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Ramón J. Sender



FREEDOM AND CONSTRAINT IN ANDRE GIDE

THE BEAUTIFUL as opposed to the sublime can be said to be a natural quality of France. The nature of the beautiful seems feminine to me, and all of France gives me the impression of an *aimable* country where beauty is regarded as a social end. Everything there tries to be sweet, comfortable, harmonious, as if the forms of French culture tended to materialize the ideal of femininity. The French exclude ugliness, any form of ugliness, and if it appears it is immediately compensated with pleasing sophisms. Other cultures (the English, Spanish, Russian) seem to prefer the sublime and, as has been known since Kant's aesthetics, the ugly and the sublime can go together. In preferring the sublime these cultures exhibit their masculine nature. But the French language is feminine and therefore especially suited to good sense and the nuances of the affective world, both of which are peculiar to women. In Spain that is not the rule. The Spanish novel begins with madness: *Don Quijote*. The French with the reasonable sentimental: the *Princesse de Clèves*. Good sense and respect for values of the soul being less frequent in the literature of other countries, the French have succeeded in giving to their language an extraordinary prestige which in turn acts reciprocally as an ennobling instrument.

Any of those commonplaces that writers of all latitudes of our scientific, artistic and metaphysical planet carefully avoid, if ex-

pressed in French, is less "common" than in other languages. One could say that French lends a dignifying sap to the commonplace. In *The Gambler* Dostoevski is irritated because any stupidity spoken or written in French acquires dignity and importance. But every language has its genius. What happens today with French happened in antiquity with Greek. If we say in English: "Those who scorn sciences give proof of their own stupidity," we will have said nothing noteworthy. But it sounds very different if we say it with the words of Montaigne: "*C'euxls qui mesprisent la science tesmoignent assez leur bestise.*" We could say that the French language gives vigor to the dead points of thought.

André Gide has had this advantage throughout his work, although frequently he gives the impression of not being French and of using a borrowed tongue. Gide could be German or English. And he has written in French everything that he has felt and thought. Occasionally a little more. The danger of saying more than one thinks he has avoided with the graces and virtues of the language. This powerful aid, if it does not always avoid the trivial, at least conjures it away throughout his work and finally makes of that sustained, slow, and at times brilliant exercise a delight that some readers esteem as Gide's best characteristic. For the readers who prefer to the beautiful—at least in art and letters—sublime ugliness, that would not be enough if they did not also find incentives in the scandalous notion of virtue held by André Gide and in his militant and argumentative antitartuffianism (which does not entirely exclude *Tartuffe*). Gide is a kind of puritan of evil, which represents perhaps a suggestive antithesis. That quality gives to his observations on customs, art, religion, a certain originality more apparent than consistent. Some readers suspect a dangerous falsity behind that. Among them no few former friends of Gide. Paul Valéry did not spare him his disdain. André Gide confesses it with pain: "I go out from this interview with Valéry quite depressed, as always when I am with him. Happy to have been with him, but dismayed to the bottom of my

heart by the inadequacy of my being and all its manifestations. An intelligence so incomparably superior to mine!" (*Journal*, July 28, 1929.) Such a humble tone wishes to awaken sympathy in us, but it will be prudent to wait a little. Gide's literary ability acts on his moral nature dangerously.

There is nothing easier than to see clearly into the confused man that Gide is. Real mountains of printed paper offer us his doubts and certitudes. People speak of his sincerity, but I prefer his analytical gift and his inspiration to his moral qualities. Besides, his sincerity is dubious. He himself confesses it now and then. There—in the courage with which he sometimes confesses his lack of sincerity—we find more merit than in the composed and dressed up "sincerity" of which, on the other hand, he frequently boasts. Montaigne used to say: "I show myself in the raw; at least in the measure that public reverence permits. If I had lived among those nations that conserve, as they say, the sweet freedom of the first laws of nature I assure you, reader, that gladly I would have painted myself whole and nude." At that time there was a fearful French inquisition. Regarding his care for other forms of social respect everyone knows what to expect after reading his essays where he does not back away from any graceless revelation of his own intimate life. Today André Gide does not have the pretext of the inquisition. The sweet freedom of the first laws of nature has existed in France since Rousseau, at least for writers. Yet Gide does not go very far, and Montaigne is still much more convincing in spite of his apologies and excuses. I speak of Montaigne because Gide considers him his model.

With its inclination to make of beauty an end, French culture is a culture of voluptuousness. This influences all forms of life in France. I believe that this is one of the reasons why the French nation recovers so easily from her catastrophes. The voluptuousness of the senses, of the soul, of reason. Rabelais, Montaigne, Racine and the rest, each on his own plane. Descartes is a voluptuary of reason; Pascal, of faith. Of Pascal, Paul Valéry said, as Jean Wahl

recalls in *Esquisse de la France: La Philosophie*, "The silence of those infinite spaces frightens me." That fear is, in Valéry, voluptuousness. André Gide hates Pascal, on the other hand, because, as he says, "he limits his joys." If he loves Descartes it is because he permits him to extract forms of happiness from the consciousness of his own imperfection, and even what he sometimes calls "his miseries." In this Gide reminds us of his Gallic, Frankish, and Norman puritanism. Gide approaches the old Greco-Latin cultures with the fury of a "liberated" man of the Anglo-Saxon world. How different Montaigne with his vast serenity and inner harmony. When the Anglo-Saxon puritan breaks his social compromise he does so with an excessive impulsiveness and falls into libertinage, something that does not happen to the stoic Montaigne, nor in general to the Mediterranean man. It would be curious to see the importance of the "not French" side in Gide, in his work and even in his life.

As defined by their creeds, there are several kinds of Christians. Gide's Christianity is undefinable unless it is a question of defining it as a jest. Gide is that bizarre thing we might call a "Christian narcissist." Conscious of the risks of his sensual disorder he seeks the protection of the divine, but he finds it more frequently in Dionysius than in Jesus. Narcissus is the ally of Dionysius. ("My perpetual query . . . : am I *aimable*?" *Journal*, June 3, 1893). His dionysian narcissism leads him to perversion and he is filled with scruples of conscience. Those scruples take him to confession. This is where Gide believes the Christian in him appears. But, what is his Christianity? Gide gets from his humility, from his pretended sincerity, still new voluptuous pleasures. He repeats to us once and again: "See how bold I am. How intelligent is my daring. How interesting the adventures of my intellect." This voluptuousness of Gide's frequently irritates us. He speculates with the beauty of contrition—of a contrition that does not exist. Gide contemplates and adores himself. In any form of adoration there is something inert and static. Contemplation is more passive

if it is narcissist. Dionysius came from Thebes, the city of opium. Although manly in form he was represented by the Greeks in a dreamy or slightly intoxicated attitude, adorned with the attributes of artistic glory: ivy, laurel, asphodel, vine leaves. In Gide's case those symbols of the natural forces capable of disturbing and intoxicating us are, rather than religion, literature. Literature in France as elsewhere has, in addition to its Dionysius, its Moloch. Its terrible Moloch thirsting for the blood of children. This is the side of Gide's work where the author is more vulnerable, where at times he makes us impatient and exasperates us. The rest, including his homosexuality, leaves us indifferent. We are too grown up to be offended by deformity or vice—literarily speaking. In the thirties when Gide's conversion to communism was announced to the four winds I said in the literary supplement of a Madrid daily that this conversion, like other forms of his "discrepancy," was the "refuge in sickness" of a timid man. Gide renounced stalinism years ago. But he continues with homosexuality and servitude to the literary Moloch.

In France this last divinity wreaks havoc even among the most considerable people. Claudel, a man of theological faith, brought up in the dogmatics of God, triune and one, and who is safer than others from intellectual pride, said to Gide in 1905:¹ "We have been delegated by all the rest of the universe to knowledge and truth. . . ." At that period the apocalyptic poet and the sinner were friends. About that time also when Gide was reading the "Muses" of Claudel he expressed his admiration saying: "It is a shattering of all my being." But soon afterward they began to disagree. And before long they were hating each other—twenty-six years of constant and rankling hate. Each of them thought he possessed the truth in the name of the rest of the universe and he kept it and defended it with a secret and reciprocal hatred. In reality both of them were officiating at the feet of the Moloch of literature. A moral perversion not inferior to those perversions of

¹ *Correspondence de Gide et Claudel*. Paris: Gallimard, 1950.

the "love that has no name" leads the Catholic author to cover Pascal, Péguy, and Unamuno with contemptuous reproach, to speak of Rousseau as of "an individual without virtue, without talent and without intelligence." The man of letters can be ridiculously unjust. As for Gide, he addresses the rudest expressions to Claudel: "His wrath . . . painful to my spirit as the barking of a dog to my ears. I cannot bear it." (*Journal*, February 6, 1907.) And in 1914 he also wrote in his diary: "I would have liked not to know Claudel. His friendship weighs on my thought and restricts and bothers it. . . ." The publication some months ago of these letters was not justified by reasons of literary or moral, philosophical or religious doctrine, and gives the impression of an idle display of vanities. A French critic, Armand Hoog, commenting on them, speaks of coquetry and strategy. "One—Gide—accuses himself without contrition. The other—Claudel—triumphs without charity." Before such things Montaigne in his time was wont to say: "Pure ignorance is much more healthy and wise than that verbal and vain science, generator of presumptuousness and temerity." Even then Montaigne knew what the literary Moloch was and had he lived today he would not have been more astonished than we at the deformities of narcissism. Seeing what sometimes happens in France one is tempted to prefer the American indifference toward letters, of which we complain so much.

But if almost everything in Gide, and especially his religiosity, is literature, what is his literary work? Says Gide lightly in his diary: "Without Christian formation . . . I would not have written either *André Walter* or *L'Immoraliste*, *La porte étroite* or *La Symphonie pastorale*, and not even, perhaps, *Les Caves du Vatican* or *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*." It would not be more absurd and gratuitous to say the same thing of *Corydon*.² It is worthwhile to tarry with this book. In the preface to the English edition Gide says: "*Corydon* remains in my opinion the most important of my books." The truth is that in his occasional sincerity Gide reveals

² *Corydon*, by André Gide. Translated by Hugh Gibb. Farrar, Straus and Co., 1950.

himself in agreement with what we were thinking after his *André Walter*. There is no author who gives more and better help to his potential detractors. The famous *Corydon* was published without an author's signature in 1911. Later Gide reprinted it with his name. The reason for his fearful prudence is that in this book he makes a socratic defense of the homosexual aberration. *Corydon* is not justified in itself philosophically or poetically. It is a curious document in the life of Gide, a document that must have more or less value, depending on the value the author's life may acquire for other reasons. The works mentioned by Gide as inspired by a Christian spirit are only so in the sense of the Catholic acceptance of the fatality of sin. But these novels provoke as much scandal as *Corydon* does. In the choirs of French and Spanish cathedrals there are two long rows of stalls with stationary seats generally made of some precious wood. On the arms and backs of the chairs appear, exquisitely carved, the more or less suggestive figures that can come to our imagination in intervals of idleness. Sin is Christian, that is to say human, and the doctors of the Church are familiar with its complex nature. But they hate scandal. On this Baudelaire based his Catholic defense of *Tartuffe*.

The truth is that all of Gide's work rests on this scandal. But also Gide hates it, as he says, and this is the puritan antithesis of which we spoke at first. When Gide says he adores Goethe, in reality he adores the purity and equilibrium of Goethe's soul. When he surrenders to admiration for Montaigne he admires above everything else his natural and limpid sincerity—two things that Gide claims for his own work but from which he knows that he is far.

In *Corydon* he says that the country where there is least homosexuality is Spain, and after Spain, France. The welcome received by this book at that time in Madrid and Paris is not surprising. In Madrid it was published during the twenties. Some pallid heroes of impotence and of "refuge in sickness" praised it in a whisper. French criticism spoke of dangerous enchantment, perversity,

witchcraft, conscious vice, cold corruption. Henri Beraud called Gide pedantic and boring besides. Massis in the *Revue Universelle* said that consciousness of evil and the will to perdition are not frequent and that when they do appear, as in Gide, they have a single name: Satanism. All of this might lack real value if we think that moral reaction to a literary work is not a fitting reaction. For this reason if *Corydon* gave us the serene and subtle beauty of the dialogues of Rémy de Gourmont or the cold and luminous sharpness of Valéry, the poetical density of Baudelaire or the childlike geniality of Rimbaud, the scandal would be less. The beauty would compensate for it. But the only thing that *Corydon* offers is a desperate attempt to rationalize a vulgar and lamentable deviation.

The starting point of Gide's arguments consists in the following: nature has given us an amorous aptitude infinitely greater than that necessary for the conservation and propagation of the species. Intimacy with woman once every ten months—he says—is sufficient for this end, and that is very little. But the argument is not convincing. Gide forgets that nature does not behave teleologically and that there are no duties directed to the acquiring of concrete ends. Eating is not a duty either but a necessity-pleasure, like love. To think that love is only a rational obligation is a Nordic and puritan attitude that doubtless can lead to unexpected consequences. He also speaks of the masculine form of beauty that many artists consider superior to the feminine—I do not understand how one form of beauty can be "superior" or "inferior" to another, if that decision does not depend on our selective inclination—and with a retrospective proselyting intention he cites opinions of Darwin, Goethe, Rousseau, and others. I would not say that the beauty of the masculine nude is superior but that its lines are more stable, less viciously plastic. This would be a sculptor's criterion. As soon as we think morally, as Gide wishes, we see a curious fact. For men in general—at least for me—masculine deformity, virile ugliness, is humorous and comical. Woman's is dramatic and whatever its forms it inspires pity and compassion.

Feminine beauty or ugliness has a transcendental meaning I do not find in men. But all the argumentation of *Corydon* is sterile. A popular proverb says that "about tastes there are no arguments."

In my judgment in most of Gide's work there is only the consciousness of sin, the humiliation of the feeling of guilt and the stimulating danger of a confession "in the Christian manner"—as he says—from which he derives dionysian pleasures. Is this heroic? Is it cowardly? Is it the *refuge in sickness* of the weak? One shrugs his shoulders, as surely many of Gide's friends did, and in the author's work we look for something which on the margin of scandal is worthwhile. What I find is an intellectually desperate attitude. A desire, a need to flee from the unbridled freedom in which his reason and soul are lost. That is why he was one day inclined to stalinist communism until he saw that in it there were neither moral nor rational principles, nor ends other than those of the political power of an Asiatic coterie. But before that incident and afterwards he has sought in one direction or another, constraint, moral repression, difficulty. What is most surprising in Gide's life is his aimless freedom. A monstrous freedom with which he at times gives the impression of not knowing what to do.

Gide's intelligence at times seems prodigiously lucid and one knows that the extraordinary can be expected of it. When he says "*l'art naît de contrainte et meurt de liberté*," we see his own problem enunciated with a surprising accuracy. With these words he illumines, perhaps unwillingly, the last planes of his personality. The fact is that Gide only shows his analytical genius when he says something about himself. His essays on Chopin are full of contradictions and his observations on Dostoevski are no more persuasive. In them, however, there are occasional confrontations with his own intellectual privacy that are full of sharpness. If his essays are disorganized and he is neither a poet nor really a novelist, what is Gide? He is a man who, in his *Journal*, talks and to whom we listen with pleasure. A man of letters in whom all the problems of the flesh, soul and intelligence coincide. As he sets

about expressing them he finds himself besieged by contradictions and limits himself to illuminating those contradictions without trying to resolve them. Contradiction is his norm even in the formalistic. What are his *non-speculative* works? Gide, the least objective of writers, has always sought an objective art. The most objective form is the theatre and he attempts it once and again. Disappointed he exclaims: "What would I not give to be the author of a good play!" In his novels we also see this constant struggle for objectivity. But his novels are only the anecdotal illustration of the ideas he expounds in his *Journal*. They are interesting as monologue rather than for their novelistic qualities. To organize forms and representations objectively a certain generosity and a certain innocence are necessary. Virtues that Gide does not possess.

He lacks the self-denial to transpose himself into objects and be reborn in them, which is what, with a little good will, we may understand by "objectivity." In spite of his novels being an art of decadence like *The Satiricon* and *The Golden Ass*, and of Gide's having a similar mental attitude, he never achieves the objectivity of Petronius or Apuleius. But he goes on arguing with himself in vain and clamoring for a *pure novel*, a *pure theatre*, *pure poetry*. As for pure poetry, that is (in Gide's sense) capable of living without the poet, Cocteau had said in *Le Secret Professionnel*: "A poem must lose one by one all the ties that bind it to what has motivated it. Every time the poet cuts one, his heart beats. When he cuts the last the poem breaks loose, rises, alone, like a balloon, beautiful in itself and without any connection with the earth." That is one of the virtues that Gide envies Valéry. As for the pure novel, that is Dostoevski. And the pure theatre, what can the pure theatre be? With humor Paul Souday reminds Gide that the pure theatre is Dumas. Gide's confusion, illuminated here and there with flashes of interpretive genius, has occasionally a dramatic accent that accidentally convinces writers. But only writers. The only thing truly vital in Gide is literature.

The novels of Gide—we repeat—belie his own ideas concerning the genre of the novel. That is why the author devotes so many pages to explaining and reconciling them with his precepts and aprioristic syntheses. The space devoted to those commentaries in his *Journal* exceeds at times that of the novels in question. In his comments he faces the objections of the others and the objections raised by himself by the consciousness of his own limitations. After the first period of his symbolist prose, characterized by musicality and an adolescent and sickly lyricism, the three novels that best represent Gide's work are *L'Immoraliste*, *Les Caves du Vatican* and *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. *The School for Wives*³ has curious aspects, although to my mind they add nothing to the qualities of the works cited. Gide loves himself so much that he does not succeed in pouring himself into the object, for which he would have to break away from the image offered him by the changing mirror of his narcissism. Still the author will say that this is natural and that there is nothing more interesting and absorbing for one than one's self. Let us accept it and even add that another way of speaking would be suspect and insincere. But from the natural and sacred egoism of the artist to that superficial and literary narcissism based on the voluptuousness of the beautiful-pleasing the way is long.

No one is more egoistic than Stendhal. The protagonists of his works, whether their names be Fabrice, Sorel, Pierre or Jean, are alike and are always Stendhal. But after knowing his gigantic work we ask ourselves: "Who was Stendhal? What was Stendhal like?" Concerning Dostoevski, the case is similar. His characters take on mythical proportions while the author, in the half shadow of his natural being, is almost unknown to us. Stendhal, master of psychological analysis, and Dostoevski, master of the analysis of the moral conscience, when they write about themselves are rather dull. They lack relief, sharpness. It is evident that the

³ *The School for Wives*, by André Gide. Translated by Dorothy Bussy. Alfred A. Knopf, 1950.

theme does not interest them, nor their egos arouse any passion in them. Or it moves them too much to risk talking in the first person. On the other hand Gide throughout his work does nothing but reveal his own image from different angles—what is apparent in the image—on a disquieting basis: his homosexuality. He encloses himself within it to show us *the complexity of the individual*. Let us grant that all this can be important. But let us remember—apropos of complexities—Dostoevski. The author of *The Brothers Karamazov* was condemned to death and had been led to the scaffold. A moment before the execution he was pardoned. When they asked him “what he felt at that instant” Dostoevski said: “I felt something like a disappointment.” Gide’s complexities beside this disappointment of Dostoevski’s pale terribly. In that disappointment of Dostoevski’s we find the sublime—the “sublimely ugly,” perhaps, of manly sensibility. With Gide’s narcissistic hedonism—the apparent beautiful—we all feel ourselves limited, reduced, uncomfortable and lost in an ocean of literary verbosity. Dostoevski integrates us and gives to our unity a truly liberating projection. Gide in vain wishes to disintegrate us in the *name of his personal and particular inclinations* put to the service of a literary vanity. This frequently makes of Gide a disagreeable author, that is, an author that is not *aimable*. (Here is where his narcissism fails.)

Before French letters I have the attitude of one in love. At times I have felt an inclination to enthusiastic admiration before Gide—with his *Journal*—but Gide’s admiration for himself is so evident that he destroys the best effects of his prose. It is like a confectioner who would eat up his own sweetmeats or a jeweler who would cover himself with the best jewels he had made—both things somewhat humorous. Furthermore Gide’s style is often rambling and when he is read in English one realizes better that it is full of the obvious. He says in *Autumn Leaves*⁴: “‘Literary

⁴ *Autumn Leaves*, by André Gide. Translated by Elsie Pell. Philosophical Library, 1950.

memories?' 'Present-day problems?' I hesitated between those two subjects, which at first seemed very different. Then, on reflecting over them, I understood that those two subjects interpenetrate and become one: for, in the often tragic light of recent events, the past becomes clear, and it is on looking for a present-day lesson in it, that I shall first bring out some memories." If French divagation has a captious, voluptuous and lyrical power the truth is that in the fictional works of Gide it barely appears, and in English it is frequently lost. I only find such power in the short episode of the Swiss sanatorium in the mountains, near the middle of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. The rest is tiresome and obvious, sterile, literarily speaking. Nevertheless there is always the admirable Gide of the *Journal*, led by a chain of splendid quotations besides. To quote, talent and especially good taste are needed. No one would dare deny Gide either dialectic skill or the good palate. When he recalls Pascal (*Corydon*) he does so selecting Pascal's words with a diabolical lucidity: "*I am very much afraid that this so-called nature may itself be no more than an early custom, just as custom is second nature.*" Gide emphasizes: "*I am very much afraid. . .*"

"Why?" *Corydon* asks.

"Because I am glad he should be afraid. There must be something in it."

But almost all his quotations are carrying water to his mill. In that task he jumbles together contemporaries like Barrès, France, Proust, classics like Goethe, Montaigne, Spinoza, ancients like Plato, Diodorus Siculus, Catullus, Virgil . . . and gives us the impression of an obstinate and stubborn follower of "discrepancy" invariably awakening in us a desire of contradiction. The quotations are frequently double-edged. Pascal offers him excellent arms in that sense, like all explorers or rhapsodists of the absolute. But if nature is an ancient custom and present custom a second nature, we don't care. What matters in literary creation is man, and through him that nature and custom which make him respectively enemy and friend of other men and their victim or

executioner. On this plane Gide's novels offer us nothing satisfactory. There is neither inner nor outer perspective, passion or faith, and the anecdotal is lost for lack of gravity, like a gas. Could one say that this is what Gide tries to do? I think not. His *Journal* often betrays him. Gide has spent his life trying to create norms, to fix the imponderable, and trembling before the dangers of freedom "which the gods," he says, "gave me more than to any other." He kept on looking for a *contrainte* sufficient to create the resistance that would awaken his secret and most hidden aptitudes. He did not seek the vagueness—which in Kafka has a barbarous lyrical power—nor a disorganization, which the existentialists cultivate much better. To produce a monument of inconsistency one must be, furthermore, as inwardly solid as Valéry in *Monsieur Teste*.

Explaining the difficulties of his freedom—that is what he has done, willingly or unwillingly, his whole life long—Gide found himself with the need to analyze it, and an analysis is a careful combination of limitations. One of the most sagacious observations is the one we quoted before: "*L'art naît de contrainte et meurt de liberté.*" Where is the constraint in the novels, in the poems, in the dramatic works of Gide? In literature Gide has the same lack of constraint as in his own life. I also believe that every work of creation, whatsoever it may be, has as origin and starting point a resistance. Without it nothing is possible. Without the resistances of gravity the visible world would not exist. If that constraint were to disappear suddenly everything would disintegrate and return to chaos. Without the constraint that mystery offers to our reason, neither would we have poetical, moral, intellectual, religious creation.

Gide has only found it on the secondary plane of the social resistance to accepting an inclination of his private life. It is not much. We are ignorant of the *pathos* of that inclination—which he has not expressed—as we are also ignorant of the joy of the

sin that he seems to wish to reveal at times from his "Christian soul." In his work he has revealed neither the heights nor the depths of his passion as hunter of pleasure—if there is such a passion—or of his cold divagatory libido. He has gone through life trying to bother serious people in the name of his rights of a singular man excusing himself before them with an overwhelming insistence. Those serious people never existed for Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and not even for Victor Hugo. All these authors knew some form of natural "constraint" and from it was born the best of their work.

Where is Gide's restrictive limitation? I think that he wished to create it himself, but mistaking the values. A rich man, intelligent, healthy, citizen of a voluptuous little world—France—he had, as he often says in his diary, more freedom than he could digest. What he calls his implacable sincerity was an unconscious tendency to create the resistance and the outer difficulty. Maybe he expected the most atrocious consequences: his social, and intellectual ruin. This would be—he never stated it clearly but it comes out in his *Journal*—the great restrictive force which would have to condition his production. But society did not respond. No one told him that he was unworthy of life, nor even of respect. The persons in whose literary opinion he had faith limited themselves in general to telling him that his books were not satisfactory. Before he succeeded in feeling the terrible constraint (that which would compel him to the saving effort) something very different came: the Nobel prize. It is to be supposed that Gide's mental situation in these days—with all his divagatory freedom—must be of a complicated and laborious perplexity. Oh, Gide, looking for contrary currents on which to sail! Oh, the world Gide wished to mock! How easily that world, acting from the smallest of its mysteries, puts before the old Narcissus his essential contradictions and condemns him to a greater confusion, a confusion from which there is no return!