

Borislav Pekić, *How to Quiet the Vampire* (An Excerpt)*

Translated by

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Letter XIX

GOLGOTHA IN D., OR REASON AND EXISTENCE

The Mediterranean Coast, 25 Sept. 1965

My dear Hilmar,

We're nearing the end of our correspondence. All we have left to do is attend a public execution in D., and then I'll reach a few conclusions regarding my life and scholarly work from everything that's been discussed over the last two weeks. In particular, I refuse to follow the old method by which both of us (along with our entire intellectual brotherhood) have been trying to recast history and reality—and even life itself—into food for thought but never into a cause for action. I wish that at least once actions would follow from these ruminations of mine, deeds from my thoughts, just as inevitably and naturally as a flame ignites from two sticks being rubbed together. I want to live the way I think, no matter where that leads me or whatever misfortunes it exposes me to.

In this letter I wish to describe in chronological order the events leading up to and including the execution of the municipal clerk Adam Trpković and to accompany this with Steinbrecher's learned commentaries, which most clearly manifest the Spirit of the Twentieth Century. Wherever possible, I'll limit my role to finding equivalents of the Standartenführer's commentaries in Western European philosophical thought, utilizing such examples to show where the responsibility for the history that you and I study really lies.

Standartenführer Steinbrecher and I were standing at an open window in his office on the second floor of the Geheime Staatspolizei in D., the room where the administration of the pensione is now located. The window looked

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out on the square where that afternoon a few local bandits were to be executed.

Steinbrecher precluded absentmindedly:

“We say *to carry out an execution*. A firing squad *carries out* an execution. We *carry out* a hanging. Personally I prefer the expression *to stage*. *To stage* a death sentence. The firing squad *stages* an execution. We *stage* a hanging. I think this term is more appropriate. How about you, Rutkowski? All that going on down there is a kind of performance, isn’t it? Otherwise it wouldn’t be public. It would take place in some dirty basement you enter through a narrow staircase with slippery steps, in danger of breaking your neck. And performances are not carried out—performances are *staged*. Thus, we’re staging an execution. The premier performance of an execution, actually. Something like this will never be repeated with the same cast, only with various alternates. The technical staff, of course, will remain the same: the directors, stage managers, set designers, ushers, the orchestra. But the actors always change. And if it is a performance, and it is, then—really!—behave in a manner appropriate to the occasion, Obersturmführer! You’re in a loge, in the first balcony—not standing in the back row where you can munch mints and peanuts. Think a little. Think about language. We’d like to conquer the world, but we don’t even have a proper language yet! Nor do we use the one we have correctly. We say *to carry out an execution* instead of *to stage an execution*. And that’s just a trivial example. Our real linguistic tragedies occur during interrogations. As a rule, our understandings of certain terms differ from those of the prisoners. The language we use to interact with them is the same as theirs, but it’s as if any similarity is exhausted in its external form. The meanings come from two different sources. When your prisoner states that he’s innocent, he imagines he’s making a general statement about himself as such, regarding all possible charges, including the one he’s currently facing. However, you accept his statement in its most limited sense, as a denial of the charge in question. If someone claims he’s innocent of something, that doesn’t mean he’s not guilty of something else. Denying charges of sabotaging an automobile doesn’t automatically exclude a future confession of sabotaging a train. Perhaps you think the semantic ambiguity of the language of investigation is an advantageous circumstance for us, in the absence of which the perfection and widening of the scope of the interrogation would be impossible or at least extremely difficult. Well, you’re mistaken, Rutkowski—as usual, I might add! Linguistic confusion aids the prisoner too. But something that serves both the jailer and the jailed well cannot be advantageous for the jailer. The ideal language of interrogation should be absolutely unambiguous, universal, and logically consistent. Truth would follow from *sentences*, and not from their *meanings*. In such a language, one thing would necessarily en-

tail another—the latter would not follow only through our grammatical and logical interpretations or Rotkopf’s pizzle whip! Antinomies would be precluded, and the thought process leading to a conclusion about someone’s guilt—impeccable. A language in which you can say that ‘Obersturmführer Konrad Rutkowski is the square root of stone tumbling downhill,’ without such a statement contradicting any grammatical laws at all, is unsuitable for any purpose, let alone for police work. If effective measures are not undertaken soon, this language will make of us not the rulers of the world but the keepers of a nuthouse!”

(Can you recognize in Steinbrecher’s linguistic jeremiad the semantic longings of Rudolf Carnap? The issue of our disputes is always the meaning of an utterance. If its meaning always followed from its form, misunderstandings and disputes would disappear, because all possible forms could be determined beforehand and even replaced with specific, fixed grammatical and logical codes. We’d be dealing exclusively with a prisoner’s *sentences*, whereas at present we torment ourselves not only with their meanings but also with all the psychological, mental, and even physical origins conditioning them. Instead of dealing with their statements, without being concerned about anything else, we’re still dealing primarily with the prisoners, and we take their statements as summary expressions of their existential condition. In the Carnap-Steinbrecher system it wouldn’t be possible to have the first page of our freshly completed Transcript contain the sentence “The assertion on the last page of this Transcript is true,” while the last page reads “The assertion on the first page of this Transcript is false.” In such a system, we wouldn’t have to carry out an additional investigation solely for the purpose of eliminating this one obvious antinomy. Because those assertions are the very kind of antinomy which can be found everywhere in our Transcripts. There are so many of them that they’re usually not even worth resolving. Transcripts—just take any police archive—are only chains of antinomies, assertions that logically contradict one another, though they do provide a harmonious basis for a verdict. Let’s illustrate the example with a familiar name that’s dear to our hearts. Let’s say the first page of our Transcript reads as follows: “The assertion on the last page of this Transcript, that Gustav Fröhlich is a spy, is true.” And then the last page reads something like this: “The assertion on the first page of this Transcript—that the assertion on the last page (that Gustav Fröhlich is a spy) is true—is false.” The assumption that the assertion about Fröhlich being a spy is true then obviously entails its falsity, whereby it is falsely stated; but the assumption that it is false entails its truth, whereby that truth is proven. Everything would be so much simpler if Steinbrecher’s dream, so similar to the dreams of the greatest living logicians, were to come true and if our Transcripts, instead of offering today’s logical and grammatical

confusion, provided an image of absolute harmony expressed in symbols. Then they would look more or less like this:

Steinbrecher: $(x-y)+(x+y)=?$

Prisoner: $2x!$

Steinbrecher: $2x+(y-x)=?$

Prisoner: $x+y!$

Steinbrecher: $(x+y)-(x+y)=?$

How wonderful, dear Hilmar!

Fine, Herr Standartenführer, the execution will be staged at precisely ten o'clock in the morning. It was a cool and rainy day. The grayish sky clung to the sea and enveloped the houses in a damp and dirty mist. There was no wind. The flags slack on the flagstaffs resembled the bloodstained rags used to mop up the floors of our offices after particularly difficult interrogations. Everything was in a kind of enchanted state, the winter hibernation of a provincial town that had been kept awake all night long by a methodical pounding of hammers.

Steinbrecher meditated:

“Rutkowski, have you noticed that executions are carried out as a rule either at night or at the break of dawn? I personally don't agree with this. Death is an integral part of our existence and not something that will come sooner or later to cut it short, not something external to us, unnatural and *contrary* to us, not something that we should be ashamed of, locking it in deep cellars, the intensive care wards of hospitals and dark bedrooms. It is death that, as Rilke put it, gives meaning to our life, without which life would be an interminable torment in inexpediencies such as despair, cancer, life prison sentences, or boredom. The constant threat of death, our fear of the indeterminacy of its onset and even its true meaning (unless you're religious, in which case the fear of nothingness is replaced by the still greater fear of being called to account), and the practical worry of avoiding or forgetting it, these things are the real source of all our existential pleasures. Because what can be done tomorrow, Rutkowski, what can always be repeated, cannot be so important or irretrievable for us *today* that we would totally give ourselves over to it. Tomorrow kills all pleasure. If the act of sex were granted to us only once, and if on that single occasion we lost all our sexual urges and our ability to satisfy them again, that would be the *ultimate sex*. Thus, the man sentenced to death—if we want to be philosophers and not cutthroats—must be made to feel what he's losing. We have no right to deprive him of his FEAR, which according to Professor Heidegger is the essence of his earthly existence. Because if our existential worries and the accompanying fear are

our essence, that which *makes us what we are*, in our higher manifestation and not only in our obvious and direct manifestations, and if that fear, as it does not stem from anything that can be eliminated, but from death which is inevitable, is something innate in existence, then it's natural for anything that aids the utmost possible expression and perfection of this fear and worry to be a rational and humane matter. In that sense death is humane, in and of itself and regardless of the social function in which it makes its appearance here. And the fear of the loss of one's life is a fruitful fear. At night that loss is not so apparent. Things are obscured, hidden in darkness as if in the black cloak of a magician. The crucial boundary between existence and nonexistence is erased. Darkness is a kind of harmless projection of death, an advance of death that we've grown accustomed to. What's more, you need artificial lighting: floodlights and stage equipment, occasionally even your own generators. You can't hang someone by flashlight or a millicandela candle. That's ridiculous. And you can't even see properly. In the dark you can even hang the judge. That would doubtless happen to our Haag—he'd hang the judge without fail. On the other hand, the monstrous union of the unreality of night and electrical lighting lends the whole confused scene the appearance of a theater rehearsal. You must for a moment at least think it's all a simple stage performance, a trick, an equipment check, and even perhaps the dress rehearsal of an execution, and that, if you make yourself useful and make a good showing, they'll take you back to your cell again. And you'll be released in the meantime. Amnesties are, to be sure, always on the way. Or at least about to be approved. And there's no hero in the world who wouldn't rejoice at one. Night gives momentum to all probabilities. Day destroys even those which are possible. That's why I favor daytime. But by no means in the morning, Rutkowski. In the morning people are tired, drowsy and not receptive to impressions. That goes for both those you're hanging and those on whose account you're hanging them. The latter are even more tired. Who knows how they spent the night before? It doesn't matter whether they were drinking or planting bombs under our vehicles, Rutkowski, in the morning all they want to do is sleep. They don't care about a thing. And since before lunch they're hungry, impatient and incapable of reaching logical conclusions, and after lunch they're full and all they can think about is lying down for a nap, the only time left for our exemplary performance is ten o'clock in the morning. Do you agree, Obersturmführer? You do? Indeed, I'd like for you not to agree once in a while. That'd give me some inspiration. Like this, my best ideas drown in the disgusting muck of your loyal approval. Fine, we'll give rainy weather a try. To see whether our opinions can diverge with regard to climactic conditions, at least. What do you think about those rains during executions? I still haven't attended an execution when it wasn't raining. Nor have I

ever heard of such a thing, though it must have happened somewhere. It probably can't rain in the Sahara just so one tradition—a repulsive one, I might add—can be upheld. But now it's too late. I've already said what I think. And you, most likely, agree. No, Rutkowski, I can't stand rain. I've been fooled by the erroneous forecasts of our radio service—not for the first time and not only about the weather. In my view, the condemned must to the fullest degree feel the definitiveness and finality, the totality and irrevocability of the act of dying. But what goddamned kind of definitiveness can anyone feel when water is running down his neck? He only feels water. The definitiveness of moisture. Not of the noose—of water!"

(I don't have much to add to this, Hilmar. The philosophical background was taken, in a somewhat simplified form and deprived of ethical correctives, from Husserl and Heidegger. He even cited the latter explicitly. Man in the world finds himself in enemy territory, surrounded by mysteries, limitations, and misunderstandings. Without any effective defenses, he's easy prey for death. His basic disposition is fear, his situation isolation, his answer despair, and his defense is his withdrawal into his own existence. But since fear is also the essence of that existence—fear without limits or form because it doesn't depend on limits or forms that death doesn't have—that withdrawal seems like someone fleeing from a lion right into a lion's den. But paradoxically, it's a flight that saves. It admits that death forms us, accepts its certainty, but turns it into existence. Existence is nothing other than *enduring* the indeterminate possibility of dying. Accordingly, fear is a constructive, not a destructive factor in life. Whatever increases fear intensifies existence. Steinbrecher understood this within his narrow field of specialization and applied it well. The foundation of the constructive successes of totalitarianism and dictatorships on the coupling of death and fear, that is to say on the very essence of human existence, is the realization of this principle on the global scale of history. For an individual, a somewhat different logical conclusion would hold, and I don't doubt, not for a moment, that any living Standartenführer would agree with it. Indeed, it's occurred to me that, according to this principle, it would be best to live with a metastasis in one's stomach, on a thin tightrope above a fiery abyss, with birds circling above and swooping down to attack you incessantly.)

The gallows had been erected on a wooden platform under the branch of a sycamore tree that obstructed our view. The gallows themselves looked like wild, unpruned sycamores, and the three nooses like three supple saplings bent back down toward the ground. The entire construction was adapted to the Square to such a degree that it was almost indistinguishable from the meager flora there. On Steinbrecher's orders, the curtains of all the windows had been

drawn and the blinds opened, but no one was there watching. Those rectangular glass eyes were black and blind.

Steinbrecher spoke on this topic:

“This is art, Rutkowski. Directing all the details of someone’s death, so that it rises to an art form. But what is such an orchestration? An imitation of action, as Aristotle defined tragedy? But we don’t want any tragedies. We prefer a farce. We can allow only ourselves a tragedy. Our enemies get a farce. When you see the condemned, you’ll know what I mean. Our stage direction has turned what for them is a tragedy into a farce and thus eliminated any emotion which might be elicited by the act of killing. Shakespeare was similarly deluded in *Hamlet*. In Act III he says about the theater: ‘... The purpose of playing, whose end, both at first and now, was and is, to hold, as t’were the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time is his form and pressure.’ (The fact that the Standartenführer knew English did not, as you see, Hilmar, automatically make him a spy, as it did with Fröhlich’s Oxford accomplice.) But we wouldn’t want for a second to be mirrors of nature and to show the world its true form and imprint. That would lead *us* straight to the gallows! So then, what is such a staging as we understand it? It’s obviously not an imitation of reality, but the creation of a new reality, the strings of which we hold in our hands. A kind of ritual puppet theater. Attending any of the party congresses would convince you of that. Thus, the first principle is: Turn anything and everything into a theatrical performance. This is what our Führer is so successful at doing. The second principle: Intelligently select the genre in which each piece is to be played. Hindenburg’s funeral should be performed as a Greek tragedy, the burial of your Adam as a puppet farce. The third principle: Carefully plan and supervise everything. And so we come to the stage on which our execution is to take place. I’ll tell you more about the farce itself when they bring out the condemned and I can refer to examples. For now let’s stay with the decor and accessories. Every detail is important. The placing of the instruments, for example. You can’t put them in basements or attics. Gallows require air and space. Perspective, too: they must be visible from all angles. In our theater, which is primarily intended for the people, we can’t have any blind spots or seats from which you can’t see the actors acting. And then there’s the decor, the things surrounding the *échafaud*. It’s tasteless and revolting to strangle people in front of nursery schools, churches, hospitals, or in cemeteries. What’s the purpose of such primitive associations? How can something like this even occur to you? What was that? It didn’t? So much the better. It’d doubtless occur to Rotkopf. If he could, that man would kill people right in their coffins. The middle ages found the right place for all this—the agora, the square, the marketplace, where in ordinary circumstances

the collective life of the city takes place. And when that life continues on this square tomorrow, there won't be a single one of the locals who won't feel that today's nooses are still swinging there in the treetops."

(As you can see, Hilmar, we haven't even neglected aesthetics. We've elevated life to art and thus fulfilled the philosopher's pledge. We've rejected the old division between comedy and tragedy and, according to today's teachings, blended them happily. Now we can laugh when they try to make us cry, and cry when they try to make us laugh. The ancient dream has been fulfilled. Art has lost its autonomy. We've subordinated it to man, turned it into an everyday, routine ritual, of both the individual and the whole nation. And can one really accomplish more in this imperfect world?)

The Schützstaffel cordon formed a black tunnel that wound from the side steps of the wooden platform of the gallows around to the door of the former carabinieri barracks. Outside the cordon, which parted at the steps leading up to the gallows, skirted the platform and closed again at the other end, as if gripping the platform like a black pair of pliers, the people of D. stood watching, packed into a crowd four deep—everyone Steinbrecher had been able to drag out of their houses in a surprise raid. Behind the townspeople von Klatern's soldiers stood in a thinner, green line, positioned to prevent the crowd from dispersing. But judging from their unenthusiastic expressions, they would have been more inclined to join the crowd if it came to that.

While I describe the scene and while Standartenführer Steinbrecher prepares to give it a philosophical foundation, I can't overcome the temptation to indulge in a little digression myself. After all, we too are capable of making a few of these damned generalizations. He didn't buy up the rights to all of them! Leaf through my previous letters so we can attend the unveiling of Adam's monument once more, but now with some new information. Now, to be sure, we know that the monument is to the man whom we knew under the name of Adam Trpković, the municipal clerk. We also know he didn't earn it. We know we're alone in this opinion and that the so-called facts are against us. We know, though this fact is of no use at all to us, that another man earned it, whom we likewise knew, and whom we—killed. In an unconscious, unaccountable state, to be sure, but we killed him no matter what the state. *Factum infectum fieri nequit*. We know also that his two compatriots equally earned it, who would, pursuant to the written propositions given to Hauptscharführer Münch, exit the door of the carabinieri barracks at a slow pace (as this was demanded of them) and pass through the motionless black formation, which according to Item 7, Subitem 12 was tasked with conjuring up the finality of the act, and accompanied by the beating of drums (also provided for in the said regulation) in a mental state which, despite the Standartenführer's desperation, had to be granted a certain measure of freedom—but in return in

their underwear (provided for in Item 11, Subitem 3)—and in the absence of their belts (as prescribed in Subitem 4 of the same Item), so that their hands were busy maintaining their dignity and not raised in defiant fists. Thus, guided by the motherly hand of all of Steinbrecher's Items and Subitems, they would take three steps up to the platform. What would tomorrow be an indefinite granite human form was now only a human joint between a few wooden beams, from which three ropes were hanging, each smeared with soap—the device for the killing (provided for in Item 13, Subitem 4 of the Technical Section). It would never lose its basic purpose, although Steinbrecher would make sure it was adorned with deep psychological insights into his own crime as well as intellectual reflections on numerous topics. Hilmar, here was the mystery of Genesis being repeated once more in my spirit. However, while I kept the Standartenführer company during the execution, I had neither the time nor the inclination for such fine extrapolations. I waited for the Standartenführer to turn me into a generalization as well. I was to report to him after the execution. It seemed that the beating of Rotkopf's worker had not been accepted as a sufficient apology and that the episode of the false Transcript of Adam Trpković's interrogation had not been forgotten. I was tasked with participating in the preparations for the hanging. Meanwhile, in Steinbrecher's mind the Transcript was turned into harmonious, analytical propositions, smooth logical figures: $A = B$, $B = C$, $C = A$. My fate had been already logically defined. When they took me away at night, stripping me of my rank and spitting all over me, beating me to a pulp somewhere along the bottom of the garden wall in the light of a reflector lamp and to the drone of an automobile motor, I would finally be put in my real place. I would become one of Steinbrecher's famous sentential formulas which were retold in the Gestapo corridors: $A = B$, $B = C$, $C = A$. $A = A$. No other result could be obtained without the logic itself being altered. He would use these formulas to harass some other unfortunate Konrad Rutkowski. This Konrad Rutkowski, the one standing at the window, could see only this fact, the fact of his *own* possible death, and in no way the fact of Adam's death, nor any kind of correspondence between the two. Intellectually speaking, I was thus entirely absorbed in myself and in testing the possibilities of extricating myself from the Standartenführer's formula. As for how I found a way to do that, and how it ended up aborted, I'll tell that later. For now, let me merely underscore certain correspondences between my position then and now. Indeed, I have a feeling that some logical conclusion must be drawn from this situation and that after a confession no one can act as if nothing has happened or changed.

For the umpteenth time I am experiencing the mystery of Genesis. This time, no one hails the deity. No one rushes to his feet. Men are not molded out of gray clay. No kind of creative lightning bolt can overcome their horror and

jolt them out of the warm security of nonexistence. The podium is empty and there is not a single human being who would give thanks to the Creator. There is no music to glorify the creation. Complete silence reigns. The music of the spheres. The music of death. Because this new deity, as I now realize, is the deity of death. And it is not new. It is the same deity that created us, only now in the form of a gallows it has revealed its true intention. The purpose of creation. It created us only in order to have something to kill. The more of us it created, the more of us it had for killing. The blood lust summoned an ever stronger lust for creation, and the latter an ever stronger lust for death. It was a vicious circle—the geometric figure of our whole quarrel with history.

Let's hope that in the meantime Steinbrecher has thought up a suitable commentary which he'll use to explain the spectacle of the people in the dark green ring of our cynical orchestration. Of course he has. Let's listen to what he has to say:

"Rutkowski, I admit I'm a fervent advocate of public executions. In this sense I'm perhaps also somewhat old fashioned. Conventions, ceremonies, rituals and the like. I wouldn't be able to kill someone on my own like that—in some basement, as you did. That's why I had to humble myself and ask General von Klatern for help with manpower. I don't need to tell you that that Pomeranian swine knew how to take advantage of the situation. Do you know what he said when we met? 'So, Steinbrecher, I'll give you my men, but I doubt they'll be any use to you. They're not, to be sure, studied executioners!' But *we* are! *We* are executioners! The one who comes to me and says 'They've burned my garage again. Do something about it'—he's not an executioner. I, who as a result does something about it, I *am*. I'm a criminal. If I do nothing, I'm still a criminal. I'm a criminal no matter what. But von Klatern is a gentleman in any case. Rutkowski, have you noticed how we're never mentioned? Our glorious army, which after four years of war is still approximately where it was at the beginning, and retreating at full speed, is the object of praise. We might eventually get a quick handshake in a dark corridor. No one talks about us, just as polite society doesn't talk about the deceased. We slip through the newspapers like a coffin carried through Australia, or a box of funeral decorations with the inscription *Empty Champagne Bottles* on the lid. The only ones who aren't ashamed of us are indeed our enemies. They're the only ones we can rely on to make sure we're not forgotten. Our own people will say they didn't even know about us. The Gestapo—what the hell is that? Concentration camps—what concentration camps? Mass murder—what will you dream up next? We never heard about any 'final solution'! And even if all that is true, we didn't have anything to do with it. Go ask those dead ones! Go ask those—what do you call them?—Gestapo men! Put the squeeze on them! Hunt them down like wild animals!

Hang them! Shoot them! Send them to prison for life! They've earned it! They've degraded us in the eyes of humanity! They abused the respect we feel for polite traffic cops at intersections! They deceived us! Steinbrecher took us in! That dog! Rutkowski pulled the wool over our eyes, the swine! In the meantime, they dress von Klatern in a gown and set him in the chair of the honorary president of some university. At the very least he's accepted into ten executive committees. He's also paid to write his memoirs, in which he will explain at length the reasons why he didn't win the war, and among them Steinbrecher will figure in as the crown reason, because of his brutal methods which prevented otherwise willing nations from running into the outstretched arms of his soldiers. He'll die the center of attention and sympathy, which you could only do if you go to South America, change your name and surround yourself with Amazonian savages! If you don't believe me, Rutkowski, then read up on the field a little yourself. Take a look through history. Remember how people write about Fouchee, and how they write about his bosses Robespierre, Napoleon, Louis, and whoever else. And in the whole business he fared well. He was a hybrid policeman, politician, and diplomat. His killings could pass as diplomatic games or political machinations. Ours not at all. Ours are murderous killings. But let's forget unpleasant things. Let's think about more pleasant probabilities. Let's daydream a little, Rutkowski, give ourselves over to imagination. Could our biological evolution help end our humiliation before Klatern and other such swine? I mean the biological evolution of the police. Not technical evolution, Rutkowski—you're not listening to me again. I said *biological*. To illustrate this, let's compare ourselves to animals. In the majority of cases, the essential tools of a living being are integral parts of its organism. They harmonize with its nature and purpose. A beaver doesn't have pincers but strong teeth and a powerful tail. A tiger doesn't defend itself with ink like a cuttlefish. The ootheca of a praying mantis is constructed on the same principle as a thermos. The catapult systems that some animals use are miniature pieces of artillery, built into the organism by the evolutionary process, just as in an ideal world every soldier would be able to shoot directly from his mouth. You can see what I'm getting at. Snares, traps, nets, nooses, springs, adhesives, all the decoys nature uses to lure victims and then kill them, including hooks, spurs, barbs, pincers, probosces, etc.—all of this, which we've taken from animals, we've been forced to mass produce in considerably less perfect form. Concerning the Service, I mean instruments of torture and liquidation, as well as dictaphones and other technical devices. The drawback of this practice is obvious. Despite the imperfections and the costs we have to deal with, as well as the problems we have concealing them from the public, we often don't have them at hand. Imagine now that by heredity, through the course of a series of Rotkopfs, his hand, as a conse-

quence of its constant use to beat people, evolved into a pizzle whip, an iron bar, or some other investigative device. We would have a subspecies of human called the *police*, and within it the Rotkopf variety, with an inborn club. A direct consequence would be a so-called 'hereditary police,' which is what all human functions are striving for by their very nature. They would be technically perfect, and would be much less of a burden on the state budget. But in my view the most important consequence would be the fact that this would in some way biologically inaugurate the police into our lives. It would become just as natural as any other organ with its specialized function! What do you think of that, Rutkowski?"

(At the time I wasn't thinking anything. I was only thinking about how I could save my skin. However, now that my intellect has been freed from that immediate cause for worry, I don't see any difference between Steinbrecher's theory and the ideas of contemporary biology published by scientists such as Pierre Lecomte du Nouy, Lucien Cuenot, Julian Huxley and J. Rostand. The specter of the SUPERMAN appears in every new hypothesis, even those which hide scientific optimism behind the fear of the degeneration of the species. At the time of the writing of these lines we have hardly reached the SUPERFROG. But the door has been opened, ever so slightly. "We must increase the number of brain cells," Rostand writes. "If the brain of a tadpole which has been given the pituitary hormone increased the number of its cells by 126%, there is no reason not to believe that, with special treatment, the human brain will not increase its cells as well." Rostand, to be sure, admits that he doesn't know what we would do with a genius frog, but he does know what we would gain in a Superman—a being, he says, that would understand what we don't, be capable of what we aren't, and would be to us what we are to a Neanderthal. Professor Vandel takes up the cause and carries it further, claiming that the past course of evolution is the best guarantor of the future. The prospects are great and we have no reason to believe that intelligence, which has reached its apex in man, will have to vanish with him as well. Man is not the end of the story, but a transitional scene. "So the end of the story is certainly a Super-Rotkopf?" Such a development can be brought about. There's no need to sit with folded arms and wait for a possible correction of conditions on earth to destroy the chances for real progress, which can only be realized through painstaking effort. Life for the esteemed Professor Vandel is constant toil. Woe to the lazy, happy, and content, for they are sinking in regression! Progress is on the other side: in making slow headway through hell. If humanity ever settled into the inert happiness of an earthly paradise—the professor insists—it would degenerate down to the level of an animal kingdom and renounce the lofty goals which can be attained only through suffering and battle. "But what good is morality, Herr Professor?" Vandel, in

close proximity to vandalism, says nothing, dreaming of man without limits. And Paul Chauchard comes to the aid of the Steinbrecherian dream. He maintains that with the appearance of human consciousness evolution began a historical phase. "Does this mean, sir, that with the loss of human consciousness it will *exit* that phase?" "Biological discoveries have enabled us to resist blind nature and take the fate of evolution, the world and ourselves into our own hands. This duty follows from the fact that man, because he is Man, must also act like Man." This is a very interesting discovery, Hilmar. It was fairly novel for me too. I had never had the luck to meet someone who would act like a man just because he was defined as such by his *biological* structure. "A BIOLOGICAL MORALITY is established. A protomorality, so to speak. An archmorality. According to it, evil is only what resists the rise of consciousness." In the meantime it is not said what kind of consciousness, consciousness of what. "Whatever accelerates human progress is good." What this progress leads to, and how, is likewise shrouded in secrecy. All we know is that such a morality is determined just as its material correlates are. This is why voices of doubt are raised. A man is what responsibility makes of him. He is the first animal to think about itself, which is capable of choosing its own thoughts. Doesn't determining him take away all his responsibilities? "So what?" asks Rostand, "What if that is the case? He who denies biological determinism," he who refuses to believe in the possible necessity of turning Rotkopf's hands into clubs, "doesn't he know that certain actions are forbidden as much as having a flat nose or brown eyes unless they have been genetically preconditioned as such? If you want to save the concept of individual responsibility, let's accept the principle that our chromosomes are ultimately responsible for everything." Hilmar, I don't think there's room for worry. We can go ahead and yield to evolution, which, with the exception of man, has not produced a moral monster so far. With the help of our scientific consciousness, nature will at some point not only make sure that Rotkopf gets clubs instead of hands, but that they will also be organically equipped with an analgesic eye, a pain gauge, which will determine its ethically appropriate doses and reduce it to a minimum of necessity.)

Something's happened. A short while ago Sabina went to take a shower and now she's screaming frantically. Maybe she got burned by hot water. I'll end here.

KONRAD

PS. I'll try to write the next letter this evening. Something strange has happened. I still don't know what to think of it. I'm hoping for the best. Namely, Sabina had a little unpleasant incident. Don't worry, it's already all right. We

didn't even need to call the doctor. The plumber was sufficient. She went into the bathroom to take a shower and closed her eyes, expecting a refreshing stream of water. Instead, what she felt flowing over her was something warm and smelly. She opened her eyes and thought to her horror that she was showering in blood. Crimson blood was streaming from the shower head. But it wasn't blood, of course. I could tell as soon as I ran into the bathroom. It was only a reddish liquid. Evidently some mineral soil had gotten into the water lines. The plumber came right away, and he had the same opinion. Especially since "the water had turned to blood" in the whole pensione. The incident was soon over. But the fact that the water became clear again all on its own and not as a result of some technical repair (no break in the pipes was found) forced me to consider some other possibilities that you might consider silly, but which could not be excluded given the circumstances. First and foremost, this could have been a filthy attempt at blackmail by Adam Trpković, similar to Moses's attempt to deliver the chosen people from slavery by turning Egypt's waters to blood. I don't dare even to think about the second. It's too terrible for me to let it out of this pen. But I'll soon know what this was all about. I took a sample of the red water without telling Sabina. Tomorrow I'll take it to be analyzed at the nearby Bone Tuberculosis Clinic. I'm hoping for the best.