

Tokyo, June 25, 2002

Dear Maurice,

The “sense of duty” is effectively the private idol of Nippon’s consciousness, that at every hour you guess, impeccable and silent.

Far from having the biding brightness of an order, the imperative frankness of the injunction one obeys, it is rather this personal intuition that obliges one to do something. No other master nor terse authority invectives within, the “sense of duty” is formed by what germs from society in the hollow of one’s intention, and which from there constrains.

“Every gain of civilization for society is achieved at the price of a great reduction in individual freedom” said Stephan Zweig. Here is Japan, absolutely civilized, enclosed loops, into its island, onto its natives.

Now if the foundation of Latin thought, then European, until Sade, Diderot, or even Stephan Zweig, essentially entails the duty of saying “no” (it is there that resounds for us the meaning of the word, freedom), those from the Nippon society seem to have a “duty to say yes”.

In some way, if “K” of Kafka had been Japanese, he would have no doubt accepted his culpability.

Thus, from the divergence of intentions in these two cultures arise inevitable incomprehension, inexhaustible, feeding in turn their mutual fascinations.

I think that by saying “no”, the individual shows he will never be a cooperative tool (what society of course, by nature, wishes of him), for in our industrial era horror is “produced” by assembly line, as when German fathers sorted teeth in 1943.

Japanese people, with a barely hidden inflection of pride, say “がまんする” (我慢), which can be almost translated as “restrain oneself”: Yes, but until where should one accept being “released from oneself”, to not be oneself, to become in a sense inhuman? And how not to be astonished at understanding that they seem to see there salvation . . .

At least in this, the “sur moi”* of the Yamato zealots is without doubt among the most frightening ghosts “modern” society had birthed.

In deepest friendship,

Morice.

* Lacan’s psychoanalytical term.