoken Moosbrugger on a park bench and decided to follow his example, as a method to distance himself from life not mentally, but with blood, arms and legs, without at once having to kill himself.

"I can't go away from here", the count said, "Go to your niece and tell her ... yes ... tell her that strong medicine works with great force, and that whoever wants to improve life should not fear some burning and cutting!" His little chin-beard rose forward and sank again, and he went on: "Tell her not to worry. The wildest men are the easiest to get on board".

"For opposition", he clarified to Ulrich, "stops being opposition as soon as you allow them to hold the steering. I do not mean the tautology, I mean that the smart people along them learn everything in no time. That is the factual, the reliable and the stable in politics!"

121. The conversation.

Diotima was out, Rachel told him opening, but Arnheim was waiting for her inside. Ulrich decided to join and entered without noticing that Rachel's face was scarlet of repentance.

Neither of the gentlemen disposed of a suitable starter. Arnheim was the first to find one.: "I do not understand you, isn't it a thousand times more important to engage in life than to write?"

"Well", Ulrich said, "I do not write at all".

Something like that could not put off Arnheim: "A very good thing", he said, "writing is a disease, like a pearl ... " and so on.

Ulrich failed to withhold his urge to say it: "But aren't you a very famous author?"

"That is nothing". Arnheim went on to depict their last conversation as a fruitful search and asked: "do I express

myself correctly if I say that according to you one should live with a limited reality-consciousness?"

Ulrich smiled to convey an inability yet to affirm or deny.

"A floating life, as a metaphor connecting two worlds but choosing for none? And what you said to your niece about me was interesting, though offensive. That I am a kind of Prussian business militarist, unable to understand such things. I clearly see what you are pointing at, and much of it is dear to me, but you demand to deny the reality-significance, this "provisionally definitive", as Leinsdorf puts it so nicely. You can't demand to disqualify it altogether can you?"

"I demand nothing at all", Ulrich said.

"You even demand much more than that", Arnheim continued, "but let me now, if I may, put this question to you: I heard from your niece your opinion about Moosbrugger. If, one his death sentence had become definitive, and you knew how to help him escape, would you do it?"

"No"

"Really?"

"Well, I think I would not, but it would depend on how I would come to see it when put in the situation. I could judge it wrong, but nevertheless decide that in a world like ours such considerations of right and wrong make no sense, and then draw a new line".

"It should be made sure he will never again put people into danger", Arnheim said, "but in old times his hallucinations

would have been given a religious meaning, and who knows what they would have done with him: send him in the desert, worship him as a visionary, who knows, did not Abraham want to slaughter Isaac. We no longer have such certainties and became hypocritical". Arnheim felt he might now be a bit too daring, due to Ulrich's irritating refusal to say he would save Moosbrugger.

"Would you get him released?", Ulrich asked

"No", Arnheim smiled, "but I want to make you another proposal, for your mistrust is offending me, I even want to win you over!" And there he began an extensive lecture about the organizational structure of large international companies as the one he ran, stressing that in their roles in the different bodies of such an organizations people often take decisions differently from what they would do in private issues. Even Tuzzi, Arnheim claimed, if he ever would give a sign to war, would do so on purely technical grounds.

This did not surprise Ulrich, who knew very well how soldiers were led by people running no risks whatsoever for their personal lives. This of course had started not long after the Trojan war, but it had become normal with the advent of the modern division of labour. He thought Arnheims scruples, be they real or feigned, old fashioned, which satisfied him like a traveler, motorized in the modern fashion, passing, with a hundred kilometers an hour a moralist walking on the road, leaving him behind in a cloud of dust. "I take your observation to ask whether we could do something about this without, as humanity, making a U-turn in history".

"Your General Secretariat For The Precision Of The Soul! I hate to jest, but I never took yours as purely that!"

"But it was nothing else. I do not believe at all such a thing would be possible. Sooner I would believe the devil made Europe in order to show something to God, his competitor".

"Then why were you so irritated when I did not want to believe you?"

Ulrich gave no answer.

"This again", Arnheim said, "does not tally with quite a number of other things I heard you claiming. I hear an alternation of depictions of grand human programs with indifference".

Again: no answer from Ulrich.

Effortless, Arnheim produced the courtesy that best answers such obtuseness and explained that his lecture about organisational structures had the aim of showing that moral questions had not to be dealt with at that level but at another one.

"Forgive me", Ulrich said, "do you also see it as a contemporary form of indirectness and subdivision of consciousness if one brings mystical sentiments in the soul of a woman, while one deems it the most rational to leave her body to her husband?"

That made Arnheim's colour slightly change but it was to threat to his balance. "This is not totally clear to me but if you talk about a woman you love you cannot say that, for reality is always richer than the line structure of principles ... you are not easy to catch", he said it with a mixture of recognition and regret, "but let me continue with where I was heading: I do propose you to join my firm".

If he had in mind to surprise Ulrich his success was undivided. And it seemed Arnheim had expected the surprise for he ignored it and went into details: in the beginning, Ulrich could be a secretary at Arnheim's side, where he could be useful at once and learn at the same time. "I hope you do not feel insulted by my offer, the salary will not have the proportions of a bribe, but the job will lead to the options of earning any income that you would deem apt. I do think that after a year or so you will have a totally different impression of me".

That said, Arnheim felt some nervousness upcoming. Somehow, in his mind, Ulrich's status had shrunk a little by making him this offer, to the level of an applicant. But then suddenly his fear for having his offer rejected got matched by the opposite fear of it being accepted. He had solidly suppressed the hotel-room motive of a few weeks ago to make Ulrich this offer, and now it raised its ugly head: to take Diotima's nephew as a son and cure his irritating lack of Arnheim-veneration, offensive capability and readiness to cerebral reply, and to manage a certain influence the young man seemed to have on his environment. Of course, he, Arnheim, was much older. But the awareness of that raised a far vague warning associated to the similar age of Diotima. On balance, his mind now started to produce some options for retreat to get rid of Ulrich in case he would accept the offer. He would manage some way or another, he reassured himself.

"What is the business background of your offer?", Ulrich asked

"You can't express that in money", Arnheim said, "What I can loose hiring you bears no resemblance to what I can win".

"You make me curious, I've never been judged profitable".

Arnheim looked as though he knew Ulrich's business profile better than he.

"But", Ulrich continued, "I do hear that the intercourse with my niece is not your main business here and that you want to acquire exploitation licenses for the Galician oil fields?"

That one was better than the prick with the mystical feelings in the married body. Arnheim paled, but slowly approached, thinking what to say.

That was slightly too hard, Ulrich thought. Now I gave him the chance to end the conversation whenever he wants. "I of course did not wish to hurt you, but this conversation can't acquire its full dimension if we recoil of being straight".

This succeeded in its aim to return some feeling of control to Arnheim. He even put his hand, his arm really, on Ulrich's shoulder, and even managed to smile. "How can you take such an exchange rumour seriously?"

"I have better information".

"I know it is talked about, of course I am doing business here, and indeed, I tell you this in confidence, I spoke to some people about it".

"My niece knows nothing about your oil. But her husband has asked her to be vigilant since you are considered a trustee of the Czar"

"There are connotations everywhere, but why not deal with them more delicately?" Arnheim still had his arm on Ulrich's shoulder and moved it a bit. It made Ulrich waver. He had been

alone too long and too much. Memories of longing to be part of something alternated with others in which he had managed to keep his back straight. He looked at the man whose offer he did not fathom.

Arnheim had let Ulrich loose. Some late demonstrators passed.

Ulrich looked at them, slightly behind Arnheim. Was this the moment for the planned crime. There was Arnheim's neck. In his pocket was a stiletto. He could do it. Or accept the offer.

It seemed to Arnheim that Ulrich had geared down and that the situation had become manageable again for him.

"Unfortunately I cannot wait any longer for Frau Tuzzi", Ulrich said, "I have to go. But what I understand is that with my lack of business knowledge I could help you to not become overly businesslike?"

"Well, maybe I went a bit too far", Arnheim laughed, with majestic friendliness, his arm on Ulrich's shoulder again, for that seemed to have worked, but Arnheim was on retreat already: "loneliness maybe, I have to apologize".

"But of course not", Ulrich said, "I will consider your offer seriously".

Some uneasiness haunted Arnheim: it might be hard to keep Ulrich outdoors in an honourable way.

122 The way home.

Dark. Demonstrators seemed now to enjoy their well-deserved rest on their beds, exhausted but relaxed. Ulrich's steps echoed

from the façades. No, of course he would not enter Arnheim's firm, thought the ghost, while haunting the dark streets of life, failing to find a window through which to slip in.

He thought of a photograph of himself as a child, in that album he found at Diotima's. On the lap of his proud mother, who had died very young. Parental hope shaped by clothing and posture, and the photographer had found a moment in which he happily laughed to his mother. He thought of his youthful coach-work on that picture in that loving but disgusting amazingly advanced cliché-shape that he had destroyed so profoundly later on. A lucky escape! The man without shape memory asked himself for the millionth time how that shape had held so well with others. It should be something like a shortening of the sight line by perspective: if you look into a long street, and gaze towards its end, you will not notice all holes and interruptions. It will look perfectly regular, like everything that we are cheated with in the street of life. If you walk straight and keep looking straight forward, you won't notice anything.

In youth, everybody gets endowed with such a perspective. In a small village everything keeps reminding you of it and keeps confirming it. But in a modern city you have to store it well, or you lose it. Most people manage, though a sizeable remainder, also lacking sufficient shape memory, clots together in a rainbow of sects and movements in which the spiritual wheel is reinvented: they branch into another long straight street, also leading nowhere.

And then, third, there was ... Ulrich. The man observing it with never ending astonishment. All alone.

That arm. Arnheim's arm. It should not have put him off balance. He collided into a little whore. She seemed nice, a bit

moving even. Would he? A passing remedy for loneliness ... but he gave her some money and walked on.

This was how Moosbrugger encountered his victim. Thinking of that, Ulrich got some lust-feelings, and jealousy. How could he have come so far?

This should all be off the table, he thought. His "time out", the entire reason to return to Vienna, should now lead to a breakthrough.

He arrived at his his silly castle and watched it with surprise: all windows were lit. While his old butler was off to his family.

Clarisse.

123. The inversion

In vain, his old butler had tried to make clear to the "forgive me, somewhat excited" woman that he was about to leave and did not know when Ulrich would return. Then he had decided to stay.

She was lying on the divan, her knees pulled up.

"A burglar I thought"

"Maybe you were right. That old slyboots tried to get me out, I said, why don't you go and sleep, but he hid somewhere down. Here." She gave Ulrich a telegram that had just arrived.

He read it while Clarisse continued talking.

His father. Died.

Despite never having felt well with his father, a feeling of loneliness came up.

"Congratulations", Clarisse said when she was told the news, "Are you very rich now?"

"Wealthy. This castle was slightly above his standing". He went down for a minute to have his travel prepared.

Clarisse had used the day to finally lose her belief in Walter's future. If he wanted to be part of the herd, let it be. In her view words, kisses and tears were meant to spread like wings, start the drama of the individual. On her way to Ulrich she had to laugh about his child-wish, maintaining itself despite his fear for her "madness". She herself saw madness as lightning, or a state of extraordinary health. But she perfectly knew that others occasionally found her hard to follow and all that she should now tell Ulrich exhaustively.

"Well, my cordial condolences, old boy!"

He knew this, if she was nervous, but it kept amazing him.

"Now I have to talk to you!"

"Why don't you have a drink first".

Clarisse made a throw-away gesture and started: "Walter wants a child, get it?".

She did wait for an answer, but then continued: "But I don't!"

"Well, that's no reason to get over-excited, if you don't want it it will not happen".

"But then he will collapse like a pudding".

"No, who every day thinks he will die usually gets very old. Older than you and me".

"Walter and me are an umbrella, I am the stick and he is the cloth. Hij wants to protect me. And seems to need a child for the purpose".

Ulrich laughed a little

"He wants to kill you", Clarisse said.

"Yes, that's what you recommended him".

"I want a child from you". She laughed like a child that knows it is expressing a decently bold wish

"Yes, but I know Walter, would I want to take his example?".

"No but it would pull him in turn, you will feel guilty and help him, help him out maybe, aren't the three of us cut out of one single stone?"

"Good. But you talk as if we are really going to do it".

She pushed her arm under Ulrich's but his remained hanging down. "Don't you like me? I know how often you look at me. You are a devil but a big one, or a god lying to stay incognito, you desire to have me ... "

She got hold of his other hand as well.

Now she will start crying, Ulrich thought.

But no.

"You would long ago have taken me between the teeth of your liar's jaws had you had the courage to show yourself to me".

Subtly, Ulrich liberated himself

Clarisse went and sat down on the divan as if she followed an order.

"Nothing happens", she sighed, "for years in a row now".

Ulrich pitied her and caressed her hair. "You are saying a lot of true things but I do not see the connections and can't follow the jumps".

"Can it be more clear? I trod 'round in little circles, paint a little, play piano like to hide holes in the wall. Covering holes that instead should be used to escape through. I know how to do that! Look, Walter and you have the ideas, I know the way. You even have the power but you refuse, I don't know why, goddammit I'll shake you until I get you ready!"

She went on to praise him as a "true barbarian" from whom - and not from Walter - she, a new Mary, finally would receive the Saviour of the world. Ulrich could not join the party but as background music to his own latest plans, it occurred to him, it would be perfectly suitable.

"You'd better agree, if you don't I'll kill you!"

Ulrich had to jam his brakes even firmer lest the Saviour would be underway.

"No I don't want, Clarisse", he said, and let her loose. "Now I want to prepare my travel".

A switch, quite a rusty one, seemed to be pulled over in Clarisse's head with a mighty jerk. She noticed her skirt had crept above her knees, pulled it down, stood up, pulled her clothes right and said: "Of course, you have to pack and I am going. Good journey. By the way, what I came to say: when you are back we shall have Meingast at home".

Clarisse would have loved to know what it had been, all she had said, but she had no idea, so it must have been of the greatest importance. Gone she was.

Ulrich had to write Leinsdorf and Diotima, for executing his father's will might well take some time.

This Clarisse! A record again. Properly viewed she was mad already.

Now he was half-way his reflection-holiday-year, he realized and stepped into his bed. And nothing had happened.

No sleep. What a day! Memories and images of it passed until he sensed something changed in the entire relation between him and his surroundings, but somehow under everything. Under the perceivable and the thinkable something made the whole shit move lightly. But not disagreeably. Something slightly at the miraculous side of strange.

How to express it? It was as if his loneliness grew both in extension and in density, broke through the walls and reached town, then kept growing into to world. "What world?" he thought, "There's none".

It pushed him out of mood and he opened his eyes. Dawn. He jumped out of his bed and stretched himself. But something remained that he could not shake off. Finally he realized what it was and smiled: "An attack of Frau Major" he was used to call it.

But fortunately no one here to repeat the error, his brains thought.

His old butler entered with the ceremony of someone who rises early to awake someone else. Ulrich washed himself, did some physical exercise and drove to the railway station.

You are on 65% [orig. p. 680] of the part of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* published during Musil's life. The story is designed to allow the reader to continue in the original with no gaps of information at: ZWEITES BUCH DRITTER TEIL - INS TAUSENDJÄHRIGE REICH [DIE VERBRECHER], 1. Die vergessene Schwester [orig. p. 685].

Dutch version and more books follow:

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