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Antoine de Saint Exupery and the quest for truth

Owen Ardell Wollam

The University of Montana

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ANTOINE DE SAINT EXUPERY

AND

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH

by

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FOREWORD

Before beginning this study of Saint Exupéry, one may find it useful to review some of the critical material available. Excepting reviews of particular works, the material is not copious and much of it appeared before the publication of Saint Exupéry's posthumous work *Citadelle*. Moreover, of the studies known to be in existence, few had been done by English writers and few had been translated from the French. Of the French works on our author, one of the most understanding is that of his very close friend, Léon Werth. Werth indicates that the life of Saint Exupéry was a continual search for "sérénité," but adds that it was "une aspiration toujours déçue." However, the latter part of his assumption is not capable of proof.

The depth of our author, it seems, has been greatly underestimated by both Maurois and Fowle. They both place him among the adventurers and tend to emphasize his heroism. In the face of Saint Exupéry's explicit and repeated repudiation of the code of the "toréador," they completely ignore the sensitive, compassionate nature of the man. Certainly, it was this very nature which spurred him to his reappraisal of mankind. Armand Hoog seems to agree that Saint Exupéry was striving for a new meaning for
mankind, for he says: "Saint Exupéry a voulu créer un nouveau mythe de force et de courage de l'Homme." André Gide, in his preface to Vol de nuit, appears to be in accord, for he praises Saint Exupéry for giving us the hero "si susceptible de tendresse." He adds that what pleases him most, "c'est sa noblesse. Les faiblesses, les abandons, les déchéances de l'homme, nous les connaissons de reste et la littérature de nos jours n'est que trop habile à les dénoncer; mais ce surpassement de soi qu'obtient la volonté tendue, c'est là ce que nous avons surtout besoin qu'on nous montre." Even Gide is prone to overemphasize the heroic tendency. Yves Lévy, in a fine article which appeared in the Monacan review, Paru, has touched the essential mark of the philosophy of Saint Exupéry when he writes: "Vertu surhumaine? Mais Saint Exupéry est l'homme qui plus qu'un autre tende à s'inscrire dans l'humain. . . . Il ne s'intéresse pas aux êtres mais plutôt à l'Homme et il finira par exalter l'Homme."  

Louis Barjon calls Saint Exupéry "l'homme qui conquiert sa variété." He continues by saying that sacrifice is not enough; one must discover the reason for the sacrifice. This reason is the truth which is outside the individual and which gives a value to life; the truth which surpasses the individual; truth which is lasting; truth which is the reality found in God. 

Huguet, in a recent study, says that Saint Exupéry
is "celui de la quête de l'absolu, celui de l'attention passionnée à l'homme, et celui de la marche vers Dieu"; that he has measured the extreme spiritual poverty of his times and revealed its profoundest aspirations. Daniel Anet stresses "la force, la grandeur et la fécondité d'une philosophie de l'acceptation" for the entire species, and adds that the chief characteristic is optimism in his belief in mankind.

Luc Estang is a bit more cautious. He ends his study on a tragic note, for he believes that there is "une tristesse exupérianne, quelque sentiment de l'échec en profondeur, malgré les apparences d'une vie comblée." He says that in his continual pursuit of serenity, he never quite reaches his goal. Dr. Georges Pélissier, a good friend of Saint Exupéry, is of essentially the same opinion. He says that Saint Exupéry "garde toujours une certaine inquiétude spirituelle."

An effort was made to obtain Maxwell Smith's A Knight of the Air, the only full-length portrait of our author in English, but it did not arrive in time for this study.

This brief survey shows considerable variation among critics concerning the evaluation of the works and thought of Saint Exupéry. Such variation is, perhaps, to be expected, since our author seems not to follow the trend of his time in regard to his attitude toward Man. He, it
appears, believed in a spiritual progress which is denied, at least in part, by many of his contemporaries; to be searching for an inner peace or "sérénité."

To investigate Saint Exupéry's search for this "sérénité" was the original plan of this study. However, there proved to be something greater, more universal: his quest for truth compatible with spiritual progress; for truth which he could communicate to Man. This quest, then, became the subject of our study.
NOTES

FOREWARD

1 Since the traditional spelling of Saint Exupéry is without a hyphen, that spelling has been followed throughout.


5 See Antoine de Saint Exupéry, Pilote de guerre (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), p. 144, "Les toréadors vivent pour les spectateurs, nous ne sommes pas des toréadors." See Antoine de Saint Exupéry, Terre des hommes (Paris: Gallimard, 1939), p. 100, "Les toréadors ne me plaisent quère." Here, he expresses his dislike for the "show-off." Henceafter, references to these works will simply be to Pilote de guerre and to Terre des hommes.

6 Statement made by Dr. Irmand Hoog of Princeton in his lectures on "Le Roman Contemporain" at Middlebury College during the summer of 1956. The author quotes from notes which he took at the lectures.


8 Yves Lévy, "Antoine de Saint Exupéry," Paru, August-September, 1945, pp. 11-16.


CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Antoine Marie Roger de Saint Exupéry was born in Lyon, June 29, 1900. He was the third child of Count Jean de Saint Exupéry and Marie de Fonsecolombo. In 1904, his father died leaving a family of three daughters: Marie-Magdeleine, Simone and Gabrielle; and two sons: François and Antoine, to be raised and educated by Madame de Saint Exupéry. The family left Lyon and the rest of Antoine's childhood was spent on the family estates in the south of France: The Château de la Môle and Saint-Maurice-de-Remens. Antoine began his schooling at Le Mans, entering Notre-Dame de Sainte-Croix in 1909. He proved a restless and irregular student. In 1912, he made his first flight with the pilot Védrines. Antoine was very impressed.

After leaving Sainte-Croix in 1914, Antoine and his brother, François, enrolled at the Collège des Mariestes at Fribourg but in 1917, they were forced to return to France because of the poor health of François. François died of rheumatic fever that same year.

Antoine began preparation at the Ecole Bossuet in Paris for the Ecole Navale. However, in 1919, he failed the examinations. Later, after spending some time in the
Ecole de Beaux-Arts at Paris, he enlisted in the Air Force and was sent to Strasbourg. At this time, prior to becoming an Air Force Pilot, one must already have soloed. Therefore, Saint Exupéry, by economizing, managed sufficient funds to begin his civil training. Finally, in June of 1921, he became a student-officer and was sent to Rabat in North Africa, where he fell under the spell of the Sahara.

His fiancée's family objected to his flying career, so in 1923, he abandoned it in favor of business. However, he was not happy; his only enjoyment lay in flying. At last, one of his former teachers, the Abbé Sudour, suggested that Saint Exupéry apply for a position with the "Compagnie Aérienne Française." His application was accepted and in the spring of 1927, after a few months spent in training and flying the mail between France and Spain, he was sent as airport manager to Cap Juby in Spanish North Africa. During his eighteen-month stay there, in addition to his daring rescues of pilots and equipment from the midst of hostile terrains and tribes, he completed his first novel, Courrier Sud which was published in 1928. In 1930, he was awarded the Legion of Honor for his exploits in Africa.

Meanwhile, his employer had appointed him director of the "Compagnie Aeroposta Argentina." From experiences gained in South America, he composed his second book, Vol de nuit, which gained him the Prix Fémina in 1931. During his time in South America, he met Consuelo Sunclin whom he married in 1931.
The company which had employed him failed, leaving him without a position. He tried various jobs: test pilot, reporter, public relations officer. Then, during an attempt to break the record from Paris to Saigon in 1935, he and his mechanic and close friend, Prévot, crashed in the Lybian Desert. After five days with almost no water and less hope, they were rescued by an Arab caravan.

Again, in 1938, while attempting another flight—this time from New York to Tierra del Fuego—he crashed in Guatemala. His injuries were most serious and the long convalescence in New York permitted him to complete and publish Terre des hommes in 1939. The same year he received the Grand Prix du Roman from the Académie Française.

With the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, Saint Exupéry immediately left New York to take part in France’s futile resistance.

Then, with the signing of the Armistice, he returned to the United States. Here, he published Pilote de guerre in 1942, which was inspired by reconnaissance missions in France. Lettre à un otage and Le Petit Prince followed in 1943. Later, when the Allies went into Africa, Saint Exupéry was given an opportunity again to serve, but only after prodigious efforts—his life was too valuable to be risked. In Africa, he was to be allowed only five missions. However, these five missions extended to eight and finally to a ninth, that of July 31, 1944, which was to have been his last. From that mission, he never returned.
He was posthumously awarded the Grand Prix Aéronautique, and in 1943, *Citadelle* which he had left in manuscript, was published as it was found.
NOTES

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER II

CODES IN CONFLICT

Throughout the works of Saint Exupéry, two fundamental though contradictory trends of thought can be discerned. One trend which is so infrequently stressed is toward "la vie douce et protégée." Though his occupation often involved him in dangerous exploits, he maintained that he really loved life, not danger. He had a great capacity for the enjoyment of the "good life." He loved beauty, music, art, nature; he was fond of books; he had a passion for knicknacks and mechanical gadgets—electric razors, recorders, phonographs, lighters—and was always buying the latest models. However, one must not infer that he was their slave, but rather that he exhibited a very human quality. It is this human quality which has been given a secondary place, which brings him close to humanity.

Perhaps the origin of this feeling of closeness to humanity is to be found in his childhood which was a golden age for him. In an atmosphere of happiness, security and affection, ties were formed which remained with him throughout his life and which sustained him in times of solitude and doubt.

In many of his books he recalls this period of
contentment and always with the same feeling of exaltation and peace. When he speaks of the family estate and the park surrounding it, he makes of it something unreal and enchanted; a wonderful world "peuple de dieux," a magic land "sombre et doré," "glace et brûlant," where he once was completely happy. However, his invocation is neither immature nor weak; it is exceptionally virile and powerful.

That his childhood was indeed idyllic was due largely to the intelligent, loving presence of his mother. She understood her children, knew how to protect and cultivate the imagination of each, knew how to make of a house a home without constraint or complication, with no ridiculous rules or pettinesses which might stifle the spirit of a child like Antoine. She allowed her children to create simple pleasures for themselves, while watching over them attentively, tenderly but firmly.¹

When he recalls the joys associated with his youth, he experiences a renewal of strength, a reaffirmation of faith. He returns to his youth to have his wounds dressed before returning to the contest.² As a shield to present chaos, he conjures up past joys. However, his recollections of the past are never merely means of escape. He himself realized only too well that escape leads nowhere.³ He asked himself what remains of childhood when one has become a man, exiled from its realm and astonished to find enclosed within its confines, "une province dont on avait fait son infini, et comprenant que dans cet infini on ne rentrera jamais plus,"
car c'est dans le jeu, et non dans le parc, qu'il faut rentrer."

No, it is not a question of escape. On the contrary, the memories of his youth serve as a kind of spiritual sustenance in the face of danger.

Not only does his childhood have a special place, but the house as well. One finds the concept of house

inseparably joined with happiness. The house, growing in significance, becomes one of the cornerstones of his life. It is the vehicle, the ship "qui fait passer les générations d'une rive à l'autre de la vie." Hence, the house, to him the foundation of civilization, is its symbol as well.

But that is not all. Perhaps more fundamentally, the house symbolizes something else. That something else was revealed to him once when he had made an emergency landing in the desert. He found himself dreaming under the spell of a strange emotion. Then, understanding and relaxing, he allowed himself to be enchanted by memory. He recalled that there was somewhere a park and an old house which he loved. Near or far, it mattered very little, "le merveilleux d'une maison n'est point qu'elle vous abrite ou vous réchauffe, ni qu'on en possède les murs. Mais bien qu'elle ait lentement déposé ces provisions de douceur." It was sufficient that they exist for them to fill the night. The feeling of well-being evoked by his reverie revealed a truth: the taste of eternity which had seemed to him to come from the desert actually had its origin in his childhood, in his home. Therefore, the house symbolizes order,
durability, even eternity.

Here then is one side of Saint Exupéry, the champion of individual happiness whose heart is filled with cordiality toward the world and its inhabitants. This cordiality enables him to picture so well the warmth of the hearth, the pleasure of a warm bed, the nobility of the peasant and the charm of young girls. Here is the Saint Exupéry preoccupied with roots, with the individual. Here is the aspect of his nature which, the result of an accumulation of "provisions de douceur," explains his sympathy for "la vie protégée."

On the other hand is the trend toward "la vie d'action" which is fostered by the requirements of his occupation. He was a pilot. Though he abandoned aviation on several occasions, it lured him back each time, for flying filled a place in his life as could no other activity.

Now flying, though dangerous and exacting, is at the same time exalting. The close association with speed and space endows man with a sense of exhilaration foreign to the uninitiated. In the face of the infinite, the hero in man manifests himself and seems to expand and flourish.

Besides, aviation is a precise trade. Here, confronting death, the nearly correct observation or calculation is absurd. In the absolute necessity for order and detail, the foundation of a sense of liberation—liberty to, not liberty from—he feels nearer truth. The sense of the imminence of truth, in part a result of the isolating quality of the
occupation, induces and promotes meditation. Paradoxically, upon the feeling of isolation from the world and humanity, is established a firm sense of unity within the fraternity of men of action, which in turn is the source of comradeship and all strong ties within it.

The interplay of Saint Exupéry's natural bent and the qualities inherent in flying had a marked influence on his personality and led him to his concept of work.

His heroic concept of work elicits a disdain for insipid, monotonous, narrow, smug existence. He is contemptuous of the humble meditations of the employee who makes himself wretched over trifles—illness, money, quarrels, all the drab little cares of a household, while avoiding the real questions of life. It is impossible for him to understand the life of the commuter, who has been reduced, little by little, to the level of a termite, who has forgotten what edifice he builds in placing his stone. From the summit of his superiority, he pitied those who abandon the fight and sink into the oblivion of mediocrity, while he soars above, a stranger to the world of mankind.

In contrast, Saint Exupéry appears as the conqueror who goes off to overcome the "dragons noirs" far beyond the confines of the ant hill. Realizing a sense of well-being and fulfillment from action, he draws from his position a spiritual wealth. He tastes the delirium which comes from renouncing a mediocre life. He savors the bittersweet satisfaction of responsibility in knowing that he works
"pour que la vie soit continue, pour que la volonté soit continue, ... pour que jamais ... ne se roupe la chaîne."

This constitutes the source of his powers and his feeling of fulfillment through responsibility and service to something surpassing self. It is in forgetting that there is something surpassing self, that one denies a higher rôle to mankind. Saint Exupéry is convinced that working for worldly goods alone is to betray one's trust. 10

Here one may recall the caricatures which Saint Exupéry painted of the inhabitants of the asteroids in the Petit Prince. Each type is revealed as erring in his own fashion: the businessman, the geographer, the coxcomb, the drunkard, the king. 11 Each, lost in his own petty universe, has failed to acquire a proper sense of values.

Saint Exupéry's vision of the grandeur of work explains his sincere affection for the gardener who, through his perpetual contest with nature, attains a spark of the eternal in the results of his labors. His affection for the shepherd may be explained as well; the shepherd is a symbol of order and stability. But perhaps even more striking is his feeling of kinship with the peasant. He reasons that he and the peasant are linked through work—both use a tool and both do a job. In addition, his affinity for the peasant is a consequence of his admiration for the durability of the peasant lineage. He sees in this lineage, a sort of immortality: "On ne meurt qu'â demi dans une lignée paysanne." 12 And he, too, would like to root himself to
something as firmly as the peasant is rooted to life and to the earth.

Here, then, is the man seeking to escape a meaningless, boresome, commonplace existence. Here is the man who deplores the fact that the little bureaucrat in his dreary job has never been roused from his lethargy; the man who regrets that one is given so little opportunity to prove himself a man, that life is so taken up with earning a living that one has no time to live and to think. Here is Saint Exupéry, the man of action who in responsibility finds a regime by which to live.

Now, obviously, the two trends delineated above cannot support each other. As stated in Vol de nuit: "ni l'action, ni le bonheur individuel n'admettent le partage; ils sont en conflit." Furthermore, the reader who is only slightly familiar with the life and work of Saint Exupéry knows that he chose for himself a life of action. However, in retrospect, when haunted by nostalgia, he feels an anxiety. Has he chosen correctly? Is there some firm middle ground upon which to construct a moral edifice? He seeks the eternal "golden mean." His search leads him to question the worth of present-day civilization; man's relationship with man; the place of service, sacrifice, duty and love in reference to human destiny. Therefore, the quest, which begins as a personal search for peace of mind, transcends individual interest. He wonders: "Où est la vérité de l'Homme?" "Que faut-il dire aux hommes?"
CHAPTER II


2 Terre des hommes, p. 76.
3 Pilote de guerre, p. 105.
4 Terre des hommes, p. 120.
5 Saint Exupéry gives to the French word "maison" a meaning not unlike the English word "home" which has no real counterpart in French.
6 Pilote de guerre, p. 112.
7 Terre des hommes, p. 78.
8 Ibid., pp. 12-23.
9 Antoine de Saint Exupéry, Vol de nuit (Paris: Gallimard, 1931), p. 76. Hereafter, references to this work will simply be to Vol de nuit.
10 Terre des hommes, p. 40.
11 Antoine de Saint Exupéry, Le Petit Prince (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1943), pp. 34-55. Hereafter, references to this work will simply be to Le Petit Prince.
12 Terre des hommes, p. 221.
13 Vol de nuit, p. 128.
CHAPTER III
A MEANING FOR MAN

Now though Saint Exupéry had chosen his code, he still remained doubtful concerning its justness. How did he resolve his doubt? One hesitates to use the word "revelation," though surely the connotation applies. Perusal of his works reveals that there are several "factors" or "revelations" which influenced him. One such factor is flying. In the preceding chapter, the effect that flying has upon the character and mental attitude of the individual was discussed. Now, if it is true that the pilot feels quite differently toward the planet and its inhabitants, it is also true that he does actually see the earth from a different position. As one travels across the country by train or car, one often has a vague impression that the globe is actually quite thickly inhabited. However, if one travels by air, immediately he is struck by the immense distances between centers of population. He changes country and climate, crosses lands and seas of infinite variety; he is given an opportunity really to observe his planet and is often struck by the frail, delicate hold Man actually has on the earth, by how few and scattered are his cities.

Dans quel mince décor se joue ce vaste jeu des
One of the essential themes in the writing of Saint Exupéry is this feeling which remains with him constantly of the fragility of man—the individual as well as his creations. A reality which, confronted with an urgent need of duration, inspires him to direct his efforts toward objects less affected by time. As the chief in Citadelle explains, "moi, je respecte d'abord ce qui dure plus que les hommes." In Vol de nuit, Rivière justifies his rigid, harsh code on the principle of durability and assumes the right to challenge opposing codes such as that of Fabien's wife, "celui d'une clarté de lampe sur la table du soir, d'une chair qui réclamait sa chair, d'une patrie d'espoir, de tendresses, de souvenirs." When Saint Exupéry recalls the death of his young brother, he realizes that tender, human happinesses are fragile and transitory; they cannot save man from death. Only action can save him by constructing something which will outlast its creator. He recalls the monuments which the ancient Incas arduously placed upon the mountains. Through the creation of their monuments, the evidence of their civilization is prolonged and with it their lives. "Le conducteur de peuples d'autrefois, s'il n'eût peut-être pas pitié de la souffrance de l'homme, eut pitié immensément de sa mort. Non de sa mort individuelle,
mais pitié de l'espèce qu'effacera la mer de sable. Et il renait son peuple dresser au moins des pierres que n'ensevelirait pas le désert."

Similarly, when Rivière sends his pilots out to face the dangers of the night and the storm, by his attempt to create something more enduring than man, he is, in reality, struggling against death. "Je le sauve de la peur." Fear of what? Fear of death, and in the victory over fear, a sort of immortality is gained.

Troubled by man's mortality, Saint Exupéry seeks in action a bulwark against death—a sort of immortality. At times he tries to create something which may serve the creator, but he as often seeks in discipline a protection from the oblivion of death.

His need of action, service, and discipline is essential. He, like his characters, chooses the active life because they are strong physically, and thus well-suited for it, and, as we have indicated already, because of the powerful urge to escape from, and to rise above, the mediocrity of a sedentary existence. Anxiety, however, is present in Saint Exupéry, but it is more quickly and easily overcome through action connected with work. Besides, he is not pessimistic; he believes in the possibility of an order worth serving. In fact, one may say that his rather optimistic outlook foretells any tendency toward nihilism and turns him away from his early fascination for the superman hero.

That one may find a sort of salvation in work is a
favorite theme of Saint Exupéry starting with Terre des hommes. Man is in error if he seeks personal happiness in inactivity, for in the act of creating, happiness is discovered and weakness is overcome. At this point, he introduces the idea of exchange. What makes a thing worthwhile is that someone has given time in exchange for it. The more time, trouble and love required to create an object, the more something of the creator's own perishable being is transferred to the more enduring creation which results in a feeling of fulfillment and happiness. "Qu'y a-t-il, savetier, qui te rend si joyeux? Mais je n'écoute point la réponse, sachant qu'il se tromperait et me parlerait de l'argent gagné, ou du repas qu'il attendait et du repos. Ne sachant point que son bonheur était de se transfigurer en babouche d'or."  

However, that which survives the individual and joins generation to generation is civilization. But what is needed to create order out of the masses making up this civilization? Civilization requires above all the supreme will of a leader who is both farsighted and firm. In Citadelle, therefore, the leader is purposely designated as the king and the son of a king who is, in addition, the builder of cities and the support of the empire. Moreover, the citadel, the city, the realm, all connote duration, solidarity, order—and order from which softness is abolished and which resists the "pentes naturelles," which lead always to mediocrity and death. "J'oppose mon arbitraire à
cet effritement des choses et n'écoute point ceux qui me parlent de pentes naturelles."

It is this leader who constructs palace, city and empire—the civilization—which will survive the flood of time, for civilization is the "navire des hommes sans lequel ils manqueraient l'éternité." In *Pilote de guerre*, he uses the image of the heap of stones which is as yet nothing, because it has neither goal nor order, but which will become a cathedral if the thought and action of man intervene to give it order, form, rhythm, direction and duration.

Now, Saint Exupéry, obsessed with the mortality of Man, soon takes a stand on the side of mankind. Man, he feels, can surmount death by creating works or institutions which will survive him and in so doing, is able, himself, to partake of the more durable.

Therefore, according to Saint Exupéry, Man is an agent (active), not an observer (passive). "Que suis-je si je ne participe pas? J'ai besoin, pour être, de participer." It is not in detaching himself from the world, that one is able to know and to understand it, nor is it in pure thought that one should seek to perfect himself. The way to genuine understanding and fulfillment is to cling to life and to live it to the fullest. One must do a job, have some real and solid contact with the world in order to understand it. "Le travail t'oblige d'épouser le monde." In *Terre des hommes*, he develops the theme of the value of the tool as an instrument of knowledge; whether it be a
Plow or an airplane:

Semblable au paysan qui fait sa tournée dans son domaine et qui prévoit, à mille signes, la marche du printemps, la menace du gel, l'annonce de la pluie, le pilote de métier, lui aussi, déchiffre des signes de neige, des signes de brume, des signes de nuit bien-heureuse. La machine, qui semblait d'abord l'en écarter, le soumet avec plus de rigueur aux grands problèmes naturels.

By plane, an earthy sort of truth is found. In doing the work of a man, one learns the cares of Man. One is in contact with the elements—with life. Therefore, it is in participation, sharing, not merely observing, that Man discovers his meaning.
NOTES

CHAPTER III

12. *Terre des hommes*, p. 34.
CHAPTER IV

THE ESSENCE OF MAN

Understandably, Saint Exupéry always disliked being an observer, for he valued only the act that proves itself to be creative and which depends upon participation. Upon this proposition, he builds his idea of the essence of mankind. Participation had revealed to him the existence of ties which linked him to humanity. Therefore, relationships assume paramount importance; they save him from becoming so absorbed in meditation that he can see nothing beyond himself. Moreover, by conscientiously recognizing the existence of ties and affinities, the individual, he feels, can escape his solitude. In working with his companions, he feels a unity in work. "La grandeur d'un métier est, peut-être, avant tout, d'unir les hommes; ils n'ont qu'un luxe véritable, et c'est celui des relations humaines."

Often just a slight threat or some real danger will recall the actual existence of a community of Man; a night in the desert amidst untamed, unfriendly tribes may be enough to reveal the presence of Man. Then, man encounters mankind. "On chemine longtemps côté à côté, enfermé dans son propre silence, ou bien l'on échange des mots qui ne
transportent rien. Mais voici l'heure du danger. Alors on s'écoute l'un à l'autre. On découvre que l'on appartient à la même communauté. 

What Saint Exupéry calls love is, in its highest form, comradeship—comradeship, the tie which binds men and produces rewards which do not deceive. Through comradeship, those who live trapped in their particular social sphere, abandoning the destiny of the race to chance, are drawn from their isolation. Released, they re-establish themselves above mere living beings. They continue the spiritual growth necessary for a progressive culture. It is not the comradeship of egotists contemplating each other, but minds striving toward the same goal. "Liés à nos frères par un but commun et qui se situe hors de nous, alors seulement nous respirons, et l'expérience nous montre qu'aimer, ce n'est point nous regarder l'un l'autre, mais regarder ensemble dans la même direction."

In the desert, perhaps, one feels and understands the need of communion more than anywhere else. The desert is a great source of inspiration and revelation. It is an expression of the unknown and often the unmovable. Here is a real sensation of expanse, of the individual reduced to the basic, of vast, cloudless skies, of an immensity which loses all reality save for the existence of "présences" which animate him. These "présences" are dear to Saint Exupéry. They are the expression of spiritual ties which bring life to inert expansions; which evoke a desire for a
renewal of contacts.

What makes him realize the need of cooperation? By chance, he has an opportunity for contemplation; he awakens to the realization that "l'homme n'est qu'un noeud de relations," that "il est pétrifié de liens." Everything is rapport. The essence of reality is placed in the conscience which meditates and which interprets or creates these reports. "Quand un hasard éveille l'amour, tout s'ordonne dans l'homme selon cet amour, et l'amour lui apporte le sentiment de l'étendue." "Etendue" is what has rapport with him, what interests him, what he desires, what he loves. If one is without emotions, the warmest room, the most fascinating city or the most brilliant gathering is empty and meaningless. On the contrary, if he possesses emotions, even in absolute solitude, by thinking of the source of his life, by remembering his home, his family, then, through the myriad mysteries crowding the silence, "d'invisibles divinités bâtissent un réseau de directions, de pentes et de signes, une musculature secrète et vivante. Il n'est plus d'uniformité, tout s'oriente... Tout se polarise. Chaque étoile fixe une direction véritable. Elles sont toutes étoiles de Nages." Thus space is peopled and becomes "étendue." The wealth and beauty of "étendue" are proportional to the ties one has made with the world and its inhabitants. "L'étendue ne se trouve pas. Elle se fonde." Besides, what creates and preserves ties and relationships must be affection. Affection is what
brings about the recalling and what fills the solitude; it reveals the secret quality of a countryside or an individual. It makes the individual aware of his own existence and the existence of others; it gives direction and force to his acts and to his life. This theme is used by the author in *Pilote de guerre* and in *Lettre à un otage*. An encounter with a young peasant girl at the front during the Spanish Civil War, lunch with a friend in a special atmosphere, the exchange of a smile with a Spanish rebel, awakens him to the glow of human cordiality; he discovers himself to be a member of the brotherhood of Man.

His feeling of human cordiality is perhaps the source of the charm of the girls created by Saint Exupéry. It may also be the source of the nostalgia for his childhood, for childhood is the charming, ingenuous origin of each of us; it is the paradise of fresh mornings, endearing animals and wondrous flowers. "Voici mon secret... Il est très simple: on ne voit bien qu'avec le coeur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux." 10

In the works of Saint Exupéry, truth is a relative concept which originates in his sympathetic cordiality toward people. Thus he often condones truths essentially opposite if they create for the individual concerned the possibility of individual fulfillment.
What does it matter under which party one serves in a civil war, if that party makes of him a hero? "Je ne crois bien de connaître s'ils étaient sincères ou non, logiques ou non, les grands mots des politiciens qui t'ont enseigné. S'ils ont pris sur toi, comme peuvent gérer des armées, c'est qu'ils répondraient à tes besoins. Tu es seul juge."

Each finds his own law. That is, logically, Saint Exupéry is led toward a relative and individual morality which has its share of truth and considerably more than its share of charm—a liberty which can create heroes.

Indeed, it is a most tempting principle; however, there is another question perhaps more urgent than individuality. The individual is part of society and must be governed by it. Government can be exercised only by rules, laws and precepts which benefit the entire group. Saint Exupéry is especially aware of this fact and, in Citadelle, strives to crystallize and present his ideas. Already there are indications in Terre des hommes and Pilote de guerre, of a trend away from relativism, for he realizes that it may lead to anarchy. The trend is not always logical and is often contradictory; there are two divergent philosophies which he follows side by side. The one is his reverence for life which is to him a supremely magnificent
force of obscure and indeed miraculous origin. It is
wonderful to contemplate, and merits the admiration and
respect of Man. When he speaks of life, he insists that
"ceux qui l'ont goûté une fois n'oublient pas cette nour-
riture... Et il ne s'agit pas de vivre dangereusement.
Cette formule est prétentieuse. Les toréadors ne me plai-
sent guère. Ce n'est pas le danger que j'aime. Je sais ce
que j'aime. C'est la vie."

The other philosophy is a rather poorly defined
spiritual concept. Everywhere in his works there is the
belief that something greater exists, that there is a
Spirit above life and that it is what is essential. This
Spirit is different from life. Life is the impulse which
does not know where it is going, the source of character
and conduct, every act and desire; it is an energy which
grows and expands. The Spirit is direction and choice,
knowledge of the universal, the rules of honor and wisdom.
However, it is not intelligence. He establishes a clear
distinction between intelligence and Spirit. Spirit is not
only different from intelligence; it is higher. Intellig-
gence is the faculty of analysis which distinguishes
objects; Spirit grasps their relationships. Intelligence
seeks the immediate goal; it is calculating and acts
through self interest, while Spirit sees beyond the
requirements of the moment and understands what constitutes
eternal values. Spirit is moved by love and sacrifice:
"La fleur qui se fane lâche sa graine, la graine qui pour-
rit fonde sa tige; et de toute chrysalide qui se brise sortent des ailes."15

It is soon apparent that Saint Exupéry's strongest inclination is toward the Spirit. In Vol de nuit, he suggests the question: "Nous aimons toujours," says Rivière, "comme si quelque chose en nous dépassait en valeur la vie humaine... Mais quoi?"16 The answer is given in Terre des hommes in the closing lines: "Soul l'Esprit, s'il souffle sur la glaise, peut créer l'Honne."17

His belief in the foregoing dictum is shown throughout Pilote de guerre. Finally, in Citadelle, he asserts that the highest achievements, a harmonious life and an orderly society, are through respect for a transcendent spiritual reality. This spiritual reality is eventually designated as God: "La pyramide n'a point de sens si elle ne s'acheve en Dieu."18 Therefore, Man is spiritual. With the conviction confirmed, Saint Exupéry hesitates no longer; he decides that the acquisition of knowledge is no longer limited to participation nor is it any longer limited to the individual. Meditation regains its worth, for the absolute is more easily attained by quiet contemplation than by action.

Dans le Dominicain qui prie, il est une présence dense. Cet homme n'est jamais plus homme que quand le voilà prostré et immobile. Dans Pasteur qui retient son souffle au-dessus de son microscope, il est une présence dense. Pasteur n'est jamais plus homme que quand il observe. Alors il progresse. Alors il se lève. Alors il avance à pas de chat, bien immobile, et il découvre l'étendue. Ainsi Cézanne, immobile et
muette, en face de son ébauche est d'une présence inestimable. Il n'est jamais plus homme que lorsqu'il se tait, éprouve et juge. Alors sa toile lui devient plus vaste que la mer.

Through contemplation, knowledge and creation, he goes beyond the life of action, abandons relativity in favor of order. He heads toward the absolute—Spirit.
NOTES

CHAPTER IV


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CHAPTER V

A CODE FOR MAN

Saint Exupéry, having found a meaning for the individual, sought then to establish the archetypes of man and society. His work at this point becomes an affirmation of his faith in Man. Whatever life may require of him, he never stops fighting "pour une civilisation qui a choisi l'Homme pour clef de voûte"; he opposes "quiconque prétendra asservir à un individu, comme à une masse d'individus, la liberté de l'Homme." Now, instead of a penchant for placing the essential in the individual, he stresses the idea of Man, the pure species which gives to the individual his value. "Ma civilisation," he writes in Pilot de guerre, "repose sur le culte de l'Homme. . . . Ma civilisation a cherché à fonder les relations humaines sur le culte de l'Homme au delà de l'individu." He neither praises nor blames the individual, for "l'individu n'est qu'une route. L'Homme qui l'emprunte compte seul." In Vol de nuit, this cult of Mankind is confused with that of the hero who disdains the crowd: "Les petits bourgeois des petites villes tournent le soir autour de leur kiosque à musique, et Rivière pensait: 'Juste ou injuste envers eux, cela n'a pas de sens: ils n'existent pas.'" They exist
only after the leader has formed them, given them souls and
wills, succeeded in forcing them out of themselves. Saint
Exupéry's first heroes are stern, relentless men who are at
all times ready to sacrifice men for the sake of what Human-
ity should be. Though gentler and wiser, his heroes never
completely subjugate their sternness. The builder of the
citadel still repeats that man is nothing in himself alone,
but that his value lies in what passes through him. He is
a vehicle, a depository made worthy because of the trust he
has received. Consequently, it is not the individual to
whom justice is due, but rather that which he carries with-
in him. "Etre juste... me dit mon père, il faut choisir.
Juste pour l'archange ou juste pour l'homme? Juste pour la
plaise ou pour la chair saine? Pourquoi prendrai-je le
parti de ce qui est contre ce qui demeure en puissance? La
justice, selon moi, me dit mon père, est d'honorer le dépo-
sitaire à cause du dépôt." 6

What, then, does Saint Exupéry require in Man? He
suggests as models, men like his friend Guillaumet, who
express the finest characteristic of Man—humanness. He
onlightens us with the episode concerning Guillaumet who,
forced down in the Andes, discovers that there is something
surpassing self; that it is not a question of courage which
is merely the result of the events in which the individual
is involved, but rather of responsibility. Uprightness is
the key: "Etre homme, c'est précisément être responsable." 9
Guillaumet, when he says, "Ce que j'ai fait, je te le jure,
Jumais aucune bête ne l’aurait fait, "10 expresses the trait which sets Man above the animals, which makes him a human being. It is the instinct of the individual facing destiny; it is the use of intelligence to assure a victory of the mind over the body and over the elements. Moreover, it is the result of recognizing that man is not in the world alone, but that he has his duty to others. So, when Saint Exupéry crashes in the Lybian Desert, he realizes that if he were truly alone, he would abandon his fight for life in favor of blissful death. However, he is not alone and because of the pity he feels for those depending upon him, he represses his desire for death; he feels his responsibility. "Chaque seconde de silence assassine un peu ceux que j’aime. . . . Patience! . . . Nous arrivons! . . . Nous arrivons! . . ." 11 Torn between meditation and action, he believes he has found the answer. Look for quality which can be found only in genuine action and real people. Quality is the real essence of the human being. He wishes and hopes that men may live in active fulfillment of their responsibility; that they may achieve a world in which man lives for Man and not for a single special group.

However, in the last pages of Terre des hommes, he warns against regarding Man as the supreme goal. That is really worthy of admiration is what has formed the man. 12 He proposes his archetype of man as a possible goal for our ambition, as a possible ideal, an example of the progress latent in the present contradictory society.
Furthermore, he tells us that we are still ignorant of almost all the conditions which foster human greatness. He indicates that these conditions appear to imply a discipline, a scale of values, of which we have only a confused idea. However, it is imperative for us to seek to know and to understand them.

The supremely human quality is latent in everyone everywhere. Threatened by war, sickness, disaster, any extraordinary incident, one becomes as though outside himself; one seems to seek the real essence—the essential of his being which is always existent though often unknown. Lack of opportunity alone permits this essential to go on sleeping. "Faute d'occasions nouvelles, faute de terrain favorable, faute de religion exigeante, ils se sont rendormis sans avoir cru en leur propre grandeur."^13

This lack of opportunity is blamed on slavish submission to society. Man is inspired with a desire for freedom from stagnation; he must be delivered. However, his freedom constitutes a real equality which is opposed to political equality; political equality is a snare. Following the thought, one discovers a fine evolution of civilization. Civilization's purpose is not to make the world more practical, more habitable or more comfortable, but to give to the human part of the individual the attention it deserves; invention and techniques must be subordinated to the individual.

The essential is not found in any particular event
or condition but rather in any event which gives man a way of rousing himself and finding his own consciousness and his own mission.

So he outlines a sort of humanism with high standards. He reveres and nurtures the highest in man and discounts individual happiness and rights when either the interests of humanity or society and orderly civilization are at stake. Only in that way can there be a truly harmonious life. "Les droits de l'homme," he writes in Citadelle, "ou commencent-ils? Car je connais les droits du temple qui est sens des pierres, et les droits de l'empire qui est sens des hommes, et les droits du poème qui est sens de mots. Mais je ne reconnais point les droits des pierres contre le temple, ni les droits des mots contre le poème, ni les droits de l'homme contre l'empire." One may wonder if he is not contradicting his humanism and supporting precepts which he opposes at other times. Here again the dual tendency of Saint Exupéry's nature saves him. Admittedly, his temperament pushes him toward a moral code of aristocratic quality and order. Admittedly, this code would seem to endanger the future of the less fortunate members of society. But his generosity, benevolence and pity toward mankind are permanently parts of his nature. From Vol de nuit to Terre des hommes, one sees him pass from heroism to a humanism in which service, brotherhood, progress and group happiness guide the really superior man to a balance between authority and love. Of course, the
v^v'eï'inf "betiV.' between 't:vo© o p p o s ite s

however, Saint Esprit does not tend toward indecision nor toward synchronism, but rather he creates a synthesis. Between complete equality and strict aristocracy, he understands and honors Man as the essence in the individual; thus he does not exclude the most humble from his order. He earnestly desires that they, too, should find the essence of Man within themselves. "Ma civilisation repose sur le culte de l'homme à travers les individus." He included all not just some.

In the existence of the child of a Polish emigrant family, he sees a sort of divine beauty in potentials which may well be spoiled and buried in wretchedness. The child is the symbol of all potentials in all men—potentials which are never realized. That torments him is not the misery of the individual, for after all, one may settle down into misery as easily as into slothfulness. "Ce qui me tourmente, ce ne sont ni ces cœurs, ni ces bosses, ni cette laideur. C'est un peu, dans chacun de ces hommes, Mozart assassiné."

He would prevent the "Mozart assassiné." Therefore, in place of an individualism governed by instincts and appetites, he substitutes a personalism founded on Spirit and love; he strives for a hierarchy formed by stages of spiritual progress. This hierarchy is envisioned beyond materialistic democracy with its tendency to place everyone on the same level.
Though the same basic trends, the same contrary forces, the same secret hesitations are evident throughout the works of Saint Exupéry, one can note an evolution in his thought. Thus from an almost Nietzschean philosophy of the superman found in Vol de nuit, he passes to the compassion of Terre des hommes and then to what may be called a sort of transcendence in Pilote de guerre, Lettre à un otage and Le Petit Prince. Finally, in Citadelle, he assembles a more disciplined and positive presentation of his code. He strives always for order; he wants it around himself, for then it is civilization; and within himself, for then it is serenity and peace.

It has been shown that civilization for Saint Exupéry is first of all a creation of man in which he prolongs or projects his transitory mortal self beyond death. However, in addition, it is a coherent edifice within which he finds the conditions of his material and spiritual life and thus the secret of happiness. No doubt civilization has economic conditions; the services of the kitchen are vital, for without food, there would be no men. However, that is not the most important condition; the goal of civilization is spiritual. The leader affirms that happiness among the people could not exist in provisions alone; the important condition is that of the services which assure the quality of Man. It is not material power nor riches which bind the community together. They destroy it. Rather, it is a common goal or faith. "Forcé-les à bâtir
one tour, et tu les changeras en frères. Mais si tu veux qu’ils se haïssent, jette-leur du grain." He makes an apology for civilization and, in his search for quality, is convinced of its glorious future. As a defender of civilization, Saint Exupéry seizes upon two more or less humanistic ideas in Citadelle. The first idea is the importance of structures of all kinds. Man is not the noble savage; that is a myth; truth is on the side of civilization. To be moral and to be happy as well, Man needs laws. Also, it is not nature, but mainly the institution which is the origin of Man.

Je n’étais point assez naïf pour croire que la fin de l’empire était due à cette faillite de la vertu, sachant avec trop de clarté que cette faillite de la vertu était due à la fin de l’empire.20

La pourriture de mes hommes est avant tout pourriture de l’empire qui fonde les hommes.21

If one allows for an excess of conviction in the foregoing idea, it remains a fact that without laws and institutions, Man does not progress.

The second idea is that civilization is not only external constraints, it is rites and accepted order; not just codes, but ceremonies and therefore the source of happiness, security and serenity. "Je suis le chef. Et j’écris les lois, je fonde les fêtes, et j’ordonne les sacrifices, et, de leurs morts, de leurs obsèques, de leurs demeures, de leurs montagnes, je tire cette civilisation, semblable au palais de mon père, où tous les pas
ont un sens. So civilization should be such that each step has a significance; a social state where one feels at ease; where one gives his consent; where one can give his fullest. Thus rich, poor, wise, powerful, leader and worker are vindicated in a society which has both goal and significance. So the creator of social order is not a dictator who makes individuals alike and keeps them together by dint of force, but the lawgiver who fixes them through faith. Like the builder of the citadel, he gives to each stone its meaning in the structure. "La contrainte valable est exclusivement celle qui te soumet au temple selon ta signification. . . . Ma contrainte est cérémonial de l'amour."
CHAPTER V

1 Pilote de guerre, p. 240.
2 Ibid., p. 242.
3 Ibid., p. 219-22.
4 Ibid., p. 214.
5 Vol de nuit, p. 48.
6 Ibid., 49.
7 Citadelle, p. 439.
8 Ibid., p. 47.
9 Terre des hommes, p. 55.
10 Ibid., p. 53.
11 Ibid., p. 155.
12 Ibid., p. 191.
13 Ibid.
14 Citadelle, p. 230.
15 Pilote de guerre, p. 219.
17 Citadelle, p. 82.
18 Note a strong resemblance to the "Unanimisme" of Jules Romain in his idea of subordination of the individual to the group.
19 Citadelle, p. 51.
20 Ibid., p. 67.
21 *Citadelle*, p. 75.
CHAPTER VI

THE MESSAGE

Briefly, then, let us summarize the Saint Exupérian ideas covered in this study. First of all, the essence of civilization is spiritual, though economic and political in structure; it is a hierarchy of values, a sharing of faith; it is an act of the Spirit. Then, there is the idea of the knot: reality is not to be found in things but in the knot that binds them together. The nation is not the sum of individuals making up a crowd, but rather the ties of love and faith by which they are united. The empire is not goods, laws, arms and citizens, but rather the idea around which these things are united so that order is created. Therefore, it is actually the Spirit which animates and justifies the existence of institutions. It would be absurd for Man to live and die for things worth less than himself; but it is quite appropriate for him to do so for the divine tie that binds.

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Mon territoire est bien autre chose que ces moutons, ces chèvres, ces demeures et ces montagnes, mais ce qui les domine et les noue.

... ..............................................................

Car Tu es, Seigneur, la commune mesure de l'un et de l'autre. Tu es le noeud essentiel d'actes divers.
One does not die for the things that make up a civilization; one dies to save "l'invisible noeud qui les noue et les change en domaine, en empire, ... La mort paie à cause de l'amour."3

Saint Exupéry accuses society of tending toward a deceptive equality among men. Men whose ties and communion have been broken by this equality are left floating in a sort of vacuum of irresponsibility. The keystone of Saint Exupérian civilization is Man. Man, like the stones of the cathedral, gives significance and life to materials. Man transcends the crowd to reach the essential part of his being—quality. Realizing his own significance, he must free himself from the mass and take part in creating Man. Man must be responsible, active, living; he must know and accept his rôle, "car ce qui donne un sens à la vie donne un sens à la mort."4

Upon this premise, then, Saint Exupéry founds his concept of liberty based on hierarchy, order, ritual and Spirit. The supreme act of liberty would be to accept constraints, not to submit to, or tolerate them, but to consent to, and approve them as rules; through this acceptance, one escapes the anxiety over man's fragility and his solitude; he finds happiness and peace in meaningful action subordinated to a plan.

Appelles-tu liberté le droit d'errer dans le vide? En même temps qu'est fondée la contrainte d'une voie, c'est sa liberté qui s'augmente... Et l'enfant triste s'il voit jouer les autres, ce qu'il réclame d'abord, c'est qu'on lui impose les règles
Liberty in its highest form is consent to order. In fact, the worst fate, according to Saint Exupéry, is for Man to be lost "dans une semaine sans jours, dans une année sans fêtes"; for Man to be without hierarchy, and to destroy his own restraints in order to feel freer. "Car il n'est apparu que l'homme était semblable à la citadelle. Il renverse les murs pour s'assurer la liberté, mais il n'est plus que forteresse démantelée et ouverte aux étoiles. Alors commence l'angoisse qui est de n'être point. . . . Citadelle, je te construirai dans le coeur de l'homme."  

Now, the truly essential point in our author's idea is reached: a citadel in the heart of Man. The order of civilization is not just external; it takes root in the conscience; it flourishes in an internal peace. No doubt peace is harmony; the placing of each thing in its place in accord with the rules. There is another aspect to this point: "La contrainte est cérémonial de l'amour."8 Certainly, there can be no peace without order; also there can be no life without affection. This is the great theme which runs through the works of Saint Exupéry. Affection and fervor which find their goal, which choose their cult and which prefer loyalty, duty and order to an illusion of liberty. They are to be respected as creative.

Je sauve celle-là seule qui peut devenir, et s'ordonner autour de la cour intérieure, de même que le cèdre s'édifie autour de sa graine et trouve, dans ses propres limites, son éprouisement. Je sauve celle-là . . . qui n'aime point d'abord l'amour mais
tel visage particulier qu'a pris l'amour?

The goal of the humanist is to enlighten and perpetuate the primacy of Man over the individual; he fails by neglecting the essential acts—sacrifice and sharing. Now religions which are opposed to them stand for collectivity, the good of the particular group, and forget to respect Man. A new humanism must restore Man through acts; Man must become again the common denominator of peoples and races. Then, the qualities which are responsible for the grandeur of Man—qualities threatened by the new religions—must be protected, strengthened and spread, if we are to continue the progress of civilization.

"Où loge la vérité de l'Homme?" "Que faut-il dire aux hommes?" Saint Exupéry's answers are: Man's truth is found in constraints, order and acceptance. Through his acts, Man must find a spiritual significance in his own being, for only in so doing can he regain a respect for Man. Then Man, conscious of his rôle, can achieve happiness and peace.

Saint Exupéry's concept of wisdom, happiness and affection implies something surpassing everyday values and perhaps even the personal God to whom appeal must be made. His God gives freely of himself to the wise who are willing to discipline themselves and submit to order.

His is the ultimate in humanistic thought which assumes fully the values of civilization, arranging them around the Spirit. It is exceptionally well balanced,
aristocratic without disdain or excess pride; philanthropic without illusion or sentimentality; individualistic without anarchy; poetic, even mystical, yet realistic and positive. It is above all, generous and progressive.

Saint Exupéry's rôle, one may say, is that of a second Prometheus who, for the salvation of Men, sought to replenish the flame stolen from the gods.
NOTES

CHAPTER V

1 Citadelle, p. 37.
2 Ibid., p. 531.
3 Ibid., p. 65.
5 Citadelle, p. 223.
6 Ibid., p. 28.
7 Ibid., p. 25.
8 Ibid., p. 249.
9 Ibid., p. 24.

10 The religions referred to by Saint Exupéry are actually theories of government such as Nazism, Fascism and Communism.
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