

CHAMFORT

A selection from his work

Introduction-Translation by **Panagiotis Kondylis**

[[Unfortunately, P.K.'s selection of Chamfort's texts has not been included with this introduction owing to the inordinate amount of time needed to locate and or translate the relevant excerpts into English]]

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Main Title Page in Greek:

Σ Α Μ Φ Ο Ρ

Ἐπιλογή
ἀπὸ τὸ ἔργο του



ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ-ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΗ
Παναγιώτης Κονδύλης



στιγμή

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INTRODUCTION

The shifts in the field of semantics (semiology) mark the transpositions (displacements) in the value scale (scale of values), rearrangements and realignments, in the consideration of, or way of looking at, the world. The struggle over words and concepts is a struggle over the substance (essence), that is to say, over the determination or re-determination of the relations between humans (people). When at the beginning of the 16th century, Agrippa von Nettesheim, invoking the etymology of the term “ethical (moral)”, called for the conversion of moral (ethical) philosophy (*philosophia moralis*) to a philosophy of mores (habits, customs, manners, moral attitudes) (*philosophia de moribus*), he was aiming precisely at the overturning of traditional and sanctified (consecrated, sacred) priorities. The turn in interest from general statements and judgements about correct ethical (moral) behaviour, to the specific (concrete) analysis of this behaviour, meant the rejection (negation, denial) of the jurisdiction of theologians and of metaphysical philosophers; since they officially exploited monopolistically the realm of universalism and timeless, that is, abstract generality, the theoretical putting forward of the locally and temporally formed and dependent, of the partial, relative and transitory, amounted to their (theologians and metaphysical philosophers’) social deposition (i.e. removal from power). The etymology of words is transformed, thus, automatically into a verdict on acts and practical relations. In this wider (broader) nexus or correlation, the philological or literary kind (genre), which

the moralistes (moralists) treat and heal or remedy – [[the moralists being]] all those who thus observe and describe (the) mores; the customs, ways (of life), practices, traditions, conventions –, crops up. Montaigne carefully wrote down (recorded, registered) Agrippa's sayings, and realised or put into practice his programme in a way so imposing (commanding, grandiose, majestic) that for more than two centuries the term moraliste meant self-evidently, or mainly, the knower, the analyst, the chronicler of social behaviour. With this meaning of the term, also (very) famous authors, known to everyone, connected, especially in France, their name. Semantics (semiology) started also again to change during the course of the 18th century, when the dominant tendency of the European Enlightenment sought again, via other paths and for its own reasons, a universal and unchangeable (invariable) ethics (morals). Then the tight etymological bond of moralis with mores, of ethics (morals, morality) with habits and customs (manners, moral attitudes and mores), moved/passed on again to the margins (fringes), and the moraliste became in the best of cases, the high-minded (exalted, lofty) moral (ethical) philosopher, and in the worst of cases, a moralist and ethicist of dubious credibility.

Now, the programme of a description of mores, in their relativity and their fluidity, in their versions or variants, and in their shifts (displacements), was not able to be realised in chemical purity. In accordance with the stimuli (stimulations), with the interests, with the temperament or idiosyncrasy of every moraliste, it (the said programme of a description of mores) was extended towards two different directions, at times roughly in a balanced manner, and at other times, more or less lopsidedly, unevenly or in an unbalanced manner. First of all, no description of social behaviour could, if it wanted to satisfy elementary analytical needs, remain or stay with the narration/narrative of the external unfolding or processing of all respective acts; this narration obtained interest only to the extent where it proceeded to the investigation and

research(ing) into/of motives, aims, desires, passions, ways of thinking, that is, of psychological and mental (cognitive) mechanisms. And since it was not difficult to ascertain that these mechanisms act identically or equivalently, or almost, inside diverse situations and diverse mores, their tracing ended up, with internal necessity, in the outlining of a more general theory regarding human nature. Thus, the moralistes became, and indeed pre-eminently (above all, par excellence), psychologists and anthropologists, in accordance, incidentally, with a fundamental and groundbreaking propensity of the 16th and of the 17th century. The second direction, towards which the programme of the description of mores was extended, did not interweave logically, but only psychologically with the first. One could, that is, in principle stand, i.e. stay and linger in regard to the ascertainments regarding man and his social behaviour, hic et nunc, or in general, however, precisely the radicality of these ascertainments, their harshness, grimness and malevolence (cruelty and inhumanity) vis-à-vis every beautification and every delusion, placed/posed at the forefront, with new tension, the old question: what do I do, if the mores are thus, who am I, if human nature is thus? Some, the fewer/fewest, like La Rochefoucauld,¹ passed by and overtook this question by smiling conventionally (in a conventional manner) or by ironically raising a brow; for others, however, to whom Chamfort also belonged, the question became pressing, and or nightmarish, precisely after the end of all delusions. In this manner, a paradoxical cycle/circle is delineated and closes. By passing inside and through anthropological generalisation, the description of mores returns to the examination of problems of moral and ethical philosophy, not, however, without essentially changing its (moral and ethical philosophy's) character substantially and substantively: because now, the matter/issue of Ought is not put universally and abstractly, but in connection, or in an interrelation (nexus), with a specific (concrete) subject,

¹ (Translator's footnote. Absolutely nothing to do with P.K.): La Rochefoucauld is a TOTAL FUCKING LEGEND!!! READ AS MUCH OF HIM AS YOU CAN. IT'S ALL FREE ONLINE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION!!!

which seeks its personal footing(s) and bases rebus et hominibus sic stantibus [[Latin = as things/affairs and men stand/are]].

Indeed, in surveying the totality of Chamfort's aphoristic and anecdotal work, we immediately stumble upon this ambiguity and equivocation, which most/very frequently appears as polarity. The description of mores is done by seeking *the* more (ethos), by contrasting to mores, *the* more (ethos). The moralist is simultaneously an ethicist in the broader/wider and higher/superior sense, that is, a(n) moral (ethical) philosopher, and especially someone who wants to live in agreement with the commands of a(n) moral (ethical) philosophy.

Nonetheless, the intensity of the moralistic (ethicistic) dimension and concern, or dimension and concern pertaining to moral philosophy (the philosophy of ethics), does not reduce the autonomous value of the description of situations and of the psychological anatomy of acts. Chamfort remains a genuine moraliste, he knows and is aware himself that he is continuing a tradition already rich, and indeed, as can be ascertained by today's retrospective survey, he is its (*philosophia de moribus* = moral philosophy's) last great representative, the last moraliste, that is, who, on purpose (expediently, purposefully) and programmatically, narrates and tells [[us about]] mores, and assess the character of people by means of their behaviour. This basic intention overshadows the oddities (peculiarities, mannerisms) and the demands of the strictly aphoristic literary style (genre); the aphorism tends easily toward rambling (and deviating), and it takes on dimensions of thought (as in contemplation, musing, cogitation, reflection, meditation, rumination, pondering, self-examination), whereupon the needs of description or of (philosophical) explication (clarification or exegesis) seem to dictate this (tendency toward rambling), and or is entirely (completely) abandoned, whereupon usually it is substituted (replaced) by the anecdote and the anecdotal dialogue. To understand this better, we must dissolve or break up a widespread misunderstanding, which

confuses the moraliste with the author of aphorisms. Montaigne and La Bruyère were great moralistes, even though they did not write aphorisms, whereas, conversely, the aphoristic genre was cultivated also after the dying out (disappearance or eclipse) of their (Montaigne and La Bruyère's) tradition, by crystallising in its own unrepeatable manner various inspirations and concoctions (contrivances, confections, inventions), whilst referring to all the levels of the scientifically knowable and of the understandable (conceivable, intelligible, imaginable).

The extensive use of solid (unalloyed or pure) anecdotal material within Chamfort's work does not flow from (a) writer's block (inhibition, bewilderment, puzzlement). Rather, it is the extreme end point of his own writer's strategy, and of his desire to portray and depict situations which speak of themselves, situations whose description coincides with their commentary. Chamfort does not address – as a personally uninvolved and aloof (non-participating) author/writer – a personally uninvolved and aloof reader, in order to inform and update him of this or that; much more than the ideal reader, he wishes to encounter (meet) the ideal joint spectator or onlooker, and joint observer (co-observer), in order to stand next to him in the corner of a salon and, whilst exchanging with him every now and then a glance or smile, to have the feeling that also the two of them (both of them) are recording (registering, taking/writing down) the same deeds (things being done/acted upon) or the same happenings, they are perceiving and apprehending them identically, they are generalising them in the same direction. The in depth, detailed and thorough study of human actions and reactions inside of (from within) specific and concrete groupings (group formations), and in specific (and concrete) situations, does not constitute a source and a form of knowledge next to others, but constitutes knowledge par excellence – that is to say, that knowledge which opens the road and paves the way for the understanding (comprehension) of the

content of other kinds of knowledge (knowledges) [[and of other (the rest of the) people]]. Whatever appears as the general and impersonal interpretation of the world or of man(, this) is also the outcome (aftereffect, corollary, result) of the tangible activity of tangible humans, and whoever went about illuminating human existence starting from some extra-human or supra-human theoretical principle, instead of doing exactly the opposite (reverse), would be committing a fatal pre-emptive error. And since it is not possible for man to exist but only in situations structured in this way and in not that way, every ontological study of man is inseparably connected with the study and the analysis of situations, where again the critical/crucial element is the way in which individual humans (people) intersect with one another and are arranged and ordered as between one another, in accordance with relations determined and specified on the axes of proximity (nearness, closeness) and distance, of love and of hate.²

In order to uncover (disclose) and reveal the deeper and fixed (firms, steady, stable) anthropological character of these circumstances, their (these circumstances') observer does not need to wait for the moments where/when they will reach their marginal, their explosive points, taking down and sweeping away (ruining) barriers and the pretences (appearances, veneers) of conventions (covenants, compacts, contracts), presenting in magno (magnification) (i.e. as magnified) a core (nucleus) since it has already broken (open) the casing (outer shell, integument, wrapping). Instead of the magnifying glass, Chamfort prefers the microscope; and instead of waiting for the disclosure (revealing) of the core (nucleus) inside of exceptional circumstances, he starts with the investigation of the surface and of the pretence (appearance) inside daily life. If the surface is of use as a pretence (appearance), then we have to guess (conjecture) a covering up (dissemblance, dissimulation, masking), and we have to still guess (conjecture) *what* is going to be covered up (masked). Chamfort does not grant to human

² (Translator's footnote. Absolutely nothing to do with P.K.): see Ch. III of *The Political and Man!*

creatures – as he distils (filtrates, refines) them (filters them out) – the moral and ethical mitigating circumstances which psychoanalysis leaves to them de facto (as a matter of objective reality, objectively) in building (or setting up for) them – with the mechanisms of rationalisation – a bridge between unconscious drive (urge, impulse) and conscious behaviour, and hence making understandable the most common co-existence between resting, restful conscience, and, selfish (self-serving, self-interested) motives. And in him (Chamfort), of course, consciences appear, for the most part, as resting and restful; but that occurs only (and only) because they (the consciences [of people]) consider the pursuit of (self-)interest –from the most material up to its most spiritual(-intellectual) forms– as rational and natural. The coverings up (masking(s), dissimulations, dissemblance(s)) take place, therefore, towards the outside, as hypocrisy, and not towards the inside, as rationalisation, and nevertheless, the games of hypocrisy do not at all lag behind, in ingenuity (resourcefulness, lateral thinking, inventiveness), and in wealth of shades and nuances (hues, tints), the corresponding games of rationalisation. Society, as Chamfort sees it, is made up (more likely) of calculating rationalists in a continual search for opportune and expedient means and ruses (artifices and tricks), rather than of those subordinated like puppets to blind passions in a continuous search for rationalisations. The practical result as to the formation of the cohabitation (living together, co-existence, symbiosis) of humans perhaps does not also differ, whether we choose one version or the other, the schema will however differ, under/with which we comprehend the social deeds (things being acted upon and being done (occurrences)). It is not accidental/ coincidental that Chamfort summons (mobilises, calls forth, employs, conscripts, enlists), according to preference, the simile or comparison of the theatre or dance of disguised (dressed-up) people (actors, dancers), whilst being in part a precursor of (well-)known representatives of our contemporary social

psychology like Goffman and Strauss.³ Both the actor, as well as the masker (i.e. the person who wears a mask) interchange a persona(ge) (visage, personality, personhood) with a role (or alternate between a persona(ge) and a role), a sub-ject with a epi-phenomenon, and during this interchange and alternation, a bidirectional, interactional and equivocal (dubious) relation develops (unfolds, is developed): the persona(ge) (visage, personality, personhood) choses the role and it puts it (the role) at/in the service of its goals (purposes, ends), the role compresses (squeezes, pressurises, condenses) the persona(ge) inside a corset, and imposes on the persona(ge) permanent self-control. Nonetheless, humans (people), as it seems, suffer less under the pressure and the demands of the role, and more if, whilst playing the role (role playing), they do not succeed in all that they calculated (reckoned on). Whoever authoritatively dominates and directs his role to such an extent or degree, such that he can, without particular internal dysphoria (discomfort, discontent(ment), malaise), abandon it (the said role) to play another (role) or several (roles) simultaneously, has greater (more) chances of success. The necessity of antimetathesis (i.e. inversion) of roles enters the consciousness and awareness and is intensified when every person ascertains that he is not the only actor or the only masker, that he lives inside a society of such people (actors and maskers), and that the communication of social individuals is a communication of roles. And since all people (everyone) know(s) whatever all people are doing, knowledge of the dissociation (divergence), and at the same time, of the interweaving of role and personae/personages inside each and every respective conjuncture constitutes the guideline (guiding principle, yardstick, measure, criterion, benchmark) for the determination of (a(n) (kind of)) expedient (beneficial, useful) social behaviour. A knows that B knows, B knows that A knows that B himself knows, and so on and so forth – up until the series and

³ (Translator's footnote. Absolutely nothing to do with P.K.): Erving Goffman (11 June 1922 – 19 November 1982), and, Anselm Leonard Strauss (December 18, 1916 – September 5, 1996).

order of mutual/reciprocal reflections (mirroring(s), mirages) becomes so complex/complicated that one of the two sides can no longer follow the game (match), and loses it (the game/match).

Undoubtedly, Chamfort had the opportunity (chance) to dissect again and again such games in the environs (surroundings, environments) of the ancien régime where he spent his life. He became acquainted and familiar with them in the extreme refinement which they (such games) can take on (undergo, adopt) inside a society of lustrous (glossy, shiny) cynicism, in (erotic) love with itself so much that it loves equally its (kinds of) pretentiousness (preciousness) and its ferocities and savageries (cruelties), is tolerant vis-à-vis moral and ethical unbridledness and unrestraint, and merciless (remorseless, relentless) vis-à-vis the/a faux-pas. It was a rational society in the sense that here every person had to know what he wants, and how to acquire it, and at the same time, a melancholic society, since it was not lacking in self-knowledge. Writers (Authors) like Laclos or Chamfort were not simply its (this society's) critics, but also its products, organs and condensations of its self-knowledge and, as such, above all, handlers (users, operators) of its pellucid and incisive language. Just as the persona(ge) and (his/its) passion poured – under i.e. on account of, the demands of social friction – into the processed mould (cast) of the social role, so too the talk about personae (personages) and about passions followed not the disorderly and messy (disorderly) flow of its object, but the commands of a language forged in a manner to be used as a sword (and often as a dagger (stiletto)). Its charm (allurement) was not found in its combinations of different tones of shade (shadow) and light, but in the/its steady and firm contours and outlines and in its symmetry, even also when this (symmetry) was bought off with repetitions, in its weighed antitheses (oppositions) and in its studied climaxes (apexes/apices). And despite all that, the connection, interrelation or nexus with flowing oral discourse (speech, talk) was not lost; a lot of all those

things we read in Chamfort were obviously written as they were spoken, because in the milieu where they (those things) were said (spoken), only at that height (i.e. lofty level) could spoken discourse distinguish itself (as superior), and make an impression. With such criteria, the social and intellectual(-spiritual) cream of the crop (elite) of the ancien régime was not unjustified to be (erotically) in love with itself. But precisely people like Chamfort knew that these criteria were not the only ones, nor the preponderant and predominant (prevailing) (criteria).

In going over or reviewing the tradition of the moralistes, Chamfort separated them into two categories: all those who regard human nature as bad/evil, and all those who regard it (human nature) as good. He himself wanted to support an intermediate position, however, his programmatic announcement was not realised, and in his specific (concrete) analyses he in actual fact identified with the first of the two schools, construing altruism as the metamorphosis of self-love (vanity, egotism), rather than self-love as the acquired proclivity of a fallen angel. If, however, to the perception or view of bad/evil human nature, he (Chamfort) does not have essential theoretical arguments and weighty (significant) empirical testimonies to pit, to the abhorrent, abominable and heinous works of this (human) nature, he (Chamfort) wishes to oppose a clear-cut and irreconcilable moral and ethical stance. It would be plausible to presume that for someone like Chamfort, who knows so well the scales of (hedonistic) pleasures and of egoisms, this desire does not stem or emanate from some moralism or ethicism of a Christian or Kantian inspiration. Rather the longing and yearning for candour, frankness and directness, and, for honesty, integrity and rectitude, became gigantic (enormous) inside him the more an elemental, overpowering and invincible feeling/sense of disgust, abhorrence and boredom (ennui, tedium) grew stronger. How can glory (kudos, renown) not disgust you when it is not but the mass approval of humans who as individuals you would

disdain (scorn) in their overwhelming (vast) majority, at least? Of what benefit to you is the favouritism of the powerful, when it (such favouritism) is bought off with direct and indirect humiliations and you forget them (such humiliations) only (and only) because from this [[favoured (acquired through favouritism)]] position you can also in (your) turn humiliate others? How much are social successes worth, which cost you the tranquility of your soul and the impartiality (or candour) of your spirit, which, moreover, are transitive (i.e. transitory and ephemeral) and as you endeavour and fight to keep them (these social successes) with tremendous difficulty and at all costs, you continually fall lower? And finally, absolutely directly and point-blank: what connects you, and why should it connect you, with the mass of the imbeciles (cretins, clots), which entrenches itself (who entrench themselves) behind the phantasm of “public opinion” and appear(s) on each and every occasion pompously in the form of vogues, fashions, currents, schools and or ideals? Chamfort does not belong to those who hesitate to call imbecility (stupidity) by its name, i.e. as what it is, he is aware of its social power (validity), and he knows that it constitutes the impermeable (impenetrable) limit of every Enlightenment – and above all knows that he cannot live with it. The dilemma: solitariness (loneliness) or (Higgledy-Piggeldy) mixing and blending in with a society where dishonesty (insincerity, lack of integrity) and imbecility (stupidity) jointly govern, by no means constitutes a dilemma for him. Knowledge of the motive (driving) forces of society automatically means the command of a solitary life, when indeed the incorruptible and unprejudiced judgement of your logic (common sense, sensibleness, reasonableness) tells you that the same motive (driving) forces live inside you as well; to the same mechanisms, you are subject.

Solitariness does not mean taking off or departure for the Thebaid desert,⁴ it does not entail ascetic feats or exploits, nor preparation for another life. On the

⁴ (Translator’s footnote. Absolutely nothing to do with P.K.): I’m unsure what the reference is to, e.g. exile? Banishment? Sanctuary? Voluntary seclusion from society? Something else? The Thebaid Greek epic is almost

contrary, in principle it constitutes the reverse face(t) of (a) participation in social life, irreconcilable vis-à-vis/as to the predominant mores. Whoever does not avoid conflict (a clash) with these mores, in the end is cut off or severed [[from society]], and necessarily interweaves within himself the sense or feeling of his personal honour with the sense or feeling of disdain and scorn vis-à-vis the many (i.e. most people). As a(n) corollary outcome (aftereffect, result), but also as an, as it were, synonym, of prudence (thoughtfulness, mindfulness, sageness, wisdom, gumption) and of integrity and probity, solitariness (loneliness, lonesomeness) is not an anti-social symptom, but much more a social stance, a stance of protest (remonstration). A different solitariness, however, exists too, which in many cases can of course constitute a meta-development (meta-evolution/unfolding) of this (social-protest stance loneliness), at any rate, however, it presupposes a maturity and a psychical state of another kind. It is a matter here of the solitariness of the experienced and settled, decided man (person, human), of that (hu)man/person who knows in advance the outcome of all the battles (fights) and has grown tired of engaging in such battles/fights, whilst feeling in addition that his time is narrowing, i.e. ticking away or is nearly up, and that the (i.e. his) remaining time, he ought to devote/dedicate to his own cultivation and improvement (betterment).⁵ He does not withdraw (retreat, draw back, shrink) from (the) social commotion (noise, turmoil, fuss, hurly-burly) because incurable Romantic Weltschmerz (= German = world-weariness (world pain/hurt/aching)) psychically besets and afflicts (agonises) him, and because he cannot reconcile himself with the chasm between ideal and reality, lost paradise and existent hell. No; the departure (taking off) does not take place with/in tears (whilst crying), but with a smile;

completely lost ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thebaid_\(Greek_poem\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thebaid_(Greek_poem))), but the Latin epic poem exists ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thebaid_\(Latin_poem\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thebaid_(Latin_poem))). As far as I can tell, the most likely answer is that the reference is to the 6th-to-7th century Duchy of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire in Egypt which was subject to tribal raids from the desert until finally conquered by Arabs in 642 A.D.

(https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Δουκάτο_της_Θηβαΐδος).

⁵ (Translator's footnote. Absolutely nothing to do with P.K.): Sounds very familiar! AAAA-HAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!

the sober weighing-up of for and against, gain (profit) and damage (harm, loss), dictates it (the said departure). More precisely: the weighing-up aids dignity, showing that whatever is gained or won inside society always has (includes) an excessive price to pay. From the point of view of biotic technique (i.e. skill at living), inner and external dignity, together with solitariness, is proved as being the best way/mode for the achievement of (to achieve) psychological health and well-being. Because, what pushes us towards social life, towards others? The need to find whatever will give an object to our passions, and whatever will grant reinforcement to and support our vanities. Society as a wider whole, and, social mingling and social interaction as a more partial (fractional, fragmentary) framework, constitute, primarily, running tracks (or arenas) of the unfolding of passions and vanities – and precisely *for this reason*, man wants to live socially. To the extent that you are spared (save yourself from) their (society as a wider whole, and, social mingling and social interaction's) weight, you also need others less, you close, i.e. withdraw, into [[your own]] solitariness with a lightened and relieved soul. Optimism gives you the wings you need when you start to satisfy your passions and vanities amongst others; pessimism gives you your tranquility and serenity (peacefulness, serenity, calmness).

Often, Chamfort characterises the secluded and solitary (alone, lonely) pessimist as a misanthrope. But with this characterisation, he by no means connects whatever all those connect, who extol (exalt, glorify, eulogise) – in all tones – philanthropy, because they urgently need fellow humans as an audience or as prey (meat, hunted animals). Chamfort's misanthrope is not suspicious, petty, mean and grumpy, he does not suffer from agoraphobia, nor does he disregard (ignore) delights (pleasures, delectations), and the rules and norms of intermingling and interaction. Misanthropy is first of all an art/a skill, the art of solitariness, that is, the art of great distances and of small-in-number (i.e. few) approaches. If the distances are great towards the side of the many, approaches

(drawing near(er)) bring the misanthrope close to the narrow circle of the knowers of humans/people and of experts, who communicate and understand one another through their common and joint stance, and feel that they belong to the same rare species (kind), where bonds/ties do not need to be stamped with the diffusions, effusions and the familiarities (intimacies, habitudes) of the vulgus profanum (= Latin = impious (unholy) mob (rabble) or common people). As art or skill, however, misanthropy also has its own form of expression: talking in jest or facetiously, which moves between sarcasm and philosophical generalisation, passing through all of the possible aesthetic, psychological and semantic/conceptual hues and nuances (shades, shading(s)). Hence, the misanthrope does not distinguish himself in/at anything, as a human type, from whatever Chamfort, in using a second favourite or beloved term of his, calls “philosopher”. Perhaps one could say that in regard to the philosopher, Reason (Logos) and honour, as with solitariness too, have to some extent a more militant character than the more detestable, obnoxious and odious – and for that reason precisely, lenient (forgiving, indulgent, charitable) – misanthrope. Nonetheless, the difference never becomes fundamental. M..., the fictitious persona(ge) who frequently appears in Chamfort’s anecdotes as the mouthpiece of crucial decisions, is equally a misanthrope and a philosopher, he could clash and enter into conflict(s) with others, but he prefers to stand aside, he could shout and yell, but he prefers to talk in jest and facetiously.

Chamfort knew why he moulded, shaped and created M... as his ideal ego. Chamfort himself could not embody with consistency and (a long) duration whatever he sketched and outlined and whatever, undoubtedly, he desired. He had an awareness and cognizance of his dichotomy (split, schism, division, bifurcation) and did not conceal (dissimulate, dissemble) it; if he ever combated it in earnest (seriously), he did not manage to defeat it. Perhaps, he would have become a misanthrope and a philosopher if the ancien régime continued and if

he himself had grown old inside a society which he since long ago abhorred and detested. However, 1789 threw him into revolutionary activity with such zeal, as if he had never doubted the natural goodness of man and the mental and cognitive abilities of the many. Whatever appeared as anthropological and psychological pessimism now took the character of social criticism (critique), as if it concerned people of one and only one social class. However, the exaltation or uplift did not last long. In one of the political chasms or gulfs which the Revolution opened, he himself sunk and drowned, after firstly trying in vain to build bridges. It is not difficult to imagine what at that time M... would have whispered. And yet, his dichotomy was not due to inconsistency. He wanted to represent the more refined misanthropy and the more guileless, sincere and candid philosophy, because, above all, he thirsted for non-alignment (being unattached, being unbound) and independence; the same thirst made the prospective (nominee, candidate as) anchorite (i.e. hermit or eremite ((religious) recluse)), a political revolutionary. And both times, as much as the biotic (pertaining to life and living) ideals clashed and conflicted as to their content, behind them, the same proud and unenslaved individuality stood, ready to be contrasted to, and to oppose, the whole world. On the quality (character or nature) of this individuality, not only was the intensity, but also the quality (character or nature) of the (i.e. his) passion for independence, dependent. Because passion for independence is something different in great, and something else, in small, souls.

The edition *Oeuvres Complètes de Chamfort*, 5 v., Paris 1824-1825 always collects most of Chamfort's texts. The (i.e. Chamfort's) aphoristic and anecdotal work is better (best) conveyed in the edition of P. Grosclaude *Maximes et Pensées, Caractères et Anecdotes*, 2 v., Paris 1953.