

Any Opportunity

Zo d'Axa

2014

When you go your own way, alone, you take any opportunity to delight in saying what the average person wouldn't dare. Concern for edifying neighbors or gossips is over. No more morality! No more games! Enough of partisan-traps...To the argument of the masses, to the catechisms of the crowds, to all of the community's national interests: to these are opposed the Individual's personal interests.

Which interests?

To each their own. The isolated one is careful not to preach a common rule. The defiant makes no place for a doctrine. Think for yourself! What is your situation? Your age? Your desire? Your strength? Do you need the crutches religion offers you? If so, go back to your church, from now on by your own choice, validated. Do you prefer, still a disciple, the sociologists' dream? Fine then, tell us your plans for the year two thousand. Or rather, are you feeling insolent? So you want to live? Are you ready? Well quit waiting on somebody, go where your hatred, your joys, carry you—the joys of complete openness, of dangers and of dignity.

One marches, acts, aims, because of a combative instinct, a nostalgic sleep makes you prefer the fight. Fully aware of the limits of the code, you poach the big game: officers and judges, deer and carnivores; you flush out the herds of politicians from the forests of Bondy; you're happy to grab a ravaging financier by the collar; at all the intersections; you release the domesticated tribe of authors and writers, furry and feathered alike, defilers of ideas, terrors of the press and the police.

With the quarrels between sects, races, and parties, every day, by the chance of events and shots to be taken, it becomes clear: *Dreyfus Affair!*¹ *Read all about it!* or the way of describing the Magistrature and the Army as they deserve it... Let us celebrate the ermine and the madder! The conscious destroyers don't specialize: in turns, according to the situation, they point right or they point left.

At the same time, *l'esprit de corps* will produce great results: the magistrates, the military, the suits, the liveries, all of the servants of Society badmouth the old madam. An office full of rumors goes sour. The robes,² rabbis and curés, the officiators, the officials and the officers, the accomplices in the antechamber juggle objects of worship. They scandalize the believers. Doubt

¹ Tr—The Dreyfus Affair is discussed in introductory materials elsewhere in this volume. D'axa makes frequent references to (and word play on) various scandals and events of the time.

² Tr—Robins is derogatory slang for the magistrature, meaning 'robed ones.

will unstitch their eyelids. In a few months the child-people will be shocked to find that they hid “things” from them... Now confidence is dead: the bad shepherds killed it. Near the smashed flagpole, the scales of justice lie there like scrap iron next to the wood pile...

It’s in vain that, with the crisis over, the junk traders of the Fatherland try to fix anything. This practice will become increasingly rare. The farce of a France signifying, amongst nations, progress or generosity won’t fool too many onlookers: never has there been a tribe more persistent in keeping mankind at the whipping post.

Moreover, it’s only with contradiction that one buys the legend of Dreyfusism any more—such a spectacle of real Truth. The nude woman before the mirror sees far too little in her glass. She sings the praises of legality, forgetting that they legally shoot conscripts convicted of a simple gesture; and that also legally, in our streets, on winter nights, men and little children die in front of closed doors. Down with these closed doors—the worst! As for these necessary revisions, the beautiful lady won’t say a word about them.

Always the big words: law, duty, honor, public safety—ring out in every clan, under opposing banners. They use sensationalist words. It’s military music, a church song, the various couplets of a public gathering. Those men who don’t get enlisted turn their nose up at sensationalist words. Not serving in the camps, they save their passionate loyalty in the fight for the right word and the precise blow. One leadership can’t count on them any more than another. They despise diplomacy, tactics, hesitations. They are suspect: in every camp, naturally, they are viewed as loose cannons. They leave the soldiers’ pay, the stripes, and the new lies to others.

It’s a lie to continue to promise, after so many promises. The prophets and the pontiffs, the preachers, and the utopians hoodwink us and show us, off in the distance, an era of love. We’ll be dead: the promised land is the one in which we will rot. What reason, what motives are there to hypnotize ourselves? No more mirages! We want—and by all possible means, disrespectful by nature of laws and prejudices, we want—immediately—to conquer all the fruits and flowers that life has to offer. If later a revolution results from scattered efforts—so much the better! That would be good. Impatient, we will have preceded it.

So continue to declaim, good sirs, if it pleases you. And you, professionals, if it pleases you, cry over Society. But another grown-up, France, it seems, is also sick. Let’s not doubt it, it’s serious. Two abstractions are better than one. So go on then! Into the face of peril! Conspiracy here... corruption there! Let’s hunt down the jew “who is bringing us ruin and dishonoring us.” Let’s expel the congregationalists. Flamidien! Dreyfus! What’s next? For the *République!* For Society! Long live Loubet! yada, yada, Panamada.³

The more French the merrier.

I say that in fact a fifteen year old boy who recruitment officers, hall monitors, and headmasters haven’t yet stupefied would be more upright than any voter. It’s all so clear. What’s happening? Nothing. A toppling society, a people drowning itself... this is of no importance:

The individual will reach the riverbank.

Standing on the solid ground that his efforts can achieve, the Escapee from social drudgeries no longer falls into old dreams. The experiments have all been done. We’ve all seen that, barely freed from the kneeling folly of the priest, men accept the duperies of patriotism en bloc. In the

³ Tr—D’Axa uses a bit of wordplay here; in place of the phrase *et patati et patata*, meaning ‘etc.’, he writes *et patati et Panama*. This is a reference to the Panama scandals of the 1890s, in which the French government wasted nearly a billion francs. Newspapers used similar nonsensical wordplay during the scandals.

name of new principles, they take that age-old yoke right back. Slavery was secularized, the yoke painted in three colors. No matter the dogma! In truth, it's just a government procedure. They slightly adjust it to the people's taste. But the colors quickly fade. They speak of humanity, of one family... Watch out! In honor of this family, they prepare to rig it again! And this individual I refer to, the one who knows, the one who thinks, the Escapee of social drudgeries, the one who no longer boards the bedecked ships of religion and fatherland, will not heedlessly disembark on the humanitarian rafts of the Medusa.⁴

Have you understood, citizen?

The notion of revolt, in this way, is not just some mania, a new faith meant to again trump your appetites and desires. It's the individual energy to defend oneself against the masses. It's the willful arrogance to live. It's the art of going on one's own—

Endehors—you only have to dare!

At every opportunity, in these *feuilles*, such a way of feeling and being emerges. The sparking events, clashing like flint, shed light on facets of the question along the way. And light-hearted or serious, these *feuilles* follow, cohere, and complement, in accordance with the formal scenario of Life, ever-vivid.

⁴ Tr—“The Raft of the Medusa” is a famous painting depicting the tragic wreck of the *Méduse*. It became a symbol of French Romanticism, dramatically featuring desperate passengers crashing onto a rocky shore atop a dilapidated raft. Leading the boat is a man waving a handkerchief, suggesting a flag.

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