

May 4, 1950

Dear Jochen,

I came home this afternoon with a strange feeling of mixed anticipations: that a letter would be here, a nice letter; or that no letter, or a frightening letter would be waiting for me. Each of these facts demands a response ; sometimes I am so tired and beaten that there is only a numbness for a while. Today I am all right. I slept well last night for the first time in weeks; I had no classes today, for I took my eighth-graders on a trip to Scribner's. They were gentle-mannered, and we were all fascinated. The only difficulties <sup>today</sup> were that a few new jobs were shoved into my hands with an admonition to hurry up because other people are waiting. And the examinations still hang over my head. I must work on them tonight. So I will write to you now, though I would rather wait until midnight when I would be alone, and everything would be neat and quiet. But by then I shall be able to think only of tariffs and labor unions and treaties.

What shall I do this weekend with the surges or irritation that sweep over me now? There will be so much more then to annoy and rub my brittle edges. I cannot "think of something else." I cannot concentrate on what is abstract and removed. I remain in this diffused rage. I suppose that if I could really do something for Joy or for my sister, I would not feel this way. But I cannot. You would not like me in this surly mood.

Do you remember our argument about your desire to understand the motives of other people and your expressed conviction that it was possible- jusqu'au fond? I have thought of it often and will continue to. My feelings about it are so paradoxical. At the same time that I know that I am right and you are wrong, I am so drawn to you and to the arrogant, amused manner in which you listen to my incoherent arguments. I balance that memory of you, smiling and saying: "You know, irony will get you no where," with the clarity and calmness of your explanation of facts and general principles in history and literature.

The difficulties that I have had in relationships with other people have always sprung from an assumption that I understood them better than I did or--even more--that they really understood me. I do not think it is dangerous for me to assume that the actions of other people should be interpreted in the best possible light, rather than viewed suspiciously. It is only dangerous if I base my own actions on what I believe to be true of them, and not on my own knowledge of right and wrong. And herein lies the dilemma of being a woman.