

**WINTER NOTES
ON
SUMMER
IMPRESSIONS**

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An Essay Concerning the Bourgeois

Why is he all huddled up here? Why does he want to turn himself into small change, to be shy, to shrivel up? "I'm not here, I'm not in the world at all; I've hidden myself, pass by, please, go by without noticing me, pretend you don't see me, pass on by, pass on by!"

"But whom are you talking about? Who is huddled up?"

"Why, the bourgeois."

"He's king, for goodness' sake, he's everything, *le tiers état c'est tout*,¹ and you claim he is huddled up!"

Indeed I do. Why did he hide behind the Emperor Napoleon? Why at the Chamber of Deputies did he forget the high style that he had loved so much before? Why does he not want to remember anything, and why does he throw up his hands when reminded of anything that was in the old days? Why is there suddenly alarm in his mind, in his eyes, and on his tongue when others dare to desire something in his presence? Why, when he desires something for himself in a moment of capricious foolishness, will he immediately flinch and begin to disavow it—"Lord, what am I doing!"—and for a long time afterward conscientiously attempt to expiate his behavior with diligence and obedience? Why does he look as though he is saying, "Here, I'll do a little business in my shop today, and, God willing, I'll do business again tomorrow and perhaps the day after tomorrow, by the grace of the Lord. . . . Well, and

then, then, if only I can quickly save up just a little bit, and—*après moi le déluge*”? Why does he put all the poor away somewhere and make believe they do not exist at all? Why is he satisfied with banal literature? Why does he terribly want to convince himself that his journals are incorruptible? Why does he agree to give so much money to spies? Why does he not dare to utter a word about the Mexican expedition?² Why are husbands portrayed in the theatre as being so noble and rich, while the lovers are all such ragamuffins, without position and patronage, some kind of shop clerks or artists, rotten to the utmost degree? Why does he fancy that all the wives, to a one, are absolutely faithful, that the foyer is flourishing, that the *pot-au-feu* is boiled on a most virtuous fire, and that her coiffure is in the best style one could possibly imagine? Regarding the coiffure, the matter has been resolved, long settled, without any discussion, has settled itself; and even though every minute cabs drive along the boulevards with their shades drawn, even though everywhere there are hideaways for all the interesting needs, even though the wives’ dresses are often much more expensive than one would imagine they could be, judging from what the husbands can afford, it has been resolved, signed, and sealed, and what more could you want? And why has it been resolved, signed, and sealed? Indeed, this is why: if it were not so, then they might think that the ideal had not been attained, that in Paris there is still no perfect earthly paradise, that there might be something more to desire, that therefore the bourgeois himself is not completely satisfied with the order for which he stands and which he forces on everyone, that there are rifts in society which must be mended. That is why the bourgeois smears the little holes in his boots with ink lest, God forbid, anyone notice them! And the wives eat candy and wear gloves, so that the Russian ladies in distant Petersburg envy them to the point of hysterics; they show their little feet as they most gracefully raise their dresses on the boulevards. What more is needed for complete happiness? Hence titles of novels such as *The Wife, the Husband, and the Lover* are no longer possible under these conditions, for there are no lovers, nor can there be. And if there were as many of them in Paris as there are grains of sand in the sea (and perhaps there are even more), there still are none nor can there be, because everything has been resolved, signed, and sealed, because everything shines with virtue. It is necessary that everything shine with virtue. Looking at the great courtyard of the Palais Royal in the evening, up to eleven o’clock, one must certainly

shed a tear of tender emotion. Countless husbands stroll arm in arm with countless wives; their sweet and well-behaved little children frolic all around; a little fountain babbles, and the monotonous splashing of its stream reminds you of something peaceful, quiet, eternal, constant, Heidelbergian. And, to be sure, there is not just one little fountain in Paris that babbles so; there are many little fountains, and everywhere it is the same, so that the heart rejoices.

The demand for virtue in Paris is unquenchable. Today the Frenchman is serious, solid, and often his heart is even deeply moved, so that I do not understand why he is still in terrible dread of something, in dread despite all the *gloire militaire* which thrives in France and for which Jacques Bonhomme* has paid so dearly. The Parisian passionately loves to trade, but it seems that in trading and peeling you like a lime in his store, he does not peel you simply for profit, as he once did, but out of virtue, out of some sort of sacred duty. To amass a fortune and possess as many things as possible has become the primary code of morality, a catechism, of the Parisian. It was that way before, but now, now it has taken on a certain sacred aspect, so to speak. Formerly something besides money was acknowledged, so that a man without money but who had other qualities could count on at least some kind of respect; but now none at all. It is necessary to accumulate money and acquire as many things as possible, and only then can one count on any kind of respect. And not only the respect of others but even self-respect cannot be counted on in any other way. The Parisian does not think himself worth a penny if he feels that his pockets are empty, and he feels it consciously, conscientiously, and with great conviction. You are allowed amazing things, if only you have money. Poor Socrates is merely a stupid, harmful phrasemonger and is respected only on the stage, for the bourgeois still likes to respect virtue on the stage. A strange person, this bourgeois: he openly proclaims that money is the highest virtue and human obligation, but at the same time he passionately loves to playact, especially as one of the higher nobility. All Frenchmen have a remarkably noble look. The most vile Frenchman, who for a farthing would sell you his own father and without even being asked would add something else to the bargain, has at the same time, even at the very moment he is selling you his father, such an imposing bearing that you are overcome with bewilderment. Enter a store to buy some-

thing, and the lowest salesclerk will crush you, simply crush you with his ineffable nobility. These are the very salesclerks who serve as models of the most sublime chivalry for our Mikhailovsky Theatre. You are overwhelmed; you simply feel guilty before these salesclerks. You come to spend, say, ten francs, yet you are greeted like Lord Devonshire. For some reason you become terribly ashamed; you want to quickly assure him that you are not Lord Devonshire at all but just who you are, a modest tourist who came in to buy something for only ten francs. But the young man with a most happy appearance and ineffable nobility of soul, at the sight of whom you are ready to confess yourself a scoundrel (because he is at such a level of nobility!), begins to show you merchandise worth tens of thousands of francs. In a single minute he has covered the whole counter for you, and it occurs to you that he, the poor fellow, will have to put it back again on your account, he, Grandison, Alcibiades, Montmorency; and on whose account? On your account; you, who with your unenviable appearance, your vices and deficiencies, and your disgusting ten francs have the impudence to disturb such a marquis—as soon as you realize all that, willy-nilly, in an instant, standing right there at the counter, you begin to despise yourself to the utmost. You are filled with remorse and curse fate because right now you have only a hundred francs in your pocket; you toss them out, your eyes asking for forgiveness. But he magnanimously wraps up for you the item purchased with your miserable hundred francs, forgives you for all the trouble and disturbance you have caused in the store, and you beat your retreat as quickly as possible. Arriving home, you are terribly surprised to find that you had intended to spend only ten francs but had spent a hundred. How many times, walking along the boulevard or the Rue Vivienne where there are so many huge haberdasheries, have I mused to myself, "If ever the Russian ladies were to come here. . . ." But the salesmen and elders in the Orel, Tambov, and various other provinces know what would follow better than anyone. When in stores, Russians generally have a burning desire to show that they have immense sums of money. On the other hand, there is such shamelessness in the world, as among Englishwomen for example, who not only are not embarrassed that some Adonis or William Tell has covered a whole counter with merchandise for them but who even begin—oh, horror!—to haggle over ten francs. But William Tell does not miss his mark: he will avenge himself, and for a shawl worth fifteen hundred francs he will milk twelve thousand from milady, and in such a way that she will remain completely sat-

isfied. But in spite of this, the bourgeois has a passionate love for ineffable nobility. At the theatre, be sure you show him characters uninterested in money. Gustave must shine with nobility alone, and the bourgeois will weep with tender emotion. Without ineffable nobility he cannot even sleep peacefully. But taking twelve thousand instead of fifteen hundred francs was a duty: he took it for the sake of virtue. Stealing is vile, base—for this it's the galleys; the bourgeois is prepared to forgive a great deal, but he will not forgive stealing, even if you or your children are dying of hunger. But if you steal for the sake of virtue, oh, then everything is completely forgiven. For you simply want to *faire fortune* and accumulate many things, that is, fulfill the duty of nature and humanity. That is why the points on stealing for a base purpose, that is, for a crust of bread, and on stealing for a lofty virtue are clearly defined in the code. The latter is protected to the utmost, encouraged, and unusually solidly organized.

Why then—once again I am back where I started—why then is the bourgeois still somehow afraid of something, as if he were upset about something? What worries him? Braggarts, phrasemongers? But, after all, he now sends them to the devil with one swift kick of his leg. The arguments of pure reason? But, after all, reason has proven untenable in the face of reality; indeed, the very wisest, most learned of men are now beginning to teach that there are no arguments of pure reason, that nowhere in the world does pure reason exist, that abstract logic is not applicable to mankind, that there is the reason of the Johns, the Peters, the Gustaves, but there has never been any pure reason; it is merely an unfounded invention of the eighteenth century. Whom then do they fear? The workers? But, after all, the workers are also proprietors at heart: their whole ideal lies in being proprietors and acquiring as many things as possible; such is their nature. A nature does not appear from nowhere. All this is cultivated over the centuries and developed over the centuries. A nationality is not easily altered; it is not easy to abandon the habits of centuries, ingrained in the flesh and blood. The farmers? But, after all, the French farmers are arch-proprietors, the most narrow-minded proprietors, that is, the best and most complete ideal of the proprietor that can be imagined. The communists? The socialists, finally? But these people have squandered away most of their time, and in his soul the bourgeois deeply despises them; he despises them, yet he nevertheless fears them. Yes, even now he fears these people. But why, really, is he afraid? After all, Abbot Sieyès³ predicted in his famous pamphlet that the

bourgeois would be *everything*: "What is the tiers état? Nothing. What should it be? Everything." Well, what he said has come to pass. Of all the words spoken at that time, these words alone have come true; they alone have remained true. But for some reason the bourgeois still does not believe, in spite of the fact that everything said after Sieyès's words has faded and burst like a soap bubble. Indeed, it was shortly after his *liberté, égalité, fraternité* was proclaimed. Liberty. What liberty? Equal liberty for everyone to do anything he wants to within the limits of the law. When may you do anything you want to? When you have millions. Does liberty give each person a million? No. What is the person without a million? The person without a million is not the one who does anything he wants to but the one with whom they do anything they want. And what follows from this? It follows that besides liberty there is still equality, namely equality before the law. Regarding this equality before the law, it may only be said that, in the manner in which it is now applied, every Frenchman can and must take it as a personal insult. What remains of the formula? Brotherhood. Well, this is a very curious point, and it must be admitted that it continues to form the chief stumbling block for the West. Western man speaks of brotherhood as the great motivating force of mankind and does not realize that nowhere is brotherhood achieved if it does not exist in reality. What is to be done? Brotherhood must be created no matter what. But it turns out that brotherhood cannot be created because it creates itself, is given and found in nature. But in the French nature—to be sure, in the Western nature in general—it has not shown up; what has shown up is a principle of individuality, a principle of isolation, of urgent self-preservation, self-interest, and self-determination for one's own *I*, a principle of the opposition of this *I* to all of nature and all other people as a separate and autonomous entity completely equivalent and of equal value to everything that exists outside itself. Well, brotherhood could not come from such a self-conception. Why? Because in brotherhood, in true brotherhood, it is not the separate personality, not the *I*, that must plead for the right to its own equality and equal value with *everyone else*, but rather this *everyone else* must on its own come to the one demanding his right to individuality, to this separate *I*, and on its own, without his asking, must recognize his equality and equal value to itself, that is, to everyone else in the world. This very rebellious and demanding individual, moreover, must above all sacrifice all of his *I*, his entire self, to society, and not only without demanding

his rights but, on the contrary, giving them up to society unconditionally. But the Western personality is not used to such a turn of affairs: it demands with the use of force, demands its rights; it wants to be *separate*—and so brotherhood does not come. Of course, it may be regenerated. But it takes thousands of years to accomplish this regeneration, for such ideas must first enter into the flesh and blood in order to become a reality. What, you will say to me, must one be void of personality in order to be happy? On the contrary, on the contrary, I say; not only is the absence of personality not necessary but one must precisely become a personality on a much higher level than that which is now defined in the West. Understand me: voluntary, completely conscious self-sacrifice imposed by no one, sacrifice of the self for the sake of all, is, in my opinion, a sign of the very highest development of the personality, of the very height of its power, the highest form of self-mastery, the greatest freedom of one's own will. To voluntarily lay down one's life for the sake of all, to go to the cross or to the stake for the sake of all, can be done only in the light of the strongest development of the personality. A strongly developed personality, fully convinced of its right to be a personality, no longer having any fear for itself, cannot do otherwise because of its personality, that is, has no use other than to offer its all to all, so that others too may be just such autonomous and happy personalities. This is a law of nature; normally man tends toward this. But there is one hair here, a very fine hair, which, if it falls into the mechanism, will at once crack and destroy everything. Namely: the misfortune to have here even the slightest calculation for one's own advantage. For example, I come and sacrifice my whole self for the sake of all; well, it is necessary that I sacrifice myself completely, once and for all, without any thought for gain, without in the least thinking that I am sacrificing my whole self to society and, for this, society will offer its whole self to me. The sacrifice must be made in just such a way as to offer all and even wish that you receive nothing in return, that no one will in any way be obligated to you. How is this to be done? After all, it is like trying not to think of a polar bear. Try to pose for yourself this task: not to think of a polar bear, and you will see that the cursed thing will come to mind every minute. So how is it to be done? There is no way it can be done, but rather *it must happen of itself; it must be present in one's nature*, unconsciously a part of the nature of the whole race, in a word: in order for there to be a principle of brotherly love there must be love. It is necessary to be drawn

by one's very instincts into brotherhood, community, and harmony, to be drawn in spite of all the nation's age-old sufferings, in spite of the barbaric crudity deeply rooted in the nation, in spite of age-old slavery, in spite of foreigners—in a word, the need for a brotherly community must be in the nature of man; he must be born with it, or he must have been in the habit from time immemorial. What would brotherhood consist of if it were put into rational, conscious language? Of this: each separate individual, without any compulsion, without any benefit to himself, would say to society, "We are strong only when we are together; take everything from me, if you require that of me; do not think of me as you make your laws; do not be at all concerned about me; I offer you all my rights; dispose of me as you please. This is my highest happiness: to sacrifice everything to you and to do you no harm in doing so. I shall annihilate myself, I shall melt away with complete indifference, if only your brotherhood will flourish and endure." The brotherhood, on the other hand, must say, "You offer us too much. We have no right not to accept what you offer us, for you yourself say that in this lies all your happiness; but what is to be done, when in our hearts we are constantly concerned about your happiness? Take everything that is ours too. Every minute and with all our strength we shall try to increase your personal freedom and self-revelation as much as possible. Do not fear any enemies now, either among people or in nature. We are all behind you; we all guarantee your safety; we are forever doing our utmost for you because we are brothers; we are all your brothers; there are many of us, and we are strong: so be at peace and of good cheer, fear nothing, and rely on us."

Needless to say, after this there is nothing to divide up, since here everything will be shared of itself. Love one another, and all these things will be added unto you.

Now there is Utopia indeed, gentlemen! Everything is grounded in feeling, in nature, not in reason. To be sure, this is even a kind of humiliation of reason. What do you think? Is it a Utopia or not?

But, again, what is the socialist to do if there is no basis for brotherhood in Western man but, on the contrary, an individualist, isolationist foundation that continually gives itself a bad name and demands its rights with a sword in its hand? Seeing that there is no brotherhood, the socialist begins to urge brotherhood. In the absence of brotherhood, he wants to create, to shape brotherhood. In order to make rabbit stew, one must first of all have a rabbit. But there is no rabbit, that is, no

nature capable of brotherhood, no nature that believes in brotherhood, no nature that is drawn to brotherhood on its own. In despair the socialist begins to act, to define a future brotherhood; he calculates the weight and the measure, entices people with the advantages, explains, teaches, and recounts who will receive how much from this brotherhood, what each will win; he determines what each individual will look like and the burden allotted to each, determines in advance an accounting of earthly blessings; who will earn how much of them and what each must voluntarily turn over to society in exchange, to the detriment of his individuality. But what kind of brotherhood will it be if they divide and determine in advance who has earned how much and what each one must do? However, the formula "one for all and all for one" has been proclaimed. Nothing better than this, of course, could be thought of, especially since the whole formula was taken from one of those books known to us all. But they began to apply this formula to the cause, and six months later the brothers dragged Cabet,⁴ the founder of the brotherhood, into court. It is said that the Fourierists⁵ have taken the last 900,000 francs of their capital and are still struggling to somehow establish a brotherhood. Nothing is coming of it. Of course, there is a great attraction in living, if not on a brotherly basis, then on a purely rational basis, that is, in living well, when they guarantee everything and demand only your labor and your consent. But here once again, an enigma enters in: it seems that they indeed offer the man a guarantee, promise to feed him and give him drink and to provide him with work, and for this they demand of him only a little drop of his personal freedom for the sake of the general welfare, a very, very little drop. But no, a man does not want to live even according to these calculations, for even a little drop is hard for him to give up. In his foolishness it seems to him that this is a prison and that he is better off all by himself, because that way he is free. And in his freedom, you know, he is beaten, he is offered no work, he dies of hunger, and he has no freedom at all; and yet it seems to this odd fellow that he is better off with his freedom. Needless to say, the socialist can only spit and tell him he is a fool, an immature adolescent who does not understand what is good for him; that an ant, a dumb, insignificant ant, is more intelligent than he because in the anthill everything runs so well, everything is so regulated, all are well-fed and happy, each knows his business, in a word: man is still a long way from the anthill.

In other words, socialism is quite possible, but only in places other than France.

And so at the height of his despair the socialist finally proclaims, "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité où la mort.*" Well, here there is nothing left to say, and the bourgeois triumphs once and for all.

And if the bourgeois triumphs, then the formula of Sieyès is realized, literally and to the last detail. Since the bourgeois is everything, why is he embarrassed, why is he all huddled up, what is he afraid of? All the others have made fools of themselves, all have proven bankrupt before him. Formerly, in the time of Louis-Philippe for instance, the bourgeois was never so embarrassed or afraid, and yet he reigned then too. Yes, but then he was still struggling; he sensed that he had enemies and settled accounts with them for the last time with rifle and bayonet on the June barricades.⁶ But the battle ended, and the bourgeois saw that he was alone on earth, that there was nothing better than he, that he was the ideal, that it was no longer left to him, as it was before, to convince the world that he is the ideal but simply to pose calmly and majestically for the entire world as the image of ultimate beauty and the greatest possible human perfection. The position is, if you will, embarrassing. Napoleon III came to the rescue. He fell to them as though from the sky, as the one way out of the difficulty, as the one possibility remaining at the time. Since that very moment the bourgeois has prospered, has paid a terrible price for his prosperity, and fears everything precisely because he has attained everything. When you have attained everything, it becomes painful to lose *everything*. And from this, my friends, it directly follows that he who fears most is the one who prospers most. Please do not laugh. Isn't that the way it is with the bourgeois of today?