



The Desert of Love – The Tendency to Approach Consciousness, and Reason in Man

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Abstract

If fear can make a travesty of our best intentions by playing with the reason to discern good from evil, then fearlessness can be the deciding factor between emerging

unscathed from life's vicissitudes or sink in its scum. It's this freedom (from fear), or rather its lack, that Mauriac builds in his tale of the trio: Maria Cross, Raymond Courreges, and Paul Courreges, who move in and out of the scenes of *Le Desert de l'Amour* (The Desert of Love) as the narrator relates their stories while mapping the characters in the novel to the panoply of Bible's character types. This essay is a close look at the Bible's depiction of the righteous (a conscious man) and an attempt at drawing the human consciousness curve with the objective to understand Good and why Evil is what it is and how they emerge in their many colours in *The Desert of Love*.

Keywords: The Holy Bible, Liberty, Righteousness, Francois Mauriac, *The Desert of Love*.

Introduction

Francois Mauriac's *Le Desert de l'Amour* (The Desert of Love) puts man in a situation of diffused right and wrong, between a fearless mind (defined by courage, candour, temperance, etc.) and the fear-torn/naive (that cannot discern between humility and vanity, restraint and lust, altruism and greed, etc.), and sees how the mind with all its wilfulness, its caprices, its stubbornness against the good reacts that states what is at stake subtly and silently. To speak of Mauriac without bringing in the Bible is not possible for Mauriac is known as a "Catholic novelist" (Fowlie) and his characters leap out from the Bible's pages in ways startling and strange.

In the Bible, God planned Creation with the best of heaven and earth to animate it when He planned mankind in His image: "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the

fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (T. H. Bible, Genesis 1:26). But before He had created the greenery and the wild animals, birds, fish and mankind, He made Man and breathed in him the ‘breath of life’ (T. H. Bible, Genesis 2:7) that made him a ‘living being’. To satisfy himself that Man, and the soon-to-arrive mankind, is built in His image—that he had left Creation in able hands just as He would trust the Garden of Eden in his safekeeping—God tested the one he had created with loving care by putting him in the Garden of Eden to “work it and take care of it”, and just as children learn to do by aping their parents, one way to take care of the Garden was to ape Him: He created the wild animals on the ground and the birds in the sky, which He brought to Man “to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.” Man, therefore, proved himself worthy of His Ways that sees Good and cherishes it by helping Him in His Creation. Next, He created Man’s helper in the woman from the ribs of Man and brought her to Man and saw Man know her as his own. Thus, He is the Good whose ways are good and that He sought to inculcate in Man as a habit, for it to seep through his every awakened moment and thought that the Tree of Knowledge of Good **and** Evil would have made sturdy, i.e., surviving the Tree of Knowledge would have had built the knowledge in him that good, and the love for it, doesn’t come alone but is accompanied by aversion to evil which only He balances who—with clear knowledge of good of fearless times—sets the norm by coping with evil, and its shadow, fear, during stressing times too to emerge the free of fear.

To pass the test, therefore, Man had to consciously overlook fear to separate dross from due, but he failed in this and thus consciousness (of good and evil) in Man is a tendency that grows with habit but is a surety by miracle.

The Bible: Frequently Asked Questions

God: who is Consciousness, the patron of known and unknown virtues, through *His Ways*, i.e., *He* establishes what is good as norms of behavior and thought through *His* own actions.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. (Genesis 1: 3)

Adam: who discerns the right—to listen to *Him* when *He* tells him what are important (to look after the Garden of Eden) and what's not (fear of death) and how to survive fear if it invades his calm—from the wrong—to listen to the snake who shifts man's attention from the significant to the insignificant; but only too late when he is shown the way by the Lord who evicts him from the Garden of Eden to find for himself what is right and wrong, but being suffused with *His* Immanence he has the immense potential for discerning good from bad and act on it.

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. (Genesis 2: 7)

Liberty: the tool in the hands of Consciousness, while Reason is the other, that wisdom knows how to use and which *He* endowed to Man: "*Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground.*" (T. H. Bible, Genesis 1:26).

Eve: the receptacle of God's craftsmanship, she is who God—at not having found a suitable helper for Man—fashions one with *His* own hands from a rib of Man. Finally, Eve is the denouement to the Lord's love for Man.

So the LORD God caused the man to fall asleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a

woman from the rib he had taken out of man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones/and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman", for she was taken out of man.' (**Genesis 2:21**)

Snake: craftiness in the animal kingdom that is evil disguised in the garb of reason with temporary loss of fear precipitating into rashness in a situation of diffused right and wrong.

'You will certainly not die,' the snake said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. (Genesis 3:4)

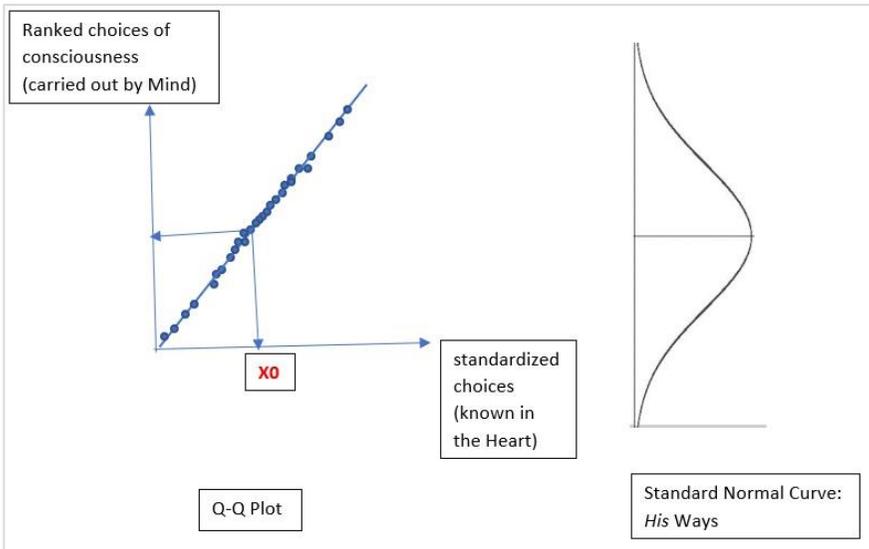
Righteous: who does the right by keeping to *His* ways in which liberty helps to differentiate between the right (all that helps to approach *Him* by acquiescing to *His* ways birthed in wisdom) and wrong (all that obscures *Him* with the fears of loss in life, including fear of death, birthed in his own helplessness to prevent the inevitable).

And the LORD God commanded the man [in the garden of Eden], 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.' (**Genesis 2:16**)

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: is the metaphor for God's Mind: One Mind. If God's commandment—that eating from the tree of knowledge is forbidden and, any transgression results in death—be taken for granted, then the One Mind knowing right(to focus on the primary task of caring for the Garden and work his way through fear, that comes secondary) vis-à-vis wrong (that yields to fear that wants to know what lies on the other side of fear and chooses folly) knows good and evil, i.e., works and cares for the Tree of

Knowledge of Good and Evil, when one mind about good, rather than just eat from it, when in two minds about it.

Majority Consciousness:



The **standardized** choices¹ of Man (i.e., the choices adhering to a norm, as the heart knows as true which submits to *Him* as omnipotent) forge a 45-degree straight line with the **observed** choices (i.e., actual choices carried out by the mind that wisdom bears testimony to—just as *His* deeds had wisdom for their only witness for she was *His* first deed, because wisdom begins when you “listen to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching [Proverbs, Prologue 8],”) by the ‘one mind’ pre-empting

¹ Choices are options that a rational man/woman will undertake to do in a situation of right and wrong which apparently indicate consciousness of liberty/reason, but which might just be examples of showing off because though he might be on the 45-degree straight line he might not be ‘one mind’ about good but just eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Here, we mean choices are those of consciousness, i.e., he/she is one mind when choosing good.

the fear in his heart and mind (what the heart says is not seconded by the mind leading to alienation and fear, and a diffused right and wrong) with consciousness (use of liberty/reason to approach the good by consciously eliding evil and its acolyte, Fear). Not only are the choices same but they can depict normal behaviour as *His Ways* epitomize in a standard normal curve: if the ‘one mind’—the **necessary and sufficient condition** for normal behaviour to take place—is presumed. That is, we can only assume there’s a histogram of observed choices best fitting the standard normal curve of *His Ways*, but cannot predict one with certainty, since human consciousness is unquantifiable and the ‘one mind’, at best something habituated with practice. For example, Abraham, son of Terah, is ready to sacrifice his son Isaac to God’s will and reveals the virtue of restraint in distress (Genesis 22:1-19) whereas Potiphar is indecisive when his master’s wife commits adultery with him. These **choices of consciousness**, where Man consciously chooses to move away from evil towards good with *His* error, the One Mind, are motivated by “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge* (Proverbs 1:7)”, which makes every knave push on and a rash pull back so that “*at the highest point along the way, where the paths meet, she[wisdom] takes her stand*” Proverbs 8:2), are to be ‘worked and taken care of’ (like Adam was expected to do with the Garden of Eden). Majority consciousness, after all, is time- and place-agnostic.

*Aristotle (Stumph) defined “Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed **what is right in both passions and actions**, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence, in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence virtue*

is a mean with regard to what is best and right an extreme².

The Bible: Righteous Is to be Majority Conscious

When Man failed to catch on to God's Ways by eating fruits from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, he set in motion a series of events that led him to being evicted from the Garden of Eden and *His* attempt to re-establish consciousness as the rule rather than the exception, which *He* did through Man: because *He* knew Man as good (for he was *His* creation though with a mind of his own), *He* knew him to have the potentiality for it and thus it's he who will establish what is consciousness on earth by using his mind—fearless by spirit and reasoning by nature, but the knowledge of Liberty, its 'breath of life'—and not be subject to anyone's commands. So, if the tendency of Man to reach majority consciousness is an all-pervading right, and a fearless/rational mind lowered at the altar of Liberty its only check, then the mind revealed as free of fear consciously moving away from evil is rationalizing its activities in the light of a goal: to normalize life from an abnormal one, shows itself in *righteousness*—or, what Aristotle called "*a mean*", "*state of character*", "*moral virtues*" that grow by habit—and this righteousness revealed is, ideally, *majority consciousness* (and not majority fear) revealed.

Bible has numerous examples of majority consciousness revealed by the choice of right: Mordecai stood up for his people, the Jews, when Haman, an enemy of Jews and a close confidante of the King Xerxes '*[who] ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush... who reigned from his royal throne in in the citadel of Susa*',

² The **Central Limit Theorem** (CLT) (Lyon) explains how various things we find in nature whose manner of existence can be quantified are normally distributed, like people's heights, IQ scores, snowflakes sizes, etc. However, a conscious mind cannot be quantified but can only be described as the initializing of the corpus of knowledge of good and evil in the mind of man, where liberty takes ownership to differentiate the two, and approaching consciousness of good its rewards.

planned on decimating the Jews; and revealed the majority consciousness of decisiveness in discord (Esther 1:10). The psalms of David tell of resilience in loss (Psalms, Book I, 1-41). Daniel (Daniel 6:1-28) in the den of lions tells of courage in danger. Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, the Moabite Naomi's daughter-in-law, who stayed back and took care of her mother-in-law rather than listen to her by leaving Naomi and seeking her fortunes anew, showed the virtue of unselfish love in grief (Ruth 1:1-22).

The Bible: The Good, Armed with Liberty, at Stake against Wickedness

In the Bible, Adam faced with a diffused right (i.e., to use his own mind that fights evil, and its fear, and establishes the commands of the most gracious of nature who gives the Garden of Eden to man where he is without fear, "*You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die*") (T. H. Bible, Genesis 2:16 and 17) and a wrong (to *not* use his own mind that knows evil yet doesn't fight that which comes accompanied by fear); and if he had once negotiated the darkness of imperfect knowledge of good and evil with the tool of liberty ("*So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*") (T. H. Bible, Genesis 2:21) by being fearless of the unknown by discerning the woman as good in him when he says '*This is now bone of my bones/ and flesh of my flesh/ she shall be called "woman",/ for she was taken out of man*' (T. H. Bible, Genesis 2:23), which means he shows a tendency for recognizing the good (faith in God) in normal times; it's only expected that he will do the right even when he walks the path of thorns to abjure the wrong. But Adam, by eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, showed himself led easily astray by Evil into mistaking its voice, craftiness, as *His* voice so

that he knows a majority consciousness centered on showing-off his righteousness (over-righteousness where folly makes a stand) that looks like *His Ways* and talks like one but finds no echo in his heart as he finishes its tasks: he has to worry about hiding his nakedness from curious eyes and take cover in the forest when he sees God come.

What Adam was found wanting in—liberty to arrive at, and then, choose the mean position from the outliers as reason dictates and which *His ways* demonstrate—God made perfect by facing his plans for Creation gone wrong by Adam’s irrational behaviour by rationalizing with liberty (that *His* love for Adam confounds) and, therefore, with *One Mind*, the diffused right (evict Adam to earth now and let him, and his descendants to come, decide what they would prefer: as the “*sons of God*”, to be the “*heroes of old, men of renown*” or to be just mere mortals who endowed with the “*breath of life*” to explore life and not count its years do just the opposite) (T. H. Bible, Genesis 6:4) from wrong (God will one day wish to “*wipe from the face of the earth the human race I[God] have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them*”) (T. H. Bible, Genesis 6:7) and *His* consciousness of Liberty stamps itself on majority consciousness as infinitesimally large via the consciousness of Noah (*He* destroys the world but lets Noah, Adam’s descendent, live as prize for his being righteous) (T. H. Bible, Genesis 6.13): “*The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma [Noah’s burnt offerings to God] and said in His heart: ‘Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood....As long as earth endures,/seedtime and harvest,/cold and heat,/summer and winter,/day and night/will never cease.’*” (T. H. Bible, Genesis 8:21)).

Aristotle's Choice Led by Reason: Man's Most Defining Nature

Ethics—the problem of what is virtue and vice in passions and actions, and what is reason in relation to them—becomes in Aristotle a problem of human nature as a rational individual:

“None of the moral virtues arises in us by nature...rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit...by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly...Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or other from our very youth; it makes very great difference, or rather all the difference.” (Stumph)

Aristotle's reasoning man's awareness of moral virtue and the Bible's Righteous Man's awareness of good from evil merge where both are fearless of Evil that, in one, is sourced in habit of reason (whereas reason being divine is sourced in the Immortal) and, in the other, sourced in habit of wisdom (the exercising of liberty to reason against all odds). The former, by the habit of reason, argues that in passions a mean state of character is better, and a virtue, than an extreme one, a vice, provided happiness is the aim, and as Aristotle says it, reason in the human nature depicts the Immortal Nature: unflaggingly virtuous (*“but [we] must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us...”*) and *“This life(that according to reason is best and pleasantest) therefore is also the happiest(i.e., without fear)”*. The Bible's Righteous Man with consciousness to separate good from evil that liberty personifies will move with fearlessness too because habit of liberty to reason in the alienation of evil takes precedence over all fear of evil.

However, Aristotle didn't make liberty the origin of action and put the onus on reason making informed choices: "The origin of action—its efficient, not its final cause—is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end. This is why choice cannot exist either without reason and intellect or without a moral state." (Stumph). Aristotle writes about reason as an immortal's prerogative, but makes lack of consciousness of liberty to lift the cover from Good a mortal's individual fallacy from which one must free oneself: "we must not **follow** those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and being mortal, of mortal things":

"If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us...that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest."
(Aristotle)

The Bible: Jesus Christ as a Microcosm of *His* Immanence and *His* One Mind

Prophet Isaiah spoke about John the Baptist in the following words:

*"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him."
(H. Bible, Mathew 3:3).*

The *Son of Man* forges a ‘straight path’ between the heart (the recognition of the Right that wants to be baptised by John, the Baptist, so much so that to have travelled from Galilee to the Jordan) and the mind (that will want John’s to baptise him, even when John’s righteousness as spoken of by Prophet Isaiah is made doubtful by his awe for Jesus, the Messiah, thus hiding his righteousness: “*But after me[John] comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. (John the Baptist prepares the way)*”), it’s for Jesus to use liberty to establish the right by carrying out the right action [to dissuade John when he said “*I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?*”] while rejecting the wrong action [to hide his righteousness] but to say out loud “*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness*”) so that the right is re-established (“*Then John consented.*”) and Jesus is one with the Righteous: “*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased*” (H. Bible, Mathew 3:13).

COURSES OF ACTION:	Mind carries out	
	Baptised by John the Baptist <i>(Right use of Liberty)</i>	Baptises John the Baptist <i>(Misuse of Liberty)</i>
Heart says		
Baptised by John the Baptist	Happy, righteous (Jesus Christ)	Unhappy, wrongdoer (repent)
Baptises John the Baptist	Unhappy, show-off (Pharisees, ask forgiveness)	Wilderness, wicked (unrepentant)

Table 1: Heart-to-Mind Maps and Matrix of Biblical Character Types

Topic

This essay is an attempt to engage in the thoughts of the author of *The Desert of Love* (Mauriac, *Le Desert de l'amour*), Francois Mauriac, who makes his novel the Bible's *tabula rasa* again while Aristotle's Ethics shows the way.

In the words of Ludwig Wittgenstein:

"Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it."
(Wittgenstein)

Because Mauriac believed that ruptured thinking, where actions don't follow from the heart, is the root cause of all the trouble and which wisdom to understand the actions as one's wrong can rectify, we are led to think that there is no unilateral belief in the Good—that is the yardstick of a devout—but the belief in the Good as something arrived at consciously by driving away the Evil in which liberty is the tool of Consciousness of life as something bigger than death that is at stake:

I frequently feel myself closer to a believer, to a pious man, the more he is separated from my own Church. This is a paradox in appearance only. In the presence of a Moslem or a Jew— if they are devout—I know beforehand, before they open their mouths, what separates me from them. The gulf between us is, in a way, a familiar one. There are no surprises. But what is not familiar to me, what enchants me whenever I discover it, is this word of worship which I recognize, this prayer which can make my own heart burst, this love for the Father Who is in Heaven, and sometimes—even among certain Jews—this attraction to Christ.
(Mauriac and Powell, *TRADITIONALISTS AND INNOVATORS: FOES WITHIN THE CHURCH?*)

Mapping Characters in ‘The Desert of Love’ to Biblical Character-Types

Maria Cross: Wrongdoer

For the twenty-seven year old Maria, balanced between a diffused right (with Francois, her little son, lost to meningitis who no longer “*had to have country air*”, she could have managed a life of hardships somehow by leaving ‘him’ [Victor Larousselle, her lover and benefactor]) and the wrong (“*I [Maria] am too cowardly to take up the struggle again, to work my fingers to the bone for an inadequate salary*” [Chapter 5]), and if her heart’s unhappy paradox was true that her boy had died leaving her safe with her secret [that she had the infamy of being the ‘kept woman of Larousselle’] and that she now no longer feared his growing up, and if she still laboured under her son’s love (ostensibly “*I never use anything but the trolley now, whatever the weather....I feel less unworthy of our poor dead darling...less, ...less like a kept woman.*” [Chapter 3]), all helping her to approach the state where she can leave Larousselle by stoutly looking poverty in the face, then, by writing a long letter to Raymond asking him to stay away from her (“*Don’t come Sunday—or any other day. It is for your sake, and your sake only, that I agree to this sacrifice*”), she had in her fear that her tainted reputation hadn’t scared Raymond away scraped superficially at the treasure lying undiscovered in her heart that knew wrong when she saw it but didn’t do anything about (she says “*One’s got to love the pleasure of the body. Gaby used to say—it’s the only thing in the world, darling, that has never disappointed me—but, unfortunately we can’t, all of us, do that.*” Chapter 10) only to repent later (“*I’m in pain,*” she moaned: “*I’m in such dreadful pain.*” Chapter 10). Dishonest enough to know craftiness (“*Maria Cross was thinking: If I tell him who I am, I may lose him...But isn’t it my duty to scare him away?*” Chapter 6), she chooses a skewed consciousness (centred on sanctimony) to override the true majority consciousness (centred on truthfulness) for she would disclose later to herself she wanted to

know pleasure fully (“when he [Raymond] would have proceeded as slowly as she wished...and make smooth and easy the voyage of pleasure...it would have brought her joy” Chapter 11).

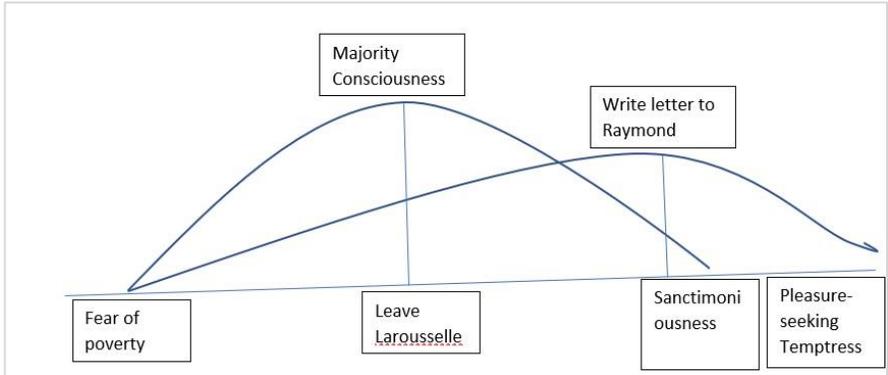


Figure 1: A human consciousness curve skewed by craftiness side tracks the ideal majority consciousness

After seventeen years, when she met Raymond and would temporarily accommodate him in her step son Bertrand’s room, for she was by then married to Victor Larousselle, she couldn’t suppress the feeling of “cold fury” against remembering the loss of innocence she feared in her son and which she had drawn out in Raymond (“the mingled smell of tobacco and the human body filled her with cold fury: I must have been mad to let him come in here” Chapter 11), and the knowledge that the thirty-five-year-old Raymond was the product of her miscreancy, which she repented. If “Bertrand is very broadminded” and whom she knew as closest to a blessed-heart (who “can be at once a friend and a master”[Maria]: “What would your Bertrand say if he could see you now, sitting here with me... and his father in that state?[Raymond Courreges]/He would understand everything: He does understand everything.[Maria]”[Chapter 11]), then Maria is the **wrongdoer** who will open her heart to Him, what she couldn’t do even before Bertrand, when she “opened the windows to let in the cold air of

dawn, and knelt down for a moment at the head of the bed. Her lips moved. She buried her head in the pillow. [Chapter 11]”

Raymond Courreges: From Wrongdoer to Wicked

For seventeen-year-old Raymond balanced between the diffused right (when he ‘passed with distinction’, he [Raymond] alone knew what an effort he had made, inspite of the apparent lawlessness of his days, not to be expelled”) and the wrong (“It was a matter of general knowledge that on those rare Sundays when he was not being ‘kept in,’ Raymond Courreges hung about the more disreputable booths at the fair. He had been seen on the merry-go-round hugging a slut of indeterminate age.”), and if it was true that “a single fixed idea had filled his mind to the exclusion even of the sense of persecution, so that hours of detention, spent standing against the rough-cast walls of the playground, had actually seemed short – the idea of departure, of flight, in the first glow of a summer morning, along the high road to Spain which ran past the Courreges’ garden...”, and if he had had saved money to travel the world “miles and miles from his own ‘people’” with a successful examination behind him, all helping him to approach the state of endurance of a devoted scholar from the state of prurience, then by acting against his best nature on the first opportunity he had to visit her, he scraped superficially at the treasure lying undiscovered in his heart that knew wrong when he saw it but didn’t do anything about it (“What a simpleton his poor father was! But the real thing that Raymond really resented was that the doctor should have diminished Maria Cross to the stature of a respectable, weak-willed little schoolteacher—and thereby reduced his sense of conquest to nothing... ‘You’re not going to tell me that Maria Cross is a saint?’ [Raymond] Chapter 6). Plagued by fear that he wasn’t good-looking enough to retain a woman (“This youthful debauchee, whose hand the pupils of the Church School were afraid to touch, was no less ignorant than they of women, and could not conceive that he might be capable of giving pleasure if only to a slattern in the

gutter.” Chapter 3), but vain enough to know craftiness (“As though he couldn’t believe his good luck, he spoke the words aloud: Maria Cross’s got a crush on me”[Chapter 6]) Raymond chooses a skewed consciousness centred on vaingloriousness) to side-track the real one (centred on endurance of a scholar).

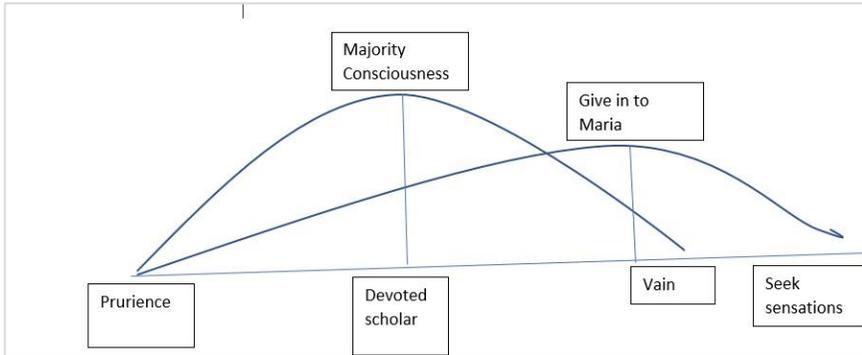


Figure 2: A majority consciousness curve skewed by craftiness side tracks ideal majority consciousness

A **wrongdoer**, who had gone the wrong way and should like to repent if he had another chance, Raymond, however, didn’t put it down to a bad experience and return to his studies, but on being thrown out of the house at Talence “*he had been taken up, almost kidnapped by an American woman, who had kept him for six months at the Ritz (his family had believed that he was in Paris working for his exam). But it was just that, he told himself, that was so impossible – to show himself as someone totally different from what he had been at that over-furnished drawing-room, when she[Maria Cross] had said, averting her face, ‘I want to be alone, Raymond–listen to me–you must leave me to myself.’*” From an abashed and foolish youth under Maria Cross’s gaze, Raymond turned into the **wicked** with the ‘*instincts of a beast of prey*’ leading a life of the dissolute.

1.1) Paul Courreges: Show-off

For fifty-two-year-old Doctor Courreges, balanced between the diffused right (he would observe Maria with detachment [“He loved her as the dead must love the living” Chapter 10] with a sense of the déjà vu) and the wrong (“he was still the dupe of his own thoughts: She needs me: I must give her what I would give any sick person.” Chapter 5) and if he knew Maria would be different from his passionate imaginings of her (“It was the law of his nature that he could never make contact with those he loved.

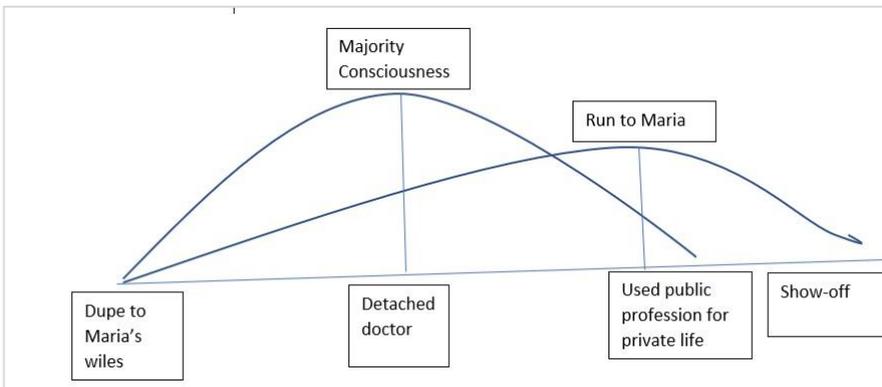


Figure 3: A majority consciousness skewed by craftiness side tracks ideal majority consciousness

He had never been more conscious of that truth than in those moments of partial success when he had held in his arms the object so long desired, and found it suddenly poor and dwarfed and utterly different from what it had been in the agonies of his desire. No reason to seek in the mirror the reasons for that solitude in which he was fated to remain until his death.” Chapter 10), all helping him to approach the state of a detached doctor from the state of dupe to Maria’s wishfulness, then by running to her beck and call he scraped superficially at the treasure lying undiscovered in his heart that knew wrong when he saw it but didn’t do anything about it (“Among his [Paul Courreges] colleagues there were men, he

realized, who had made dreams like that come true. To be sure, their indisciplined lives had done something to prepare public opinion for the scandal of their break with the proprieties, whereas it was the opinion of the whole town that Dr. Courreges was a saint.” Chapter 5). Led by the fear that Maria might die without he telling her of his love (“Suppose Maria Cross was going to die?...Death is the salt of love: it is life that brings corruption.” Chapter 10) and show-off enough to be crafty about his doctor’s duties (“If you keep me from going out, you will be responsible for her death [Paul Courreges to his wife Lucie who was pleading with him not to go to ‘that woman’ {Maria} Chapter 10]”, Paul Courreges would choose the skewed majority consciousness (centered on show-off of devotion to his profession) for the real majority consciousness (unselfish dutifulness) pulling him into its vortex of delusions.

If it were the duties of a doctor that he was fulfilling, then he wouldn’t be so much a dupe as his keeping his Hippocratic Oath. But with his mind in it and not the heart (a **show-off**), the Doctor would forever ricochet between the unselfishness that a physician’s existence asked of him and the life of selfishness he imagined with Maria:

“You must be mad! What about your wife, your children?”

“They don’t need me. When a man is buried alive, he has the right, if he has the strength, to lift the stone that is choking him. You can have no idea of the desert that lies between me and my wife, between me and my son and daughter....”

“But what about your position, your patients, the career of beneficent activity which you have built up? Think of the scandal...?”

“If I were to die they would have to do without me. No one is indispensable. And when I say die, I mean die, Maria. For I shall set the equivalent of death between me and the wretched hermit existence, so full of grinding labour, which I have been leading. With you I shall be re-born....” [Chapter

5, *imagined conversational sequence between Paul and Maria, imagined by Paul Courreges*].

Conclusion

In the final pages of the novel, where the three are brought together by fate after seventeen years of wilderness, Francois Mauriac makes the two men—Raymond, and his father, Paul Courreges—no different, no less forgiving to Maria, if not more passion-driven, from where they had started out except for having advanced in age. It's right time for that one Son of Man to return, the author says because ("*There could be no hope for either of them, for father or for son, unless before they died, He should reveal Himself who, unknown to them, had drawn and summoned from the depths of their beings this burning, bitter tide*" Chapter 12).

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